

A General Theory of Magic

MARCEL MAUSS

*translated from the French by
Robert Brain*



Routledge & Kegan Paul
London and Boston

sabbath. This is clearly an exaggerated view, despite the fact that magical sects and witchcraft epidemics are well attested. Yet, while we must take exaggerated public opinion and myth into account when studying these families and sects of magicians, there is sufficient evidence to show that magic must always have functioned, at least partly, in small groups of the kind which today are formed by believers in the occult. Moreover, even when there is no formal grouping of magicians, we have in fact a professional class and this class has rules which are obeyed implicitly. We find that magicians usually follow a set of rules, which is a corporate discipline. These rules sometimes consist of a search for moral virtues and ritual purity, sometimes of a certain solemnity in their comportment, and also in other ways. The point is that they are professionals who deck themselves out with the trappings of a profession.

There may be people who will object to what we have been saying about the social character of these practitioners of magic by saying there is a folk magic which exists and is not performed by qualified persons; we can only reply that here the agents always try to resemble, as far as possible, their idea of a magician. Moreover, we should point out that this folk magic exists only in the form of survivals, in very simple little communities, hamlets or families. And we could maintain, not without some semblance of reason, that these small communities, whose members vaguely reproduce the same magical gestures of their forebears, are well and truly associations of magicians.

2 The Actions

The actions of a magician are rites. In describing them we shall demonstrate how well they correspond to our whole concept of ritual. We should point out that in collections of folklore they are often presented in forms which seem very uncomplicated, very commonplace. If the folklorists had not informed us that they were, in fact, rites, we should be inclined to consider them as everyday gestures, entirely lacking any special character. Their apparent simplicity, however, is a result of their being poorly described or poorly observed; or else they are shadows of their former selves. We shall obviously avoid those poorly described, limited rituals in our search for the typical features of magical rites.

Fortunately we possess descriptions of a great number of rites which are very complex indeed. Hindu sympathetic rites, for example, are extraordinarily intricate (*Kaucika sūtra*, 47-9). A whole range of wooden materials of ill-omen are required, along with herbs chopped in special ways, special kinds of oil, pieces of charred wood. People face a different direction from that adopted in rites of good fortune. The ritual is performed in a lonely place where the land is waste on special days—described in esoteric terms and clearly referring to evil auguries—and in shady spots (*aroka*), under an evil asterism. Then comes the special initiation rite, a long one, for the person involved—a *diskā*, according to the commentary (Kecava ad *sū* 12), similar to the initiation undergone in holy sacrifices. It is the Brahman, at this point, who becomes the protagonist of the main rite, or rather rites, which constitute the sympathetic magic proper. It is impossible to judge from the texts whether the thirty-two types of rites we have counted (47, 23 to 49, 27), many of which have as many as three forms, are merely part of one huge ceremony or whether they are theoretically distinct one from the other. Nevertheless, even the least complicated of them, performed in a mud shelter (49, 23), lasts no fewer than twelve days. The magic finishes with a ritual purification (49, 27). Imprecatory ritual among the Cherokee and the Pitta-Pitta in Queensland are hardly simpler. Finally, our Greek parchments and Assyrian texts give rituals of exorcization and divination which are no less elaborate.

1 *The conditions of the rites* In beginning an analysis of rites in general, we should first point out that magical precepts not only include one or more central operations, but also enumerate a certain number of dependent observances, which are exactly akin to those which accompany religious ritual. Every time we come across genuine rituals or liturgical manuals, a precise enumeration of these circumstantial details is always included.

The time and place of the ritual are strictly prescribed. Some ceremonies may take place only at night, or at special hours of the night—at midnight, for example. Others occur at special times in the day, at sunset or sunrise—two periods which are specially magical. The day of the week is also laid down: Friday, for example, is the witches' sabbath, although without prejudice to other days. As soon as the notion of a regular week exists, rites take place on

particular days. Similarly, special periods of the month are favourable, and probably almost always depend on the waxing and waning of the moon. Lunar dates are the ones most commonly fixed for the times of observance. In ancient India all magical rites theoretically involved sacrifices to the new moon or the full moon. It seems from older texts and also from modern descriptions that the brighter half of the month was reserved for rites of good omen, while the darker dates were devoted to those of evil omen. The course of the astral bodies, the conjunctions and oppositions of the moon, the sun and the planets, the positions of the stars, are all taken into consideration. It was in this way that astrology became part and parcel of magic. Some of our Greek magical texts are even found in works of astrology, and in India, in the astrological-astronomical texts of the later Middle Ages, the whole of the latter section is devoted to magic. The month and the order of the year in a general cycle are also sometimes taken into consideration. Solstitial and equinoctial days and particularly their eves, intercalary days, great festivals—of the Christian saints, for example—are all periods which are held to be special and exceptionally propitious. Of course, it sometimes happens that all these rules and regulations become so hopelessly entangled that perfect conditions can very rarely be realized. If the Hindu magicians are to be believed, some of their rights could be practised successfully only once every forty-five years.

Magic is not performed just anywhere, but in specially qualified places. Magic as well as religion has genuine sanctuaries. There are cases where such sanctuaries are used for both purposes, in Melanesia and Malaysia, for example. In modern India the altar of the village deity is also used for magical purposes and in Christian Europe some magical rites must perforce be performed in church, even on the altar. In other cases sites are chosen specifically because religious rites cannot be performed there—because they are impure, or in some way considered special. Cemeteries, crossroads, woods, marshes, rubbish heaps—are all places where ghosts and demons may be found and are highly favoured for the performance of magic. Ceremonies are also carried out on the boundaries of village and field, on thresholds, hearths, rooftops, on central beams, streets, roads or paths, in any place, in fact, which has some specific use. A minimal qualification in these cases requires that the spot has some correlation with the object of the rite. In order to harm an

enemy they spit towards his house or at his feet. If the spot has no special characteristic the magician may draw a magical circle or square, a *templum*, around him and he performs his magic inside this.

It is clear, therefore, that magic, along with sacrifice, has provision for determining the time and place of ritual. There are other provisions. During ritual, materials and tools are employed which are not just everyday things. Their choice and preparation are made ritually and they are themselves also subject to special conditions of time and place. The Cherokee shaman goes off herb-hunting at a certain day of the moon, always at daybreak; he collects the herbs in a particular order, picking them with particular fingers, being careful not to let his shadow fall on the leaves and performing ritual peregrinations beforehand. Lead is taken from a bath, earth from a cemetery and so on. The confection or preparation of these materials, the ritual ingredients, is a long and finicking business. In India everything that goes into an amulet or a philtre is first of all chewed, and rubbed a long time in advance and in a strictly prescribed fashion. Magical objects, while they may not be consecrated in a religious sense, are at least medicated, and this provides them with a kind of magical consecration.

Apart from such preliminary consecration, most materials used qualify for the ritual by their innate qualities—like some sacrificial victim. Some derive these qualities from religion—they are the remains of a sacrifice which should have been consumed or destroyed—the bones of the dead, water used in lustrations, etc. Others may have features which should, in a manner of speaking, disqualify them—they are left-overs from meals, filth, nail-parings, hair-leavings, excrement, foetuses, household detritus—on the whole anything which is usually thrown away or considered useless. There is also a certain class of objects which appear to be used for their own sakes by virtue of their real or imagined properties, or again because they coincide with the nature of the rite: special animals, plants or stones. Finally, there are other types of substances such as wax, glue, plaster, water, honey, milk, used to bind the mixture or serve as a base for others and constitute, as it were, the plate on which the magic cuisine is served up. These substances themselves have special properties and may be the object of taboos which are sometimes very formal. In India it is usually laid down that the milk used should come from a cow of a particular hue, which also has a calf of identical colour. These are the materials

which together comprise our magical pharmacopoeia; in learning magic their enumeration is given the same vital emphasis as the learning of religious dogmas. In the Greco-Roman world the substances used are so innumerable as to appear almost endless, yet we possess no magical ritual or practical codes for the Greco-Roman period which are at all general or complete. We do not doubt that for any single group of magicians, at any one period, the materials must normally have been prescribed in the same way as they are in the Atharvanic texts, in chapters 8 to 11 of the *Kaucika Sutra*, and even in the Cherokee texts. The list of ingredients, at least to our way of thinking, always had the imperative character of a pharmaceutical codex. We hold that those texts of magical pharmacopoeia which have come down to us complete are—each in its own time—comprehensive and limitative handbooks for a magician or a circle of magicians.

Apart from the materials, we also have the tools of the magician, which themselves always ended up having their own magical qualities. The simplest of these instruments is the magic wand, while the Chinese divining compass was perhaps one of the more complex. Greco-Latin magicians had a veritable arsenal of bowls, rings, knives, ladders, discs, rattles, bobbins, keys, mirrors, etc. The medicine bag of an Iroquois or a Sioux Indian, with its dolls, feathers, pebbles, woven beads, bones, praying sticks, knives and arrows, is as full of heterogeneous bits and pieces as the cabinet of Dr Faustus.

When we come to the roles of the magician and his client, in relation to magical ritual, we find they play the same role as the priest and the worshipper in relation to sacrifice. They also undergo preliminary rites which involve the individuals alone, their whole families or even the entire community. Among many prescriptions, they must remain chaste and pure, washing and anointing their bodies prior to the rite; they may have to fast or abstain from certain foods; they are told to wear special clothes, either brand-new or worn, pure white or with purple bands, etc; they wear make-up, masks, disguise themselves, put on special headgear, etc: sometimes they are naked, either in order to remove all barriers between them and magical forces or perhaps in order to act through ritual impropriety like the good lady of the fables. Finally special mental states are also demanded—you must have faith, the whole thing must be treated with the utmost seriousness.

All these observations concerning the time, place, materials, tools and the agents of magical ceremonies are none other than entry rites for the magical performance, which we also find in sacrifice and which we have described elsewhere. These preliminary rites are of such importance that they constitute separate ceremonies in relation to the ritual they precede. According to the Atharvanic texts, a sacrifice always precedes the rite and supererogatory rites are often performed to prepare the way for each later rite. For Greece, we have long descriptions of special scrolls, spoken and written prayers, diverse talismans which were made to protect the magician against the powers he employed, against inadvertent mistakes and against the machinations of his enemies. While on this subject, we might also include other ceremonies as entry rites, ceremonies which can play a role out of all proportion to the importance of the central rite, designed to achieve the ritual objective. These include ritual dances, continuous music, drumming, fumigation and drug-taking. All these practices aim at inducing special states in the officiants and their clients, not only morally and psychologically, but also physically in some cases. These transformations are realized to perfection in shamanistic trances, voluntary and induced reveries, which also are considered to be part of the ritual. The frequency and importance of such practices show that magical rites take place in a differentiated magical milieu. Preparatory rites performed before the main ceremony mark off and circumscribe this magical milieu from the normal outside world. If the worst comes to the worst a simple action, such as a whisper, a word, a gesture or a look, may suffice to indicate this difference.

As in sacrifice, there are regularly, if not invariably, exit rites—ceremonies designed to limit the effects of a ritual and assure the immunity of the actors. Unused ritual materials are thrown away or destroyed; the people are bathed; participants leave the magical spot without looking behind them. These are not simply individual precautions but are prescribed actions. In Cherokee and Atharvanic ritual, rules of this type are expressly mentioned, and they must also have played a part in the magical rites of the Greco-Romans. Virgil remembers to mention them at the end of the eighth eclogue (v, 102):

Fer cineres, Amarylli, foras, rivoque fluenti
Transque caput jace; nec respexeris . . .

In the *Mavrela Kroviki* there is a rite of divination and the

liturgy has been preserved in the great magical Papyrus of Paris; here again we find a final prayer which is a true exit rite. As a general rule, it seems that magic tends to multiply the elements involved in ritual, to such an extent that it seems to be providing itself with loop-holes, and often successfully. Literary traditions concerning magic, far from reducing the apparently complex nature of these practices, seem to have embroidered on them at will. This is perfectly in accord with our notion of magic. It is natural for a magician to take refuge behind questions of procedure and technicalities, to protect himself in case of failure in magical prowess. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to try and prove that magic simply involves artifice. If this were so the magician would have fallen the victim first and his profession would have become an impossible one. The importance and wide diffusion of these rites point directly at the essential characteristics of magic itself. It is a noteworthy fact that most of the conditions which must be observed are abnormal ones. However commonplace, the magical rite has to be thought of as unique. It is not pure chance that herbs are plucked on the days of St John or St Martin, at Christmas or on Good Friday or at the time of the new moon. These are times which are in themselves extraordinary, and all magical rites generally aim at endowing the ceremonies with an abnormal character. All movements are the opposite of normal ones, particularly those performed at religious ceremonies. Conditions, including those of time, are apparently unrealizable: materials are preferably unclean and the practices obscene. The whole thing is bizarre, involving artifice and unnatural features—very far removed from that simplicity to which recent theorists have wished to reduce magic.

2 *The nature of the rites* We now come to the central rites, those which are directly effective. They usually comprise two types of rite—verbal and non-verbal. Apart from this very broad division, we do not wish to make any further classification of magical ritual. For the benefit of our exposition we shall simply present groups of rites, remembering that between each of these groups there is no well-marked distinction.

Non-verbal rites In the present state of the science of religion, the first group of rites which is given a particularly magical character is that known as sympathetic or symbolic magic. Theoretical contributions to this type of magic have been so extensive and the

repertoire of evidence so considerable that we need not dwell long on it ourselves. Reading the evidence, one may well believe that the number of symbolic rites is theoretically endless and also that all symbolic actions, by their nature, are effective. We, on the contrary, postulate, without actually having the proof, that in any system of magic the number of symbolic rites which are prescribed and performed is always limited. We also hold that they are performed, not because they are logically realizable, but because they are prescribed. Compared with the infinity of possible symbolic actions, or even those actually found throughout the world, the number used in a single magical system is singularly limited. We would be able to assert that symbolic systems are always limited by codes if we could find genuine catalogues of sympathetic rites. Naturally enough, however, these catalogues do not exist, since magicians have only ever felt the need to classify their rites according to their aims, not according to their procedures.

We should like to add that, while sympathetic procedures are employed generally in all magical systems throughout the world, and while genuine sympathetic ritual does exist, magicians on the whole have shown no inclination to speculate on the nature of this sympathy. They are less occupied with the mechanics of the rites than with the lore which has come down to them and their formal or exceptional character.

This is why these practices appear to us more like holy actions and genuine ritual, rather than gestures which are mechanically effective. Of all the rituals we know—Hindu, American or Greek—it would be very difficult to pinpoint those which are purely sympathetic. The variations played on the sympathetic theme are so great that the whole subject has become obscure.

Of course, magic does not consist entirely of sympathetic rites. First we have a whole class of rites which can be equated with those rituals of consecration and deconsecration which we find in religion. Purificatory systems are so important that the Hindu *shānti* (expiation) seems to have been a speciality of the Brahmans of the Atharva Veda. In Greek the word *καθαρμός* finally came to be used to mean magical ritual in general. Such purifications are carried out by fumigations, steam-baths, passing through fire or water. Many curative rites and ritual to ward off evil are performed by similar practices.

We next come to sacrificial ritual. We have some in the

Mavreia Kroviki which we mentioned earlier and also in Hindu magic. In the Atharvaric texts, apart from the obligatory entry rites, the greater part of the ritual involves sacrifice either actually or implicitly. Thus the medicating of arrows is done on a fire of wood used for making arrows; in this kind of ritual a part of everything which is consumed is perforce sacrificial. In the Greek texts hints of sacrifice are fairly frequent. The image of sacrifice has been imposed on magic to such an extent that it has become a kind of guideline, by which the whole procedure is ordered in the mind. In the Greek texts on alchemy, for example, we find over and over again that the transmutation of copper into gold is explained by a sacrificial allegory. The theme of sacrifice, particularly of children, is common enough in our knowledge of the magic of the ancient world and also the Middle Ages, and we have examples of the same kind of thing almost everywhere, although they may be preserved in myths rather than in actual magical practices. We consider all such rites to be sacrifices simply because they are said by the performers to be such. They are not verbally distinguished from religious sacrifice any more than purificatory magic is to be distinguished from purification in religion. Moreover, their effects are the same as those of religious sacrifice, in so far as they release forces and powers and they are a means of communicating with these powers. In the *Mavreia Kroviki* the god is even present at the ceremony. The text also explains that, in magical rites, the materials involved are really transformed, assuming a sacred nature. We read in one spell, which seems to have avoided Christian influence:

Σὺ εἰ οἶνος οὐκ εἰ οἶνος, ἀλλ' ἡ κεφαλὴ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, σὺ εἰ οἶνος, οὐκ
εἰ οἶνος, ἀλλὰ τὰ σπλάγχνα τοῦ Ὀσειρίου, τὰ σπλάγχνα τοῦ Ἰαῶ.

(Papyrus, 121, B.M., 710.)

We therefore find that magic and sacrifice may be associated together but this does not apply everywhere. Among the Cherokee Indians and the Australian aborigines sacrifice is completely lacking, and in Malaysia the relationship is tenuous. We have the offering of incense and flowers, which is probably of Buddhist or Hindu origin, and the very rare sacrifice of goats and cocks, which often seems to be of Muslim origin. On the whole, if there is no sacrifice in religion it is also lacking in magic. In any case, a special study of sacrifice in magic is not so relevant to the study of magic as sym-

pathetic ritual and we prefer to reserve this to another work which is to be devoted to a comparison of magical and religious rites. Meanwhile we may merely suggest, as a general thesis, that sacrifice does not form in magic, as it does in religion, a tightly knit class of highly specialized rites. On the one hand, as we saw in the example of the sacrifice of the arrow, by definition, in all cases of expiatory magical sacrifice, sacrifice only dresses up sympathetic rites; it provides, so to speak, the framework of the ritual. On the other hand, it is part of the magical *cuisine*. It is no more than one way, among a thousand others, of performing it. Thus in Greek magic, the confection of the *κολλούρια* is not distinguished from sacrifice. The papyri call these magical mixtures which are used in fumigations and all kinds of other things by the name of *ἐπιθύματα*.

We are now confronted with a large category of poorly defined practices which occupy an important place in magic and its dogmas. They cover the use of substances whose virtues are transmitted through contact; in other words they provide the means of utilizing objects sympathetically. Because they are as curious as they are widespread, they affect the whole of magic by their bizarre nature and provide one of the essential features of its popular image. The magician's shrine is a magic cauldron. Magic is the art of preparing and mixing concoctions, fermentations, dishes. Ingredients are chopped up, pounded, kneaded, diluted with liquids, made into scents, drinks, infusions, pastes, cakes, pressed into special shapes, formed into images: they are drunk, eaten, kept as amulets, used in fumigations. This cuisine, pharmacy, chemistry, what you like to call it, not only causes magical materials to be utilizable, but serves to provide them with a ritual character which contributes in no small way to the efficacy of magic. It is a ritual itself, formalized and hidebound by tradition, and the actions involved are rites. These rites should not be lumped along with those entry rites or concomitant rites involved in a magical ceremony. The preparation of the ingredients and the confection of the products is the main—the central—object of the whole ceremony and has its own entry and exit rites. In sacrifice the preparation of the animal corresponds to this aspect of a magical rite. It is a moment in the ritual.

The art of preparing the materials involves other activities. Magicians prepare images from paste, clay, wax, honey, plaster, metal or papier mâché, from papyrus or parchment, from sand or wood. The magician sculpts, models, paints, draws, embroiders,

knits, weaves, engraves. He makes jewellery, marquetry and heaven knows what else. These various activities provide him with representations of gods and demons, dolls for black magic; they are all his symbols. He makes gree-grees, scapulars, talismans, amulets, all of which should be seen as continuing rites.

Verbal rites Normally verbal rites in magic are called spells and we see no reason for not continuing this custom. However we do not wish to imply by this that it is the only kind of verbal ritual in magic. This is far from being the case and the system of verbal magic plays such an important role in magic as a whole that in certain systems it is extremely differentiated. Up till now it has never been given its real due. From many modern descriptions one could easily be led to believe that magic involved only non-verbal actions. Verbal ritual is mentioned only in passing terms and is neglected in favour of lengthy enumerations of the other aspects of the rite. On the other hand, there are texts, such as the Lönnrot on Finnish magic, which contain nothing but incantations or spells. Only rarely are we provided with a sufficiently balanced idea of these two vital features of ritual. W. W. Skeat did it for Malaysian magic and J. Mooney for the Cherokee. In magician's manuals we find that rites are normally interdependent. They are so closely associated that in order to provide a correct notion of a magical ceremony we must study the two concurrently. If one or other of these aspects tends to predominate, it is usually the spells. While it is doubtful whether entirely wordless rituals ever existed there is evidence of a large number of rites which were exclusively oral.

In magic we find almost all the same forms of spoken rite which we found in religion: oaths, wishes, prayers, hymns, interjections, simple formulas. However, for the same reason that we made no attempt to classify non-verbal rites, we shall not place these rites in categories. They do not in fact correspond to well-defined classes of fact. Magic is chaotic and there is hardly ever an exact correlation between the form of the ceremony and its professed object. We find the strangest anomalies: hymns of great holiness used for the most evil purposes.

There is one group of spells which corresponds to what we have called sympathetic magical rites. Some even act sympathetically. It is only a matter of naming the actions or things in order to bring about the sympathetic reaction. In a medical spell or in a rite of

exorcization, play is made on words like 'withdraw', 'reject', words for the illness itself or the demon responsible for the evil. Puns and onomatopoeic phrases are among the many ways of combating sickness verbally through sympathetic magic. Another method, which gives rise to a special class of spells, is the mere description of a corresponding non-verbal rite: Πάσσο' ἄμα καὶ λέγε ταῦτα. τὰ Δέλφι δὸς δορία πάσσω (Theocritus, 2, 21). Apparently it was often believed that the description of the rite, or even the mention of its name, was enough to conjure it up and produce effect.

Prayers and hymns as well as sacrifice are involved in magic particularly prayers to gods. Here is a Vedic prayer pronounced, during a simple sympathetic rite aimed at curing dropsy (*Kaṇḍika Sutra* 25, 37 *et seq.*):

This Asura rules over the gods; indeed the will of king Varuna is truth (comes to pass automatically); from this (this illness) I, who excel on all sides by my spell, from the fury of the terrible [god] I remove this man. Let honour [be paid] to you, Oh king Varuna, to your fury; because, terrible one, all deceit is known to you. A thousand other men I will abandon unto you; that through your goodness [?] this man should live one hundred autumns. . . .

Varuna, god of the waters, who punishes evil with dropsy, is evoked as a matter of course during this hymn (Atharva Veda 1, 10), or more exactly during the course of this formula (Brahman, line 4). In prayers to Artemis and the sun, which have been found in Greek magic papyri, the beautiful, lyrical tenor of the invocations is perverted and suffocated by the intrusion of the usual magical hotchpotch. Prayers and hymns, once they are disencumbered from this usual paraphernalia, are very similar to the hymns we are in the habit of calling religious. They are often, in fact, borrowed from religious ritual, especially from prohibited or foreign religions. A. Dieterich has been able to uncover a whole section of Mithraic liturgy in the Great Papyrus of Paris. In the same way sacred texts which are religious in nature may, on occasion, become magical. Holy books, such as the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, the Tripitakas, have provided spells for a goodly proportion of mankind. We should not be surprised, therefore, if spoken rites of a religious nature are used so extensively in modern magic. This fact is to be correlated with the use of spoken rites in religious practices in the same way as

the application of techniques of sacrifice in magic is to be correlated with its use in religion. For any one society there can be only a limited number of conceivable ritual forms.

What the purely non-verbal rites in magic normally do not include is the tracing out of myths. However, there is a third group of verbal rites which comprises mythical spells. Amongst these we have a type of incantation which describes a situation similar to that which the magician is trying to produce. The description usually involves a fairy story or an epic tale, with heroic or divine characters. The actual case is assimilated to one described as if it were a prototype, the reasoning behind it being something like this: if a certain person (a god, saint or hero) was able to do such and such a thing (usually a very difficult task) in such and such a circumstance, perhaps he could perform the same feat in the present case, which is exactly similar. A second type of mythical spell consists of rites which have been called 'original' rites. These describe the genesis and enumerate the names and characteristics of the being, thing or demon concerned in the rite. It is a kind of investigatory process by which the demon involved in the spell is slowly uncovered. The magician institutes magical proceedings, establishes the identity of the powers involved, catches hold of them and brings them under control by the use of his own power.

All these spells may achieve considerable dimensions. However, it is more common for them to shrink in size: the onomatopoeic muttering of a phrase, the naming of the person involved, may indicate the aim of a rite and be performed as a matter of form after the verbal rite has long since become merely an automatic action. Prayers may be reduced to the name of a god or demon, or a well-nigh meaningless ritual word, such as the *trisagion* of the *godesch*, etc. Mythical spells end up by consisting of nothing but a single proper name or a common word. The names themselves become unrecognizable. They may be replaced by letters: *trisagion* becomes a T, the names of planets become vowels. We even get enigmas like the 'Εφέσια γράμματα, or bogus algebraical formulae to which accounts of alchemical procedures are reduced.

All verbal rituals tend to have the same form, because their function tends also to be the same. Their intention is primarily to evoke spiritual forces or to specialize a rite. The magician invokes, conjures up, calls down powers which make rites work; at the very least he feels the need to mention which of the forces he is using.

This occurs when exorcizing rites are carried out in the name of such and such a god; the authority is called in evidence, particularly in mythical charms. Other magicians talk about the objectives of the non-verbal rites, mentioning the name of the person for whom it is being performed. They inscribe or pronounce the name of the victim over the figurine. While collecting certain medicinal herbs they must say for what or for whom they are intended. In this way the spoken rite may render the mechanical rite more complete, more precise, and it may on occasion entirely supplant it. Every ritual action, moreover, has a corresponding phrase, since there is always a minimal representation through which the nature and object of the ritual is expressed, even if this is achieved only through an interior language. It is for this reason that there is no such thing as a wordless ritual; an apparent silence does not mean that inaudible incantations expressing the magician's will are not being made. From this point of view, the mechanical rite is but a translation of the unspoken incantation: a gesture is a sign, and also a language. Words and actions become absolutely equivalent and that is why we find descriptions of the non-verbal rites presented to us as spells. Without any formal physical movement a magician can create, annihilate, direct, hunt, do anything he wishes with the aid of his voice, his breath, or merely through his will.

The fact that all spells are formulas and that virtually all non-verbal rites also have their formulas shows at once to what degree all magic is formalistic. As for the spells themselves, there has never been any doubt that they are rites, since they are traditional, formal and clothed in an effectiveness which is *sui generis*. It has never been suggested that words can physically produce the desired effects. For non-verbal rites this fact is less obvious since there may be a very close parallel, often a logical one, between the rite and the desired effect. Obviously steam-baths and magical anointing have been able to relieve afflicted persons. Nevertheless, the two types of rites have the same characteristics and lend themselves to similar observations. Both take place in an abnormal world.

Spells are composed in special languages, the language of the gods and spirits or the language of magic. Two striking examples of this kind of rite are the Malaysian use of *bhāsahantu* (spirit language) and the Angekok language of the Eskimoes. In Greece, Jamblique informs us that 'Εφέσια γράμματα is the language of the gods. Magicians used Sanskrit in the India of the Prakrits, Egyptian and

Hebrew in the Greek world, Greek in Latin-speaking countries and Latin with us. All over the world people value archaisms and strange and incomprehensible terms. From the very beginnings, practitioners of magic (and perhaps the earliest are to be found in Australia) have mumbled their *abracadabras*.

The peculiar and weird nature of non-verbal ritual is paralleled by the enigmatic mutterings of spoken rites. Far from being the simple expression of individual emotions, magic takes every opportunity to coerce actions and locutions. Everything is fixed and becomes precisely determined. Rules and patterns are imposed. Magical formulas are muttered or sung on one note to special rhythms. Both in the *Catapatha brâhmana* and in Origen we find that intonation is sometimes more important than the actual words. Gestures are regulated with an equally fine precision. The magician does everything in a rhythmical fashion as in dancing: and ritual rules tell him which hand or finger he should use, which foot he should step forward with. When he sits, stands up, lies down, jumps, shouts, walks in any direction, it is because it is all prescribed. Even when he is alone he is not freer than the priest at his altar. Apart from this there are some general canons which are common to both spoken and mechanical rites: these involve numbers and directions. Movements and words must be repeated a number of times. Not any number of times, but according to sacred and magical numbers, such as 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 20, etc. Moreover, words are pronounced or actions are performed facing a certain direction, the most common rule being that the magician should face the direction of the person at whom the rite is aimed. On the whole, magical ritual is extraordinarily formal and tends to become more and more so, to the point of extreme mystical preciosity—the tendency does not lie in the simplicity of everyday actions.]

The simplest magical rites have the same form as those which are the object of the greatest number of definitions. Up to now, we have spoken of magic as if it consisted solely of positive actions. There are, however, many negative rites and these are precisely the simple ones which we now mention. We have already noted them in our list of the preparations performed prior to a magical rite—the abstinence required of the magician and the other people involved is a case in point. They also include that huge mass of facts we call superstitions. They consist mainly of avoiding certain actions in order to prevent a magical effect. Here the rites are formal, and

formal to a superlative degree, because the imperative character of the rite is almost complete. The kind of obligations associated with these rites show that they are the result of social forces even more than other rites which we have shown to be so because of their traditional, abnormal or formalist characteristics. However, on the important question of sympathetic taboos—negative magic as we prefer to call it—we have so far found so little enlightenment in the work of our predecessors, and also in our own researches, that we are hardly in a position to do more than call attention to the subject as offering an important field for study. For the moment we shall confine our attention to noting that these facts provide yet another proof that ritual—as an element in magic—is predetermined by collective forces.

As for positive rites, we have already pointed out how universally limited they are in each magical system. Their composition—and here we mean the combined effects of spells, negative ritual, sacrifices, recipes—is no less limited. There is a tendency for a limited series of stable complexes to grow up—we call them types of ceremonies—which are quite comparable either to technical patterns or what are known as art styles. There is a choice between available forms in each magical system; but once formulated we find the same clearly marked complexes over and over again, used for all kinds of purposes, no matter the logic of their composition. An example would be the variation on the theme of conjuring up the witch through the objects upon which she has cast a spell. When it is a matter of milk failing to produce butter, the milk in the vat is stabbed with a dagger, a custom which is also carried out to ward off many other kinds of evil. Here we have one type of magical rite and not the only one which furnishes an example on this theme. We also have the medication of two or three dolls, which can be justified only by a similar proliferation. These actions through their persistence and their formalism are comparable to religious ceremonies.

Arts and crafts have styles which might be called tribal or, more precisely, national. In the same way it could also be maintained that each magical system has its own recognizable style which is characterized by the predominance of certain types of ritual: the use of dead men's bones in Australian sorcery, fumigation with tobacco in America, the benedictions and credos of the Muslims and Jews and other magical systems influenced by the religions of these

last two. The Malays seem to have been the only people to know the curious ritual theme involving assemblies.

While it is true that different societies exhibit specific styles of magic, within each system—or, from another perspective, within each of the larger ritual groups we have described separately—there are important variations. The choice of the type of magic to be used is partly a matter for specialist magicians who use one rite or a limited number of rites in all the cases for which they are qualified. Each magician is bound by his materials, his tools and his medicine bag, which he inevitably uses every time he works. More often than not a magician is set apart from his colleagues by the type of rites he performs, rather than by the powers he possesses. We might add that the people we have called amateur magicians have an even more limited knowledge of rites and tend to go on repeating the same ones endlessly. This is the reason why certain formulas which are used over and over again, without rhyme or reason, end up by becoming completely unintelligible. Once again we find form taking precedence over content.

Nevertheless, what we have just said on the formation of styles in magical ritual does not mean that they are in fact classifiable. Apart from the question of the existence of a vast amount of floating ritual, the fact remains that the development of special styles is quite a matter of accident and does not correspond to any real diversity of function, in magic there is nothing properly comparable to religious institutions.

3 Representations

Magical practices are not entirely without sense. They correspond to representations which are often very rich and which constitute the third element of magic. As we have seen, all ritual is a kind of language; it therefore translates ideas.

The minimum of display which each magical act involves is display of its effect. But this display, however rudimentary it may conceivably be, is already highly complex. It has several components, several levels. We can indicate at least some of these, so that subsequent analysis will not be purely theoretical; for there are magical systems which are perfectly conscious of their diversity and refer to it with special words and metaphors.

In the first place, we assume that magicians and their followers will not represent the special effects of the rite concerned without taking into account, at least unconsciously, the general effects of magic. Each magical rite seems to have arisen from some kind of syllogistic reasoning with the major term perfectly clearly expressed sometimes even in the spell: *Venenum veneno vincituri natura naturam vincit*. 'We know where you come from. . . . How can you kill like this?' (*Atharva Veda*, vii, 76, 5, *vidma vai te . . . janam . . . Kaltham ha tatra tvám hano . . .*). No matter how different the results of each rite, when they are working, they are thought to have common characteristics. In every case, in fact, we have either the imposing or suppressing of a characteristic or a circumstance: from being bewitched to being delivered, from possession to exorcization. In a simple word there has been a change of state. We are prepared to claim that all magical acts are represented as producing one of two effects: either the objects or beings involved are placed in a state so that certain movements, accidents or phenomena will inevitably occur, or they are brought out of a dangerous state. The actions vary according to the initial state of the individual, the circumstances determining the significance of the change, and the special ends assigned to them. Nevertheless, they share one feature in that their immediate and essential effect is to modify a given state. The magician, therefore, knows full well that his magic is consequently always the same. He is always conscious that magic is the art of changing—the *māyā* as the Hindus call it.

However, apart from this quite formal conception, there are other more concrete elements behind a magical rite. Things come and depart: the soul comes back to the body, fever is driven away. An attempt is made to make sense of an accumulation of images. The bewitched person is ill, lame, imprisoned. Somebody has broken his bones, dried up his marrow, peeled off his skin. The favourite image is of something holding him, and it is tied or untied: 'an evil thread which has been maliciously tied', 'a chaining up which has been etched on the earth', etc. Among the Greeks the spell is a *κατάδεσμος*, a *φίλτροκατάδεσμος*. The same idea is expressed in Latin, although more abstractly, in the word *religio*, which has the same meaning. In a spell directed against a type of throat disease, we read, after an enumeration of technical and descriptive terms: *Hanc religionem evoco, educo, excanto de istis membris, medullis*

(Marcellus, 15, 11); *religio* is here treated as a kind of vague being, with a diffuse personality that can be chased and caught. Elsewhere, the effects of the rite are expressed in ethical images: peace, love, seduction, fear, justice, ownership. This kind of representation, whose features are now and then vaguely glimpsed, may also be condensed into distinct notions and given special terms. The Assyrians expressed the idea through the word *māmit*; in Melanesia, the equivalent of *māmit* is *mana*, which is seen as a product of the rite; among the Iroquois (Huron) the substance thrown by the magician is called *orenda*; in ancient India it was the *brahman* (neuter) which worked. We call it a charm, enchantment or a spell and the words we use show how unscientific the idea is. The idea is represented as a concrete, material object; a spell or a rune is thrown down, a charm is washed, drowned or burnt.

A third moment in our total representation comes when it is believed that there is a certain relationship between the persons and things involved in the ritual. This relationship may be conceived as a sexual one. An Assyro-Babylonian spell creates a kind of mystical marriage between demons and the images meant to represent them: 'People, evil and wicked ones who have taken off N., son of N., and will not let him go, if you are male let this be your wife, if you are female let this be your husband.' (C. Fossey, *La Magie assyrienne*, Paris, 1902, p. 133.) There are a thousand other ways of conceiving this relationship. It may be represented as something which is shared between the magicians and their victims. The magicians can be reached through their victim who thus has a hold over them. In the same way a spell can be removed by bewitching the magician who, for his part, naturally has control over his own spell. It is also said that it is the magician, or his soul, or his demon which has possessed the victim; in this way he gains control of his victim. Demoniacal possession is the strongest expression, simple spell-binding the weakest, with regard to the relations established between the magician and the subject of his rite. There is a distinct idea that there is a kind of continuity between the agents, the patients, the materials, the spirits and the end-object of a magical rite. Taking everything into consideration, we find the same idea in magic which we found in sacrifice. Magic involves a terrific confusion of images, without which, to our way of thinking, the rite itself would be inconceivable. In the same way that the central person in the sacrifice, the animal victim, god and the sacrifice

itself become merged into one, the magician, the magical rite and its effects give rise to a motley of indissociable images. Moreover, this very confusion may be the object of the representation. However separate the different moments in the representation of a magical rite may be, they also form part of a total representation whereby cause and effect become confused. Here we have the basic idea behind magical actions, an idea involving immediate and limitless effects, the idea of direct creation. It is the absolute illusion, the *mâyâ* as the Hindus so aptly named it. Between a wish and its fulfilment there is, in magic, no gap. This is one of its distinctive traits as we see in fairy tales. All those representations which we have been describing are only different forms, different moments, if you like, in this idea of magic. However, there do exist more straightforward representations of magic and these we shall attempt to describe now.

We shall classify these representations as impersonal and personal according to whether the idea of individual beings is involved or not. The first group may be further divided into abstract and concrete classes; the second group, of course, will be only concrete.

1 *Abstract, impersonal representations. The laws of magic* Impersonal representations of magic involve laws which have been proposed, either implicitly or explicitly, at least in the case of alchemists and doctors. Over the past few years a great deal of importance has been given to these types of representation. It was believed that magic was dominated by them and the quite natural conclusion was reached that magic was a kind of science; when laws are involved we have science. In fact, magic gives every outward appearance of being a gigantic variation on the theme of the principle of causality. But this teaches us nothing, since it would be quite remarkable if it were otherwise, because magic's exclusive aim, apparently, is to produce results. On this subject we can only concede that if its formulas were simplified, it would be impossible not to consider magic as a scientific discipline, a primitive science—and this is exactly what Frazer and Jevons have done. Magic can also function as a science and take the place of sciences not yet developed. The scientific character of magic has been observed throughout the world and has been consciously cultivated by magicians. This tendency towards a scientific orientation is naturally more obvious in the superior forms of magic, those which presuppose a

body of acquired knowledge or refined techniques and which are performed in cultures where the idea of positive science is already present.

From the tangle of changing images it is possible to extract three principal laws. They could in fact all come under the heading of laws of sympathy, if antipathy is also covered by the notion of sympathy. These are the laws of contiguity, similarity and opposition: things in contact are and remain the same—like produces like—opposites work on opposites. E. B. Tylor and others after him have noticed that these laws are none other than the association of ideas (among adults, we would add), with one difference, that here the subjective association of ideas leads to the conclusion that there is an objective association of facts, or in other words that the fortuitous connexion between thoughts is equivalent to the causal connexion between things. If the three principles were to be combined into one, we could state that contiguity, similarity and contrariety equal simultaneity, identity and opposition, in both thought and deed. But we should be left wondering whether these formulas exactly reflect the way in which these so-called laws have been conceived.

Let us first look at the law of contiguity. The simplest expression of the notion of sympathetic contiguity is the identification of a part with the whole. The part stands for the complete object. Teeth, saliva, sweat, nails, hair represent a total person, in such a way that through these parts one can act directly on the individual concerned, either to bewitch or enchant him. Separation in no way disturbs the contiguity; a whole person can even be reconstituted or resuscitated with the aid of one of these parts: *totum ex parte*. It is not necessary to give examples of beliefs which have become so well known by now. The same law may be expressed in another way: the personality of a being is indivisible, residing as a whole in each one of its parts.

This formula applies not only to people but also to things. In magic the essence of an object is found in a piece of it, as well as in the whole. The law is therefore, very general and concerns a property, which is attributed to both the individual's soul and the spirit essence of objects. This is not all: each object contains, in its entirety, the essential principle of the species of which it forms a part. Every flame contains fire, any bone from a dead body contains death, in just the same way as a single hair is thought to contain a man's life force. These observations lead us to believe that we are

not only concerned with concepts involving an individual's soul; thus, the law cannot be explained by properties which are implicitly attributed to souls. Neither is it a complementary aspect of a life theory concerning life tokens. A belief in life tokens, on the contrary, is only a special case of *totum ex parte*.

This law of contiguity, moreover, comprises other features. Everything which comes into close contact with the person—clothes, footprints, the imprint of the body on grass or in bed, the bed, the chair, everyday objects of use, toys and other things, all are likened to different parts of the body. There is no need for contact to be permanent or frequent, or actually made—as in the case of clothes or objects of everyday use. A road, objects touched by mere accident, bath water, a fruit that has been bitten into, etc.—all can be used magically. Magic performed over the residues of meals—which is practised throughout the world—follows from the idea that there is a continuity and complete identity between the remains, the food consumed and the one who has eaten—the latter being substantially identical to the food partaken by him. A similar relationship of identity exists between a man and his family. It is through his relatives that he can be harmed most effectively and it is always deemed a useful practice to name them in spells or to write their names on magical objects designed to bring him harm. The same relationship exists between a man and his domestic animals, his house, roof, fields, etc. There is also continuity between a wound and the weapon that caused it: a sympathetic relationship is involved in the curing of the wound through the intermediacy of the weapon. The same tie links a murderer and his victim. The notion of sympathetic continuity leads to a belief that the corpse bleeds when the assassin approaches it. It returns immediately to the state it was in at the time of the crime. The explanation of this phenomenon is a valid one, since we have several clear examples of this kind of continuity. It even spreads further than the guilty one. It was believed, for example, that if a man maltreated a robin-redbreast his cows would give forth red milk (Simmenthal, Switzerland).

As a result, we find that both individuals and objects are theoretically linked to a seemingly limitless number of sympathetic associations. The chain is so perfectly linked and the continuity such that, in order to produce a desired effect, it is really unimportant whether magical rites are performed on any one rather

than another of the connexions. Sidney Hartland says that a girl, deserted by her lover, may make him suffer sympathetically by winding some of her hair round the feet of a frog or, alternatively, twining it into a cigar (Lucques). In Melanesia (the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, apparently) the friends of a man who has wounded another are placed in a position, as a result of the blow itself, of poisoning the victim's wound by magic.

The idea of magical continuity, realized through the relationship between parts and the whole or through accidental contact, involves the idea of contagion. Personal characteristics, illness, life, luck, every type of magical influx are all conceived as being transmitted along a sympathetic chain. Although contagion is already one of the best known of all magical and religious notions, we shall spend a little time on the idea. In cases of imaginary contagion, a fusion of images is produced in exactly the same way as we found in sacrifice. The result is relative identification of the things and beings in contact. In a manner of speaking, it is the image of the thing to be displaced that runs along the sympathetic chain. This fact is often a feature of the rite itself. In India the victim must touch the magician at a certain moment in the main rite; in Australia the person being medicated has a thread or chain attached to him and the illness is chased along it. However, magical contagion is not only an ideal which is limited to the invisible world. It may be concrete, material and in every way similar to physical contagion. In order to diagnose maladies, Marcellus of Bordeaux advised patients to be sent to bed for a period of about three days with a puppy which had not yet been taken away from its mother. The patient had to give the dog milk from his own mouth and at frequent intervals (*ut aeger ei lac de ore suo frequenter infundat*), after which all that remained to be done was to open the dog's belly. Marcellus adds that the death of the dog cured the man. An exactly similar rite is practised among the Baganda of central Africa. In both cases the fusion of images is perfect. More than an illusion is involved—there is also hallucination. You can really see the illness leaving the person and being transmitted elsewhere. Here we have a transfer—rather than an association—of ideas.

Such a transference of ideas is further complicated by the transference of sentiments. From beginning to end in a magical rite we find the same sentiment, which gives sense and style to the ceremony, and which, in all truth, directs and orders the associations

of ideas. This is the factor which explains how the law of continuity functions in magical rites.

In most applications of the law of sympathy through contiguity, it is not merely a matter of spreading a quality or state from one object or person to another. If the law, as we have formulated it, were absolute, or if—in those magical rites where it functions—it were the sole factor involved (and then only in its intellectual form) and if we are in fact only concerned with the association of ideas, then we would be able to state at once that all the elements of a magical chain—constituted by an infinity of possible, necessary or accidental contacts—would be equally affected by the quality they were engaged in transmitting and, consequently, that all the qualities of any element in the chain, whatever they were, would be transmitted *in toto* to each other part. This, however, is not the case; if it were, magic would be impossible. The effects of sympathetic magic are always limited to the effects desired. On the one hand, the current of sympathy is interrupted at precise points. On the other, only a jingle transmissible quality or, at the most, only a few, are transmitted. Thus, when the magician absorbs his client's illness, he himself does not become ill. Similarly, he communicates only the everlasting nature of the powder taken from a mummy which is used to prolong life, the value of gold or diamonds, the insensitivity of a dead man's tooth. Contagion is limited to those properties which the magician detaches and abstracts from the whole.

It is even held that by their very nature the properties in question are localized in one spot. A man's good fortune, for example, is to be found in the straw of his thatched hut. From the idea of localization derives that of separability. The ancient Greeks and Romans thought that they could cure eye diseases by transmitting a lizard's sight to an afflicted individual. The lizard has his eyes put out and is then brought into contact with pebbles which are used as amulets. In this way its sight, cut off at the roots, could be made to go, in its entirety, wherever the magician wished. Separation and abstraction are expressed, in this example, by these rites; but this care is not always necessary.

Those limitations which are placed on the theoretical effects of the law are the real condition of its application. The same requirements which make the rite work and lead to the association of ideas also determine their selection and limitation. Thus in all cases where the abstract notion of magical contiguity functions, the

association of ideas is accompanied by transfer of sentiments, by phenomena of abstraction and exclusive attention, and by direction of intent: phenomena which take place in the consciousness, but which are objectivized in the same way as the association of ideas themselves.

The second law, the law of similarity, has a less direct expression than the first as far as ideas of sympathy are concerned. We think Frazer was right when he, along with Sidney Hartland, reserved the term sympathy proper for phenomena including contagion, and called this other category, which we shall now deal with, 'mimetic sympathy'. This law of similarity has two principal formulas which it is important to distinguish: like produces like, *similia similibus evocantur*; and like acts upon like, and, in particular, cures like, *similia similibus curantur*.

As far as the first of these formulae is concerned, it amounts to saying that similarity equals contiguity. The image is to the object as the part is to the whole. In other words, a simple object, outside all direct contact and all communication, is able to represent the whole. This is the formula which is apparently used in black magic. However, it is not simply the idea of an image which is at work here. The similitude which comes into play is, in fact, quite conventional; there is nothing resembling a portrait. The only thing the image and the victim have in common is the convention which associates the two. The image, the doll or the drawing is a very schematic representation, a poorly executed ideogram. Any resemblance is purely theoretical or abstract. The law of similarity, therefore, when it is working, like the preceding law presupposes the existence of phenomena of abstraction and attention. Assimilation does not derive from any illusion. Moreover, these images are dispensable. The mere mention of a name—even thinking it, the slightest rudiment of mental assimilation—is sufficient for an arbitrarily chosen substance—bird, animal, branch, cord, bow, needle, ring—to represent the victim. The image is, therefore, defined only through its function which is simply to produce the person. The basic thing is that the function of representation should be fulfilled. From this it follows that the object to which this function is attributed may be changed for another during the course of a ceremony or that the function itself may be divided between several objects. If one wishes to blind an enemy by passing one of his hairs through the eye of a needle, which has sewn up three

shrouds, and then sticking holes in the eye of a toad with the same needle, the hair and the toad are both used in turn as *volt*. As Victor Henry has remarked on the subject of a Brahmanical magical rite, a single lizard may, at various points in the rite, represent the curse, the person uttering the curse and the evil contained in the curse.

In the same way as the law of contiguity, the law of similarity can be applied not only to persons and their souls but also to objects and modes of objects, in their possible and real aspects and their moral and material ones. The idea of the image—as it becomes more extensive—assumes the nature of a symbol. Rain, thunder, sun, fever and unborn children may be symbolically represented by poppy flowers, an army by a doll, a village union by a pot of water, love by a knot, etc., and they are created through their representations. The fusion of images is complete for these cases as well as the earlier ones, since it is not an imaginary wind, but the real wind which is found enclosed in a bottle or goatskin, tied in knots or encircled by rings.

On top of this application, the law results in a whole series of interpretations which are quite remarkable. In the determination of symbols, in their utilization, we have the same phenomena of exclusive attention and abstraction without which we should be unable to conceive of the application of the laws of similarity—as exemplified in the images used in black magic—nor the functioning of the law of continuity. Of the objects chosen as symbols the magicians are concerned with but a single quality, for example in clay—its coolness, weight, its leaden colour, its hardness or softness. The needs and propensities of the rites not only determine the choice of symbols and the use to which they are put, but also limit the consequences of assimilation, which theoretically, like the series of contiguous associations, ought to be limitless. Moreover, all the qualities of the symbol are never transmitted or symbolized. The magician believes himself in control, to be able to channel at will the effects of his actions. He is able, for example, to restrict the effects of funerary symbols to sleep or blindness. The magician who brings rain is content with a shower, since he fears a deluge. The man who is assimilated to a frog which has had its eyes gouged out does not magically turn into a frog.

This apparently arbitrary business of abstraction and interpretation does not result in an infinite multiplication of possible symbolic structures. On the contrary, we have noticed that the existing scope

for lively imaginations in any one magical system seems curiously limited. For one object we have to be content with a single symbol, or at most but a few. More surprisingly, there are only a few objects which can be expressed symbolically. The magical imagination has been uninventive to such an extent that the small number of symbols which have been thought up have been put to manifold uses: magical knots are required to represent love, rain, wind, curing, war, language and a thousand other things. The poverty of the symbolic system is not the creation of single individuals whose dreams, psychologically, would be very free. The individual finds himself confronted by rites and traditional ideas which he is never tempted to refurbish because he has faith in tradition; without tradition there can be no beliefs nor rites. For this reason it is natural that traditional symbols should be meagre.

The second formula of the law of similarity—that like acts on like, *similia similibus curantur*—differs from the first in that, even in its expression, the actors take into account those phenomena of abstraction and attention which always condition, as we pointed out, the application of the other rites. While the first type deals only with general evocations, these rites involve an effect being produced in a well-defined direction. The course of the action is then determined by the rite. Take, for example, the legend of the curing of Iphiclos. One day his father, Phylax, brandished a blood-stained knife at him while they were castrating goats. He was made sterile through the sympathetic effect of this action and failed to have children. When the diviner Melampus was consulted he made Iphiclos drink wine mixed with some rust from the knife which had been recovered from the tree where Phylax had hidden it. This was repeated over ten days. The knife was capable of exacerbating Iphiclos's condition, and at the same time Iphiclos's qualities could pass into the knife through sympathy. Melampus permitted only the latter to take effect, and limited it to the illness in question. In this way the king's sterility was absorbed by the sterilizing power of the instrument. The same thing occurred in India when Brahmans cured dropsy through ablutions. Here the patient was not made to take an overdose of liquid, but the water with which he came into contact absorbed the liquids which were making him suffer.

While these facts can be grouped under the law of similarity, deriving as they do from the abstract notion of mimetic sympathy, of

attractio similitum, their special features cause them to be placed in a class apart. This is more than a corollary of the law; it is a kind of concurrent notion which may equal it in importance owing to the number of rites which it dominates in each ceremony.

Before leaving the exposition of the second form of our law of similarity, we find ourselves face to face with the law of opposition. When like is found to cure like, what we have in fact is the opposite. The sterilizing knife produces fertility, water produces the absence of dropsy, etc. A complete formula for these rites would be: like drives out like in order to produce the opposite. Conversely, as far as the first series of facts involving mimetic sympathy is concerned, when like evokes like it drives away the opposite: when I cause rain to fall by pouring water on the ground I am causing the disappearance of drought. In this way the abstract notion of similarity is inseparable from the abstract notion of contrariety. The two forms of similarity could thus be brought together in one formula, 'opposite drives away opposite', or in other words could be included in the law of opposition.

But this law of opposition has always existed separately in the minds of the magicians. Sympathy may be equated with antipathy, but the two are clearly distinguished from each other. A proof of this is that in antiquity there were books called *Περὶ συμπάθεων καὶ ἀντιπάθεων*. Whole systems of ritual—involving pharmaceutical magic and counter-spells—can be classed under the idea of antipathy. Magic has always speculated on polarity and opposition: good and bad fortune, cold and hot, water and fire, freedom and coercion. A large number of things have been grouped together in opposites and this opposition has been taken advantage of. We therefore consider the idea of contrast as a distinct idea in magic.

In fact, just as similarity cannot exist without opposition, opposition does not exist without similarity. In an Atharvanic ritual, rain is made to stop by invoking its opposite, the sun, with the aid of a wood known as *arka*, which means light, lightning or sun. In this rite of opposition we can already see the mechanisms of sympathy, properly so called. A further proof that they are not incompatible is that the magician uses the same piece of wood directly to stop storms, thunder and lightning. In both cases the material used in the rite is the same; only their treatment varies slightly. In the one case fire is exposed, in the other glowing coals are buried. This simple ritual modification expresses the will which directs the

rite. We can state, therefore, that opposite drives out its opposite by evoking its equivalent.

Thus the separate formulas covered by the law of similarity can all be exactly fitted into the formula of opposition. From the point of view of the ritual schema used in our study of sacrifice, it can be said that symbolic structures are present in three schematic forms, each corresponding to one of three formulas: like produces like; like acts on like; opposite acts on opposite. They differ only in the ordering of their elements. In the first case, we think primarily of the absence of a state; in the second, we are dealing first with the presence of a state; in the third, we are dealing with the presence of a state opposite to that which is desired. In the first, we think in terms of the absence of rain, which has to be produced through a symbol; in the second, we think of falling rain which is made to stop through a symbol; in the third, rain is conjured up and then brought to a stop by evoking its opposite through a symbol. In this way abstract notions of similarity and opposition may both be encompassed by the more general idea of traditional symbolism.

In the same way the laws of similarity and contiguity tend to merge into each other. Frazer has stated the case well, and he could easily have produced proof of it. Rites of similarity normally involve contact: contact between the witch and her clothing, the magician and his wand, a weapon and a wound. The sympathetic effects of a substance are only transmitted by absorption, infusion, touch, etc. Conversely, these contracts are usually only vehicles for qualities of symbolic origin. In black magic, practised with the aid of a person's hair, the hair is a link between the desired destruction and the victim to be destroyed. In an infinity of similar cases we do not find any clear pattern of ideas and rites, but an interweaving of elements. The actions become so complicated that it is only with great difficulty that they can be neatly ordered into one or other of our two categories. In fact, whole series of black magic ritual contain contiguities, similarities and neutralizing oppositions alongside pure similarities, without the magicians bothering about them or really having in mind anything except the final objective of their rite.

Let us now consider the two laws, ignoring their complexities for a moment. First of all, we find that sympathetic (or mimetic) actions performed at a distance are not always thought to be working on their own. There is the idea of effluvia which leave the body, magical images which travel about, lines linking the magician and his field

of action, ropes, chains. Even the magician's soul leaves his body to perform the act he has just produced. The *Malleus maleficarum* mentions a witch who dips her broom in a pond to bring on rain and then flies away into the air to search for it. Several Ojibway pictograms depict the priest-magician, after the ritual, holding his arms up to heaven, piercing the vault of the sky and drawing clouds towards him. It is this kind of thing which makes us imagine that similarity is the same as contiguity. On the other hand, contiguity may also be the same as similarity, and with reason: the law holds only when the individuals involved, the substances in contact, in fact the whole ritual ensemble, contain the same circulating essence, which renders them identical. That is why all our abstract, impersonal representations of similarity, contiguity and opposition—even if they may once have been separately conceived—have become naturally confused and confusing. They are obviously three aspects of one idea; and it is this idea we must now set to work and clarify.

Several magicians who concerned themselves with the meaning of their ritual have shown themselves perfectly aware of this confusion. The alchemists had a general principle, which appears to have summed up perfectly their theoretical reflections. They always prefixed it to their schemes: 'Each one is the whole and the whole is in each one'. Here, chosen at random, is a passage which nicely expresses this principle: 'Each one is the whole and it is through it that the whole is formed. One is the whole and if each one did not contain the whole, the whole could not be formed'. *Ἐν γὰρ τὸ πᾶν, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ τὸ πᾶν γέγνε.* *Ἐν τὸ πᾶν καὶ εἰ μὴ κατέχη τὸ πᾶν, οὐ γέγνε τὸ πᾶν.* This whole, which is contained in everything, is the world. And we are sometimes told that the world is conceived as a unique animal, whose parts, however disparate they may seem, are inextricably associated. Everything has something in common with everything else and everything is connected with everything else. This kind of magical pantheism provides a synthesis for our different laws. The alchemists, however, never insisted on this formula, except in so far as it provided their studies with a metaphysical or philosophical commentary, of which we have only the remnants today. However, they did insist on one formula which was juxtaposed to the other: *Natura naturam vincit*, etc. It is 'nature', by definition, which is found both in the object and in its parts. Here we have the basis of the law of contiguity, and it is this which is found in all members of a single species and forms the

basis of the law of similarity. It is the same thing which enables an object to act on an opposite object of the same kind, and is, therefore, the basis of our law of opposition.

The alchemists did not confine themselves to the field of abstract considerations and it is this fact which proves to us that these ideas really worked in magic. They understood by *φύσις*, by *nature*, the idea of a hidden essence and their magical water which produced gold. The idea behind these formulas—one which the alchemists never tried to conceal—involves a substance which acts on other substances by virtue of its properties, whatever their mode of action. This action is a sympathetic one or may be produced between sympathetic substances. It can be expressed in the following way: like acts on like; and we should add, along with our alchemists, that like attracts like, or that like dominates like (*ἐλκει* or *κρατεῖ*). They say that this is because you cannot act on the whole with the whole. Since nature (*φύσις*) is disguised in forms (*εἶδη*), there has to be a convenient relationship between the *εἶδη*, that is, the forms of the objects which act upon one another. Thus, when they say 'nature triumphs over nature' they mean that there are objects which have a relationship of such close dependence that they are fatally attracted to each other. It is from this point of view that the nature of the destructive element is to be envisaged. In fact, it is an element which dissociates things, which uses its influence to destroy unstable components, and as a result brings about new phenomena and new forms, attracting to itself those identical and stable elements which they contain.

Have we here a general notion of magic, rather than merely a particular notion associated with one branch of Greek magic? Most probably the alchemists did not invent it. It is found in philosophy and we see it applied in medicine. It also seems to have functioned in Hindu medicine. Whatever the case, it matters little whether the idea was ever consciously expressed elsewhere. It is clear that these abstract representations of similarity, contiguity and opposition are inseparable from ideas of things, natures or properties which are transmissible from one being or object to another. This is all we wish to deduce from the facts. It is also true that these properties and forms resemble different rungs of a ladder, which must be scaled before one can act on *nature*, and that the inventions of the magician are not made freely and that his methods of action are essentially limited.

2 *Concrete impersonal representations* Magical thinking cannot, therefore, thrive on abstraction. We have clearly seen that when the alchemists spoke of nature in general, they were referring to a very special kind of nature. For them it was not a pure idea, covering all the laws of sympathy, but a very distinct representation of effective properties. This brings up the topic of those concrete personal representations which are known as *properties* or *qualities*. Magical rites can be explained much less clearly through the application of abstract laws than through the transfer of properties whose actions and reactions are known beforehand. Rites of contiguity, by definition, involve the simple transmission of properties. A child who does not speak receives the talkativeness of a parrot; a person with toothache is given the hardness of rodents' teeth. Rites of opposition are not more than struggles between properties of a similar kind, appertaining to different species. Fire is the correct opposite of water and for this reason it can drive away rain. Finally, rites of similarity are such only because they can be reduced, in a manner of speaking, to the sole and absorbing contemplation of a single property: a magician's fire reproduces the sun, because the sun *is* fire.

But this idea of properties is both a very clear one and a very obscure one at the same time—a fact which applies to all magical and religious ideas. In magic and religion the individual does not reason, or if he does his reasoning is unconscious. Just as he has no need to reflect on the structure of his rite in order to practise it, or to understand the nature of his prayers and sacrifice, so he has no need to justify his ritual logically, nor does he worry about the whys and wherefores of the properties he employs, caring very little to justify in a rational manner the choice and use of his materials. We are sometimes able to retrace the secret pathway of his ideas, but he himself is usually incapable of it. In his mind he has only the vaguest idea of a possible action, for which tradition furnishes him with a ready-made means, yet he has an extraordinarily precise idea of the end he wishes to achieve. When he recommends that a woman in child-labour should not let flies buzz around her for fear she should have a daughter, it is believed that flies are endowed with sexual properties whose effects must be warded off. When the cream jug is thrown out of the room in order to bring good weather, the jug is endowed with properties of a certain kind. However, there is no attempt to trace back the chain of associated

ideas by which the originators of these rites arrived at their notions.

These kinds of representations are perhaps the most important concrete impersonal representations in magic. The widespread use of amulets attests their extension. A good deal of magical ritual is concerned with manufacturing amulets which, once they have been ritually medicated, can be used without rite. Moreover, a certain type of amulet is made of substances and elements whose appropriation may not have necessitated any ritual. This is true of precious stones, diamonds, pearls, etc., to which magical properties are attributed. However, whether an amulet derives its virtues from ritual or from intrinsic qualities of the material itself, it is fairly certain that when it is used the owner clearly considers only its permanent attribute.

Another fact which shows the importance of the notion of properties in magic is that one of the major preoccupations of magic has been to determine the use and the specific, generic or universal powers of beings, things, even ideas. The magician is a person who, through his gifts, his experience or through revelation, understands nature and natures; his practice depends on this knowledge. It is here that magic most approximates science. From this point of view, magic can be very knowledgeable even if it is not truly scientific. A good deal of the knowledge we have mentioned here has been acquired and verified through experiment. Sorcerers were the first poisoners, the first surgeons—we are aware that primitive surgery can be highly developed. Magicians made real discoveries in the field of metallurgy. However, unlike those theorists who have compared magic to science, because of the abstract representations of sympathy sometimes found in the former, it is because of the magician's speculations and observations on the concrete properties of things that we are willing to accord him the title of scientist. The laws of magic discussed above are really a kind of magical philosophy. They were a series of empty, hollow forms bringing in laws of causality which were always poorly formulated. Now, thanks to the notion of property, we have come across rudiments of scientific laws, involving necessary and positive relationships thought to exist between certain objects. Owing to the fact that magicians came to concern themselves with contagion, harmonies, oppositions, they stumbled across the idea of causality, which is no longer mystical even when it involves properties which are in no way experimental. From this line of thinking they ended up deriving,

in authentic fashion, special properties from words and symbols.

We affirm that each magical system has necessarily set up categories of plants, minerals, animals, parts of the body, dividing them into groups which do or do not have special or experimental properties. On the other hand, each system has set about codifying the properties of abstract things—geometrical figures, numbers, moral qualities, death, life, luck, etc. And the two sets of categories have been made concordant.

Here we come up against an objection: we are told that the laws of sympathy determine the nature of these properties. The properties of such and such a plant, for example, derive from the fact that the object or being on which it is supposed to act has the same—or different—colour. In this case, we must reply that far from there being any association of ideas between the two objects due to their colour, we are dealing, on the contrary, with a formal convention, almost a law, whereby, out of a whole series of possible characteristics, colour is chosen to establish a relationship between two things. Moreover, only one, or very few, of the objects having that colour are chosen to share this relationship. This is how it works among the Cherokee Indians when they choose their 'yellow root' to cure jaundice. This kind of reasoning, applied here to colour, can also be used with regard to form, contrariety and all other possible properties.

Furthermore, while it is clear that objects are vested with particular powers, by virtue of their names (*reseda morbos reseda*), we claim that things act more as incantations than as objects with properties, since they are really kinds of materialized words. In these cases, the conventions we mentioned above come into greater evidence, since we are dealing with that most perfect of all conventions—a word, whose meaning, sound and everything about it, by definition, are all produced through tribal or national consensus. With a little difficulty we might also include in this argument the notion of magical keys, whereby the properties of things are defined through their relations with certain gods or certain things, which in fact represent their power (for example, the hair of Venus, Jupiter's finger, Ammon's beard, a virgin's urine, Shiva's liquid, an initiate's brain, the substance of Pedu). Here the convention which establishes the sympathetic relationship is a double one. First of all we have the convention determining the choice of name for the first sign (urine = Shiva's liquid) and then there is the other which determines the relationship between the named object, the second sign and the

effect (Shiva's liquid = cure for fever since Shiva is the god of fever).

The sympathetic relationship is perhaps more apparent in the case of those parallel series of plants, perfumes and minerals which are said to correspond to planets. However, without commenting on the conventional nature of the attribution of the substances to each planet, we should at least take into consideration the convention which determines the virtues of the planets, virtues which are on the whole moral ones (Mars = war, etc). In summary, far from the idea of sympathy being the presiding principle in the formation of ideas concerning properties, it is the notion of property and the social conventions behind the objects which allow the collective spirit to link together the sympathetic bonds concerned.

In overcoming our self-imposed objection in this way, we do not wish to imply that the properties of an object are not a part of a system of sympathetic relationships. Quite the contrary: we hold that the facts we have just mentioned are of the utmost importance. They have been called 'signatures', that is, symbolic correspondences. They provide, in our opinion, examples of a classification similar in many ways to those studied in *Année Sociologique* [1948-9?]. Things which are grouped together under this or that astral sign belong to the same class, or rather to the same family, as the astral body, its region, its mansions, etc. Those which have the same colour, the same shape and so on are believed to be related because of their colour, their shape, their sex. The grouping of things by opposites is also a method of classification. It is really a way of thinking which is basic to all magical systems, that is, the division of everything into at least two groups: good and evil, alive and dead. In this way, the system of sympathetic and antipathetic magic can be reduced to one of classifying collective representations. Things affect each other only because they belong to the same class or are opposed in the same genus. It is because they are members of one and the same family that things, movements, beings, numbers, events, qualities gain a reputation for being similar. It is also because they are members of the same class that one can act on another, it being held that a similar nature is common to a whole class, in the same way as the same blood is held to diffuse throughout an entire clan. As a result, they are involved in relations of similarity and continuity. Furthermore, from class to class we find oppositions. Magic becomes possible only because we are dealing with classified

species. Species and classifications are themselves collective phenomena. And it is this which reveals both their arbitrary character and the reason why they are limited to such a small number of selected objects. In fact, when we are dealing with representations of magical properties we find ourselves in the presence of phenomena which are comparable to those of language. Just as no object has an infinite number of names, so, with regard to things, the number of signs is restricted. And just as words have only a distant relationship, or none at all, with the things they describe, between a magical sign and the object signified we have very close but very unreal relations—of number, sex or image, qualities which in general are quite imaginary, but imagined by society as a whole.

In magic there are other representations—both impersonal and concrete—besides those of properties. They include representations of the power of the ritual, and its methods of action. We mentioned this earlier in our discussion of the general effects of magic, pointing out the concrete forms of such notions as *mâmit*, *mana*, effluvia, chains, lines, jets of water, etc. We also find representations of the magician's power and his methods of action, also mentioned earlier when discussing the subject of the magician himself: the power in his look, his strength, his presence, his invisibility, his insubmersibility, his power of transportation, his ability to act directly from a distance, etc.

These concrete representations, along with other abstract representations, provide us in themselves with a conception of the magical rite. There are, in fact, numerous rites which consist of no more definite representations than these. The fact that they are sufficient in themselves perhaps provides justification for persons who see magic as the direct working of ritual and who relegate to a subsidiary role those demonological representations which to us, at least, are necessarily found in all magical systems.

3 *Personal representations. Demonology* There is no real discontinuity between those ideas involving spirits and the concrete and abstract ideas we have just been discussing. Between the idea of the spirituality of magical action and the idea of the spirit there is only a small gap to breach. The idea of a personal agent, from this point of view, could be considered as the product of the effort made by the magical efficacy of rites and their qualities, in order

for their expression to be represented concretely. In fact, it has happened that demonology has been considered a means of expressing magical phenomena: the miasmas are devils, αἱ ἀγαθαὶ ἀπορροαὶ τῶν ἀστέρων εἶναι δαίμονες καὶ τυχαὶ καὶ μοῖραι. The idea of the demon, from this point of view, is not inconsistent with other notions. It is in a way a supplementary idea useful in explaining the play of laws and properties. Here we have a simple substitution of the person as a causal factor for the idea of magical causality.

All magical representations may have personal representations. The magician's double and his animal auxiliary are personal expressions of his power and the way his actions work. Some Ojibway pictograms show it as a *manitou* of the Jossakid. In the same way the miraculous sparrow-hawk which carries out Nectanebo's orders represents his magical powers. In both these cases the attendant demon or animal is the personal and effective agent of the magician. Through it he acts from afar. In the same way the power of the rite may be personalized. In Assyria, the *māmit* is like a demon. In Greece the *tychē* that is, the magical wheel, has conjured up demons, and so do certain magical formulas, such as the *Ephesia grammata*. The idea of properties works the same way. Plants with special virtues are linked to demons who cure as well as bring diseases. We find demons of vegetation of this kind in Melanesia and among the Cherokee, as well as in Europe (the Balkans, Finland, etc.). The bathing devils on Greek vases derive from the practice of using objects from baths in spells. We see from this example that personification can be associated with a minor aspect of the rite. It may equally well be applied to the most general aspects of magical power. In India, *Shakti*, power, is deified. Obtaining such powers, *siddhi*, is also deified. *Siddhi* is invoked, in the same way as the *Siddha*, those who have obtained it.

Personification is not limited to these examples. Even the subject of the rite may be personified by its ordinary name. This applies first of all to illnesses: fever, fatigue, death, destruction, anything in fact which is exorcized. An interesting story could be told of that doubtful divinity of Atharvanic ritual who is known as the goddess Diarrhoea. Naturally, we find the growth of this phenomenon in the system of incantations, particular evocations, rather than in purely non-verbal rites, although they may exist here and remain unobserved. In incantations, the illness which the magician is trying

to drive away is addressed and in this way treated as a person. For this reason almost all Malaysian formulas are conceived of as invocations addressed to princes and princesses who are no less than the objects and phenomena involved in the rite. Elsewhere, in the *Atharvaveda* for example, everything magically medicated becomes really personified: arrows, drums, urine. Here we are concerned with something more than a language form. These people are more than simple vocatives. They existed both before and after the incantations were made. They include the Greek *φόβοι*, the genies of illness in Balkan folklore, *Laksmi* (fortune) and *Nirrti* (destruction) in India. The latter even have their own mythology like other illnesses personified in the majority of magical systems.

The introduction of the idea of spirits does not necessarily modify the magical rite. In the main, spirits in magic are not a free force. They must simply obey the rite, which indicates how they should go about their work. It is, therefore, a possibility that nothing betrays their presence and that they need not even be mentioned in spells. All the same, it often happens that the spiritual auxiliary does play its part, and sometimes a big part, in magical ceremonies. In some, the image of the auxiliary animal or genie is conjured up. We find in ritual and prayers hints of offerings and sacrifices which have no other object than to evoke and satisfy the demands of personal spirits. If truth be told, these rites are frequently supererogatory in relation to the central rite, the schema of which always remains symbolic or sympathetic in its principal lines. Yet they are sometimes so important that they entirely swamp the ceremony. Thus, an exorcism rite may be encapsulated in a sacrifice or a prayer addressed to a demon who is to be driven out, or to a god who drives him away.

In dealing with these kinds of rites, it would be true to say that the notion of the spirits is the pivot on which they turn. It is obvious, for example, that the idea of a demon will take precedence over all other thoughts in the mind of the officiant, when, for example, he addresses a god in Greco-Egyptian magic in order to beg him to send a demon to work for him. In cases like this, the idea of the rite, along with everything involving automatic inevitability, fades into the background. The spirit is an independent servant and assumes, in magical practices, the role of chance. The magician ends up admitting that his science is not an infallible one and that

his will is not necessarily accomplished. He is dealing with a power. In the same way the spirit is both a subject and free form, merged with the ritual and separate from the ritual. Here we seem to be in the presence of one of those antinomian confusions which abound in the history of both magic and religion. The understanding of these apparent contradictions belongs to the theory of the relationship of magic and religion. However, we can state here that the most common magical facts include those where the ritual seems to constrain. But we do not wish to deny the existence of other facts, which will be explained elsewhere.

What are magical spirits? We shall attempt a very summary explanation, a very rapid enumeration, in order to show how magic has recruited its bands of spirits. We shall at once find that these spirits have other than magical qualities and that we also come across them in religion.

Our first category of magical spirits embraces the souls of the dead. Magical systems even exist which—either from the beginning or through a process of reduction—have only this kind of spirit. In western Melanesia, people have recourse to spirits known as *tindalos*—all of whom are spirits of the dead—in both their magic and their religion. Any dead person may become a *tindalo*, if he proves his power through the performance of a miracle, a maleficent action, etc. However, in principle, only people who possessed religious or magical powers when alive may become *tindalos*. The dead, in this case, provide the spirits. They do so in Australia and in America as well, among the Cherokee and Ojibway. In ancient and modern India the dead, deified ancestors are invoked during magical ceremonies. In spells, however, the spirits are invoked of dead persons for whom funeral rites have not yet been appropriately performed (*preta*), of those who have not been buried, of those who died a violent death, of women who died in childbirth, of the spirits of stillborn children (*bhûta*, *churels*, etc.). In ancient Greece, the *δαίμονες*, that is, magical spirits, are given names which indicate that they are souls of the dead. We even have the occasional mention of *νεκυδαίμονες* or *δαίμονες μητρώοι και πατρώοι*, although they are most frequently those of demons who died a violent death (*βιαιοθάνατοι*) or who were not buried (*ἄποροι ταφῆς*), etc. In Greek areas another type of dead person provides magical auxiliaries: these are the heroes, that is, the dead who form the object of a public cult. It is not clear, however,

whether all the magical heroes were official ones. On this point the Melanesian *tindalo* may be reasonably compared with the Greek hero, since although he may be a person who was not deified after death, he is necessarily conceived in this way. In Christianity the dead all have properties which may be useful, qualities deriving from their death. However, magic makes use only of the souls of non-baptized children, those who died violent deaths and dead criminals. Even such a short exposition shows that the dead are magical spirits either by virtue of a general belief in their divine powers, or because of their special qualities which, in the phantom world, give them a special role in relation to religious beings.

A second category of magical beings embraces demons. The word 'demon', of course, is not used here as a synonym for devil, but for words such as genie and *djinn*. Demons are spirits: on the one hand, they are distinguishable from the souls of the dead, and on the other, they are those who have not yet attained the divine nature of gods. In character they are rather tame, yet they sometimes represent something more than a simple personification of a magical rite, a magical property or object. All over Australia, it seems that they were thought of as distinct in form and even when we have sufficient information about them they still appear quite specialized. Among the Arunta we find magical spirits, *Orunchas* and *Iruntarinias*, who are really local genies and who are set apart by their relatively complex nature. In eastern Melanesia spirits are invoked which are not souls of the dead, nor are they all gods, properly speaking. They are spirits which play a considerable role, especially in nature rites: *vui* in the Solomon Islands, *vigona* in Florida, etc. In India, along with the *Devas*, the gods, we have *Pisâkas*, *Yâksasas*, *Râkshasas*, etc., and the whole group, from the moment we have a classification, forms the category of *Asuras*, the main personalities of which include Indra's rival *Vrtra* and *Namuci*. We all know that Mazdaism considered, on the contrary, that the *Daevâs*, servitors of Ahriman, were the adversaries of Ahura Mazda. Now and then, in these two cases, we come across specialized magical beings. They are evil genies, it is true. Nevertheless, their very names betray the fact that there was never a radical distinction between them and the gods—at least in the beginning. Among the Greeks these magical beings were the *δαίμονες*, which, as we saw, were similar to the souls of the dead. The specialized nature of these spirits was such that magic was defined in Greek by reference to its

relations with demons. There are demons of all kinds, of both sexes, of all shapes and sizes—some are localized on earth, others people the atmosphere. Some are given proper names, although they are all magical. The fate of all the Sxiuoves was to become evil genies and go and live among the *Cercopes*, *Empusae*, *Keres*, etc., as a category of evil spirits. Furthermore, Greek magic showed a marked preference for Jewish angels, particularly the archangels and the same applies to Malayan magic. Eventually all these archangels, *archontes*, demons, eons, etc. formed a genuine pantheon of hierarchic magic. This was later inherited by medieval magic, in the same way as the whole of the Far East inherited the magical pantheon of the Hindus. Demons, however, were changed into devils and set up alongside Satan-Lucifer, on whom all magic depended. Nevertheless, in the magic of the Middle Ages and also that of our own times, in places where the old traditions have been preserved, we find that our system has other genies, fairies, sprites, goblins, kobolds, etc.

Magic, however, need not address itself to specialized genies. In fact, the different classes of spirits we have just mentioned were not always exclusively magical in nature. And once they have become magical, this does not mean they do not relinquish the religious role: we do not consider Hell as a magical idea. On the other hand, there are countries where the functions of gods and demons are not distinguishable from each other. This is the case all over North America, where Algonquian *manitous* constantly change from one to the other. The same occurs in eastern Melanesia where the *tindalo* behave in the same way. In Assyria, there are whole series of demons which may or may not be gods. In the scriptures their names usually have divine affixes. The main ones include the *Igigi* and the *Anunnaki*, whose identity is still somewhat mystifying. All in all, demoniacal activities are not at all incompatible with those of the gods. Moreover, the existence of specialized demons does not mean that magic cannot make use of other spirits, endowing them, at least for the time being, with a demoniacal function. And we find gods—and in Christian magic, saints—who crop up as spiritual auxiliaries of the magicians. In India, the gods play their part even in black magic, in spite of the degree of specialization which has developed there, and they play essential roles in all other magical ritual. In countries which have undergone Hindu influence, Malaysia and C  mpa (Cambodia), the entire Brahman pantheon

figures in their magic. As for the Greek magical texts, they first of all mention a host of Egyptian gods, either by their Egyptian or their Greek names, as well as Assyrian and Persian gods, Iahw   (Jehovah) and the whole gamut of Jewish angels and prophets—they are all gods who were outside Greek culture. However, they also used the 'high gods', in their form, referring to them by their Greek names, Zeus, Apollo, Aesculapius, even associating them with their particular localities. In Europe, the Virgin, Christ and the saints are the only spirits which appear in most of the spells and particularly in the mythical charms.

Personal representations in magic have presented a sufficient consistency for myths to have grown up. Mythical charms, of the kind just mentioned, depend on myths pertaining to magic. There are others which explain the origin of magical tradition, of sympathetic relations, ritual, etc. However, while magic may have its myths, these are only rudimentary and very specific in nature, dealing only with things rather than with spiritual beings. Magic has little poetry. We do not find many stories about its demons. Demons are like soldiers in an army, they are troops, *ganas*, bands of hunters or cavalcades; they lack any real individuality. This applies even more to the gods which have become involved in magic. They are stripped of personality leaving—if we may be allowed to express it this way—their myths on the doorstep. Magic is not interested in them as individuals, but as wielders of properties, powers whether generic or specific in nature. Moreover, they may be transformed to suit a magician's purpose, and are often reduced to mere names. In the same way that spells can invoke demons, so the gods may also end up as nothing more than mere incantations.

The fact that magic has made use of gods shows that it has been able to take advantage of the obligatory beliefs of society. It is because gods were believed in that magic used them for their own ends. But demons, along with gods and the souls of the dead, are objects of collective representations, which are often obligatory and sanctioned, at least in ritual. This is the reason why they became magical forces. In fact, each magical system would be able to draw up a limited catalogue of spirits, limited in type if not in number. This hypothetical and theoretical limitation provides us with the first hint of the collective character of our demoniacal representations. Secondly, demons may be named in the same way as gods. Since they are normally used for all kinds of purposes, the

multiplicity of their services has given them a kind of individuality, and each is, individually, the subject of a tradition. Furthermore, commonly held beliefs in the magical power of a spirit being always presuppose that the spirit has given the public proof of its powers in the form of miracles or successful actions. A collective experience, or at least a collective illusion, is necessary before a demon, properly speaking, can be created. Finally, let us remember that most magical spirits are exclusively presented through ritual and tradition. Their existence is proved only after the growth of the belief which endows them with respect. Therefore, in the same way that impersonal representations of magic seem to have no reality outside collective traditional beliefs—beliefs which are held in common by a group concerned—in our view, personal representations are also collective. We even feel that the proposition will be more acceptable in this case.

4 General Observations

The vague, multiform character of the spirit powers with which magicians have to deal is also a feature of magic as a whole. At first sight, the facts we have collected together may seem very disparate. Some tend to merge magic with technology and science, while others assimilate it to religion. In fact, it should be placed somewhere between the two, but it cannot be defined by its aims, processes or its ideas. Up to the present, our studies have shown that the subject is even more ambiguous, more indeterminate than ever. It resembles non-religious techniques in its practical aspects, in the automatic nature of so many of its actions, in the false air of experiment inherent in some of its important notions. But it is very different from techniques when we come to consider special agencies, spirit intermediaries and cult activities. Here it has more in common with religion because of the elements it has borrowed from this sphere. There are almost no religious rites which lack their magical equivalent. Magic has even developed the idea of orthodoxy as we see in the *διαβολαί*, those magical accusations dealing with impure rites in Greco-Egyptian magic. However, apart from the antipathy which magic shows towards religion and vice versa (an antipathy, moreover, which is neither universal nor constant), its incoherence and the important role played by pure

fancy make it a far cry from the image we have learnt to associate with religion.

Nonetheless, the unity of the whole magical system now stands out with greater clarity. This is the first gain to be made from our incursions into the subject and our long discussions. We have reason to believe that magic does form a real whole. Magicians share the same characteristics, and the effects of their magical performances—in spite of an infinite diversity—always betray much in common. Very different processes can be associated together as complex types and ceremonies. Quite disparate notions fuse and harmonize without the whole losing anything of its incoherent and dislocated aspects. The parts do, in fact, form a whole.

At the same time the whole adds up to much more than the number of its parts. The different elements which we have dealt with consecutively are, in fact, present simultaneously. Although our analysis has abstracted them they are very intimately and necessarily combined in the whole. We considered it sufficient to define magicians and magical representations by stating that the former are the agents of magical rites, while the latter are those representations which correspond to them—we considered them together in relation to magical rites. We are not in the least surprised that our fore-runners have preferred to consider magic solely as a series of actions. We might also have defined magical elements in relation to the magician. Each presupposes the other. There is no such thing as an inactive, honorary magician. To qualify as a magician you must make magic; conversely, anyone who makes magic is, at least for the moment, a magician. There are part-time magicians who revert immediately to their status of layman as soon as the rite is accomplished. As for representations, they have no life outside ritual. Most of them offer little of theoretical interest to the magician and he rarely formulates them. They have solely a practical interest, and as far as magic is concerned they are expressed almost entirely through actions. The people who first reduced them to systems were philosophers, not magicians. It was esoteric philosophy which promulgated a theory of magical representation. Magic itself did not even attempt to codify its demonology. In Christian Europe, as well as in India, it was religion which classified demons. Outside ritual, demons exist only in fairy tales and church dogma. In magic, therefore, we have no pure representations

and magical mythology is embryonic and thin. While in religion ritual and its like on the one hand, and myths and dogmas on the other, have real autonomy, the constituents of magic are by their very nature inseparable.

Magic is a living mass, formless and inorganic, and its vital parts have neither a fixed position nor a fixed function. They merge confusedly together. The very important distinction between representation and rite sometimes disappears altogether until we are left with the mere utterance of a representation which thereby becomes the rite: the *venenum veneno vincitur* is an incantation. The spirits which the sorcerer possesses or which possess the sorcerer may become confused with his soul or his magical powers. Spirits and sorcerers sometimes have the same name. The energy or force behind the rite—that of the spirit and the magician—is usually one and the same thing. The normal condition of magic is one involving an almost total confusion of powers and roles. As a result, one of its constituent features may disappear without the nature of the whole changing. There are magical rites which fail to correspond to any conscious idea. The action of spell-binding is a case in point, as well as many imprecations. Conversely, there are cases where representations absorb the ritual, as in genealogical charms, where the utterance of names and causes constitutes the rite. In sum, the functions of magic are not specialized. Magical life is not compartmentalized like religion. It has not led to the growth of any autonomous institutions like sacrifice and priesthood. And, since magical facts cannot be divided up into categories, we have been forced to think in terms of abstract elements. Magic is everywhere in a diffuse state. In each case we are confronted with a whole, which, as we have pointed out, is more than the sum of its parts. In this way we have shown that magic as a whole has an objective reality—that it is *some* thing. But what kind of thing is it?

We have already gone beyond the bound of our provisional definition by establishing that the diverse elements of magic are created and qualified by the collectivity. This is our second, noteworthy advance. The magician often qualifies professionally through being a member of an association of magicians. In the final count, however, he always receives this quality from society itself. His actions are ritualistic, repeated according to the dictates of tradition. As for representations, some are borrowed from other spheres of social life: the idea of spirit beings, for example. Further research will

be required, involving religion directly, if we are to find out whether this idea is the result of individual experience or not. Other representations are not derived from the observations or reflections of individuals, nor does their application allow any individual initiative, since they are remedies and formulas which are imposed by tradition and which are used quite uncritically.

While elements of a magical system are collective in nature, can the same be said for the whole? In other words, is there some basic aspect of magic which is not the object of representations or the fruit of collective activities? Is it not, in fact, absurd or even contradictory to suppose that magic could ever be, in essence, a collective phenomenon, when, in order to compare it with religion, we have chosen, from among all its characteristics, those which set it apart from the regular life of society? We have seen that it is practised by individuals, that it is mysterious, isolated, furtive, scattered and broken up, and, finally, that it is arbitrary and voluntary in nature. Magic is as anti-social as it can be, if by 'social' we primarily imply obligation and coercion. Is it social in the sense of being, like a crime, secret, illegitimate and forbidden? This is not quite true, at least not exclusively so, since magic is not exactly the reverse side of religion, in the way that crime is the reverse side of the law. It must be social in the manner of a special function of society. But in what way should we think of it? How are we to conceive the idea of a collective phenomenon, where individuals would remain so perfectly independent of each other?

There are two types of special functions in society which we have already mentioned in relation to magic. They are science and technology on the one hand, and religion on the other. Is magic a kind of universal art or possibly a class of phenomena analogous to religion? In art or science the principles and methods of action are elaborated collectively and transmitted by tradition. It is for these reasons that science and the arts can be called collective phenomena. Moreover, both art and science satisfy common needs. But, given these facts, each individual is able to act on his own. Using his own common sense, he goes from one element to the next and thence to their application. He is free: he may even start again at the beginning, adapting or rectifying, according to his technique or skill, at any stage, all at his own risk. Nothing can take away his control. Now, if magic were of the same order as science or technology, the difficulties we previously observed would no longer exist, since

science and technology are not collective in every single essential aspect, and, while they may have social functions and society is their beneficiary and their vehicle, their sole promoters are individuals. But it is difficult to assimilate to magic the sciences or arts, since its manifestations can be described without once encountering similar creative or critical faculties among its individual practitioners.

It only remains now to compare magic with religion; and here we are faced with formidable difficulties. We still uphold, in fact, that religion in all its aspects is essentially a collective phenomenon. Everything is done by the group or under pressure from the group. Beliefs and practices, by their very nature, are obligatory. In analysing a rite which we took as a type—that is, sacrifice—we established that society was present and immanent everywhere; that society itself was the real actor in the ceremonial drama. We even went so far as to maintain that the sacred objects of sacrifice were social things, *par excellence*. Religious life, like sacrifice, permits no individual initiative, and invention is admitted only under the form of revelation. The individual feels constantly subordinate to forces which are outside his power—forces which incite him to action. If we are able to demonstrate that within the field of magic there are similar powers to those existing in religion, we shall have shown that magic has the same collective character as religion. All that will then remain to be done will be to show how these collective forces are produced—in face of the isolation which magicians insist on—and we shall thereby conclude that these individuals have merely appropriated to themselves the collective forces of society.