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MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

MOSES AND

MONOTHEISM

SIGMUND FREUD

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

KATHERINE JONES

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AND THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

PARTS I and II of this book were published in German in Imago in 1937; Part III has not previously appeared in print.

I am indebted to Mr.

James Strachey and Mr.

Wilfred Trotter for

kindly reading through this

translation and for

making a number of valuable

suggestions. I have also had the advantage of

consulting the author on some doubtful points.

K.J:

,

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PART I

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN

Part I

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN

To deny a people the man whom it praises as
the

greatest of its sons is not a deed to be under-
taken

light-heartedly especially by one belong-

ing to that people. NO consideration, however,

will move me to set aside truth in favour of supposed national interests. Moreover, the elucidation of the mere facts of the problem may be expected to deepen our insight into the situation with which they are concerned.

The man Moses, the liberator of his people, who gave them their religion and their laws, belonged to an age so remote that the preliminary question arises whether he was an historical person or a legendary figure. If he lived, his time was the thirteenth or fourteenth century B.C.; we have no word of him but from the Holy Books and the written traditions of the Jews. Although the decision lacks final historical certainty, the great majority of historians have expressed the opinion that Moses did live and that the exodus from Egypt, led by him, did in fact take place.

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It has been maintained with good reason that the later history of Israel could not be understood if this were not admitted. Science to-day has become much more cautious and deals much more leniently with tradition than it did in the early days of historical investigation.

What first attracts our interest in the person of Moses is his name, which is written Mosche in Hebrew. One may well ask: Where does it come from? What does it mean? As is well known, the story in Exodus, Chapter ii, already answers this question. There we learn that the Egyptian princess who saved the babe from the waters of the Nile gave him his name, adding the etymological explanation: because I drew him out of the water. But this explanation is obviously inadequate. "The biblical interpretation of the

name

,

He that was drawn out of the water

5 "

thus an author of the
Judisches Lexikon

1

"is folk

etymology; the active Hebrew form itself of the
name (Mosche can at best mean only

,

the

drawer out

5

) cannot be reconciled with this
solution." This

argument can be supported by

two further reflections : first, that it is nonsensical
to credit an

Egyptian princess with a knowledge

of Hebrew

etymology, and, secondly, that the

water from which the child was drawn was most

probably not the water of the Nile.

1

Judisches Lexikon, founded by Herlitz und Kirschner, Bd. IV,
1930, Jiidischer Verlag, Berlin.

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN

13

On the other hand the suggestion has long been
made and by many different people that the name
Moses derives from the Egyptian
vocabulary.

Instead of

citing all the authors who have voiced

this

opinion I shall quote a passage from a recent

work

by Breasted,

1

an author whose

History of

Egypt is regarded as authoritative. "It is

important to notice that his name, Moses, was

Egyptian. It is simply the Egyptian word

,

mose

,

meaning

*

child/ and is an abridgement of a

fuller form of such names as

,

Amen -mose

,

meaning

c

Amon-a-child

5

or

,

Ptah-mose,

5

mean-

ing

c

Ptah -a -child,

5

these forms themselves

being

likewise abbreviations for the

complete form

*

Amon- (has-given) -a child

5

or Ptah

-(has -given) -

a -child.

5

The abbreviation

,

child

5

early became

a convenient

rapid form for the cumbrous full

name, and the name Mose,

c

child,

5

is not un-

common on the Egyptian monuments. The father

of Moses without doubt

prefixed to his son

5

s name

that of an

Egyptian god like Amon or Ptah, and

this divine name was

gradually lost in current

usage, till the boy was called

,

Mose.

5

(The final

s is an addition drawn from the Greek translation

of the Old Testament. It is not in the Hebrew,

which has

,

mosheh

5

).

55

I have

given this
passage literally and am by no means prepared
to share the

responsibility for its details. I am

a little

surprised, however, that Breasted in

1

The Dawn of Conscience, London, 1934, p. 350.

14 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

citing related names should have passed over the
analogous theophorous names in the list of
Egyptian kings, such as Ah-mose, Thut-mose
(Thothmes) and Ra-mose (Ramses).

It

might have been expected that one of the
many authors who recognized Moses to be an
Egyptian name would have drawn the con-
clusion, or at least considered the possibility,
that the bearer of an

Egyptian name was himself

an

Egyptian. In modern times we have no
misgiving in drawing such conclusions, although
to-day a person bears two names, not one, and
although a change of name or assimilation of it
in new conditions cannot be ruled out. So we
are not at all

surprised to find that the poet

Chamisso was of French extraction,

Napoleon

Buonaparte on the other hand of Italian, and
that

Benjamin Disraeli was an Italian Jew as

his name would lead us to

expect. And such an

inference from the name to the race should be
more reliable and indeed conclusive in respect
of

early and primitive times. Nevertheless to the
best of

my knowledge no historian has drawn this
conclusion in the case of Moses, not even one of
those who, like

Breasted, are ready to suppose

that Moses " was

cognizant of all the wisdom of

the

Egyptians."

1

What hindered them from doing so can only

be guessed at.

Perhaps the awe of Biblical

1

Loc. cit.

9 p. 334.

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN

15

tradition was

insuperable. Perhaps it seemed

monstrous to imagine that the man Moses could have been

anything other than a Hebrew. In

any event, what happened was that the recognition of the name

being Egyptian was not a factor

in

judging the origin of the man Moses, and that nothing further was deduced from it. If the

question of the nationality of this great man is considered

important, then any new material for

answering it must be welcome.

This is what

my little essay attempts. It may

claim a

place in Imago

1

because the contribution

it

brings is an application of psycho-analysis.

The considerations thus reached will impress only that

minority of readers familiar with analytical

reasoning and able to appreciate its conclusions.

To them I hope it will appear of significance.

In

1909 Otto Rank, then still under my influ-

ence, published at my suggestion a book entitled

:

Der

Mythus von der Geburt des Helden.

2

It deals with

the fact " that almost all

important civilized

peoples have early on woven myths around and

glorified in poetry their heroes, mythical kings

and

princes, founders of religions, of dynasties,

empires and cities in short their national heroes.

Especially the history of their birth and of their

early years is furnished with phantastic traits;

1

See

Glossary.

2

Fünftes Heft der

Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde, Fr.

Deuticke, Wien. It is far from my mind to depreciate the value of Rank's

original contributions to this work.

1 6 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

the

amazing similarity, nay, literal identity, of those tales, even if

they refer to different, COM-

pletely independent peoples, sometimes geo-

graphically far removed from one another, is well

known and has struck many an investigator.

55

Following Rank we reconstruct on the lines of

Galton's

technique an "average myth

55

that

makes prominent the essential features of all these

tales, and we then get this formula.

"

The hero is the son of parents of the highest

station, most often the son of a king.

"

His

conception is impeded by difficulties,

such as abstinence or

temporary sterility; or else

his

parents practise intercourse in secret because

of

prohibitions or other external obstacles. During

his mothers

pregnancy or earlier an oracle or a

dream warns the father of the child

5

s birth as

containing grave danger for his safety.

"

In

consequence the father (or a person

representing him) gives orders for the new-born

babe to be killed or

exposed to extreme danger;

in most cases the babe is

placed in a casket and

delivered to the waves.

"

The child is then saved by animals or poor

people, such as shepherds, and suckled by a

female animal or a woman of humble birth.

"

When full grown he rediscovers his noble parents after many strange adventures, wreaks vengeance on his father and, recognized by his people, attains fame and greatness.

55

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN 1

7

The most remote of the historical personages to whom this myth attaches is Sargon of Agade, the founder of Babylon about 2800 B.C. From the point of view of what interests us here it would perhaps be worth while to reproduce the account ascribed to himself:

"

I am

Sargon, the mighty king, King of Agade. My mother was a Vestal; my father I knew not; while my father's brother dwelt in the mountains. In my town Azupirani it lies on the banks of Euphrates my mother, the Vestal, conceived me. Secretly she bore me. She laid me in a basket of sedge, closed the opening with pitch and lowered me into the river. The stream did not drown me, but carried me to Akki, the drawer of water. Akki, the drawer of water, in the goodness of his heart lifted me out of the water. Akki, the drawer of water, as his own son he brought me up. Akki, the drawer of water, made me his gardener. When I was a gardener Istar fell in love with me. I became king and for forty-five years I ruled as king.

5'

The best known names in the series beginning with Sargon of Agade are Moses, Cyrus and Romulus. But besides these Rank has enumerated many other heroes belonging to myth or poetry to whom the same

youthful story attaches either
in its
entirety or in well recognizable parts, such as
(Edipus, Kama, Paris, Telephos, Perseus, Heracles,
Gilgamesh, Amphion, Zethos and others.

B

18 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

The source and the tendency of such myths are
familiar to us
through Rank's work. I need only
refer to his conclusions with a few short hints.

A hero is a man who stands up manfully against
his father and in the end
victoriously overcomes
him. The myth in
question traces this struggle
back to the very dawn of the hero's life,
by having
him born against his father's will and saved in
spite of his father's evil intentions. The exposure
in the basket is
clearly a symbolical representa-
tion of birth

; the basket is the womb, the stream
the water at birth. In innumerable dreams the
relation of the child to the
parents is represented
by drawing or saving from the water. When the
imagination of a people attaches this myth to a
famous
personage it is to indicate that he is
recognized as a hero, that his life has conformed
to the

typical plan. The inner source of the myth
is the so-called "

family romance " of the child,
in which the son reacts to the
change in his inner
relationship to his parents, especially that to his
father. The child's first
years are governed by
grandiose over-estimation of his father; kings
and

queens in dreams and fairy tales always
represent, accordingly, the parents. Later on,
under the influence of
rivalry and real disappoint-
ments, the release from the parents and a critical
attitude towards the father sets in. The two
families of the

myth, the noble as well as the
humble one, are therefore both
images of his OWN

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN 1

9

family as they appear to the child in successive
periods of his life.

It is not too much to
say that these observations
fully explain the similarity as well as the far-
spread occurrence of the myth of the birth of the
hero. It is all the more
interesting to find that
the

myth of Moses

5

birth and
exposure stands
apart; in one essential point it even contradicts
the others.

We start with the two families between which
the

myth has cast the child's fate. We know that
analytic interpretation makes them into one
family, that the distinction is only a temporal
one. In the
typical form of the myth the first
family, into which the child is born, is a noble and
mostly a royal one; the second family, in which
the child
grows up, is a humble and degraded
one, corresponding with the circumstances to
which the

interpretation refers. Only in the
story of (Edipus is this difference obscured. The
babe

exposed by one kingly family is brought up
by another royal pair. It can hardly be an
accident that in this one
example there is in the
myth itself a glimmer of the original identity of
the two families. The social contrast of the two
families

meant, as we know, to stress the heroic
nature of a

great man gives a second function
to our

myth, which becomes especially significant
with historical

personages. It can also be used

to
provide for our hero a patent of nobility to
20 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM
elevate him to a
higher social rank. Thus Cyrus
is for the Medes an alien
conqueror; by way of
the
exposure myth he becomes the grandson of
their
king. A similar trait occurs in the myth of
Romulus : if such a man ever lived he must have
been an unknown adventurer, an
upstart; the
myth makes him a descendant of, and heir to,
the
royal house of Alba Longa.
It is
very different in the case of Moses. Here
the first
family usually so distinguished is
modest
enough. ^He is the child of Jewish
Leyites. But the second family the humble one
in which as a rule heroes are
brought up is
replaced by the Royal house of Egypt; the
princess brings him up as her OWN son. This
divergence from the usual type has struck many
research workers as
strange. E. Meyer and others
after him
supposed the original form of the myth
to have been different. Pharaoh had been warned
by a prophetic dream
1
that his
daughter's son
would become a danger to him and his kingdom.
This is
why he has the child delivered to the
waters of the Nile
shortly after his birth. But the
child is saved
by Jewish people and brought up
as their own. " National motives " in Rank's
terminology
2
had transformed the
myth into the

form now known

by us.

However, further thought tells us that an

¹

Also mentioned in Flavius Josephus's narration.

²

Loc. cit., p. 80, footnote.

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN 21

original Moses myth of this kind, one not diverging from other birth myths, could not have existed. For the legend is either of Egyptian or of

Jewish origin. The first supposition may be excluded. The

Egyptians had no motive to glorify Moses; to them he was not a hero. So the

legend should have originated among the Jewish people; that is to say, it was attached in the usual version to the person of their leader.

But for that

purpose it was entirely unfitted;

what good is a legend to a

people that makes

their hero into an alien ?

The Moses myth as we know it to-day lags sadly behind its secret motives. If Moses is not of

royal lineage our legend cannot make him into a hero ; if he remains a

Jew it has done nothing

to raise his status.

Only one small feature of the

whole myth remains effective : the assurance that

the babe survived in

spite of strong outside forces

to the

contrary. This feature is repeated in the

early history of Jesus, where King Herod assumes

the role of Pharaoh. So we

really have a right

to assume that in a later and rather

clumsy

treatment of the legendary material the

adapter

saw fit to

equip his hero Moses with certain

features

appertaining to the classical exposure

myths characteristic of a hero, and yet unsuited

to Moses
by reason of the special circumstances.
With this unsatisfactory and even uncertain
result our
investigation would have to end,
22 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM
without having contributed
anything to answering
the"
question whether Moses was Egyptian, were
there not another and
perhaps more successful
way of approaching the exposure myth itself.
Let us return to the two families in the
myth.
As we know, on the level of analytic
interpreta-
tion
they are identical. On a mythical level they
are
distinguished as the noble and the humble
family. With an historical person to whom the
myth has become attached there is, however, a
third level, that of
reality. One of the families is
the real one, the one into which the
great man
was really born and in which he was brought
up.
The other is fictitious, invented by the myth in
pursuance of its OWN motives. As a rule the real
family corresponds with the humble one, the
noble
family with the fictitious one. In the case
of Moses
something seemed to be different. And
here the new
point of view may perhaps bring
some illumination. It is that the first family,
the one from which the babe is
exposed to danger,
is in all
comparable cases the fictitious one; the
second
family, however, by which the hero is
adopted and in which he grows up is his real one.
If we have the
courage to accept this statement
as a

general truth to which the Moses legend also
is
subject, then we suddenly see our way clear.
Moses is an
Egyptian probably of noble origin
whom the myth undertakes to transform into a
Jew. And that would be our conclusion! The
MOSES AN EGYPTIAN

23

exposure in the water was in its right place; to
fit the new conclusion the intention had to be
changed, not without violence. From a means of
getting rid of the child it becomes a means of its
salvation.

The divergence of the Moses legend from all
others of its kind
might be traced back to a
special feature in the story of Moses

5

life. Whereas

in all other cases the hero rises above his humble
beginnings as his life progresses, the heroic life
of the man Moses

began by descending from
his eminence to the level of the children of
Israel.

This little investigation was undertaken in the
hope of gaining from it a second, fresh argument
for the
suggestion that Moses was an Egyptian.

We have seen that the first argument, that of his
name, has not been considered decisive.

1

We

have to be
prepared for the new reasoning the
analysis of the exposure myth not faring any
better. The
objection is likely to be that the
circumstances of the
origin and transformation of
legends are too obscure to allow of such a con-
clusion as the
preceding one, and that all efforts
to extract the kernel of historical truth must be

1

Thus E. Meyer in Die Mosessagen und die Leviten, Berliner
Sitzber.

1905: " The name Mose is probably the name Pinchas in
the priest dynasty of Silo . . . without a doubt Egyptian. This
does not prove however that these dynasties were of Egyptian
origin, but it proves that they had relations with Egypt." (p. 651 .)

One may well ask what kind of relations one is to imagine.

24 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

doomed to failure in face of the incoherence and contradictions

clustering around the heroic person

of Moses and the unmistakable

signs of tenden-

tious distortion and stratification accumulated

through many centuries. I myself do not share

this

negative attitude, but I am not in a position

to confute it.

If there was no more

certainty than this to be

attained

why have I brought this enquiry to the

notice of a wider

public? I regret that even my

justification has to restrict itself to hints. If,

however, one is attracted by the two arguments

outlined above, and tries to take

seriously the

conclusion that Moses was a

distinguished

Egyptian, then very interesting and far-reaching

perspectives open out. With the help of certain

assumptions the motives guiding Moses in his

unusual

undertaking can be made intelligible;

in close connection with this the

possible motiva-

tion of numerous characteristics and

peculiarities

of the

legislation and religion he gave the Jewish

people can be perceived. It stimulates ideas of

some moment concerning the

origin of mono-

theistic

religion in general. But such important

considerations cannot be based on

psychological

probabilities alone. Even if one were to accept it

as historical that Moses was

Egyptian, we should

want at least one other fixed

point so as to protect

the

many emerging possibilities from the reproach

of their

being products of imagination and too

MOSES AN EGYPTIAN

25

far removed from reality. An objective proof of the period into which the life of Moses, and with it the exodus from Egypt, fall would perhaps have sufficed. But this has not been forthcoming, and therefore it will be better to suppress any inferences that might follow our view that Moses was an Egyptian.

PART II

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

Part II

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN . . .

IN Part I of this book I have tried to strengthen by a new argument the suggestion that the man Moses, the liberator and law-giver of the Jewish people, was not a Jew, but an Egyptian. That his name derived from the Egyptian vocabulary had long been observed, though not duly appreciated. I added to this consideration the further one that the interpretation of the exposure myth attaching to Moses necessitated the conclusion that he was an Egyptian whom a people needed to make into a Jew. At the end of my essay I said that important and far-reaching conclusions could be drawn from the suggestion that Moses was an Egyptian; but I was not prepared to uphold them publicly, since they were based only on psychological probabilities and lacked objective proof. The more significant the possibilities thus discerned the more cautious is one about

exposing them to the critical attack of
the outside world without
any secure foundation
like an iron monument with feet of
clay. NO

29

30 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

probability, however seductive, can protect us
from error; even if all parts of a problem seem
to fit
together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle,
one has to remember that the probable need not
necessarily be the truth and the truth not always
probable. And, lastly, it is not attractive to be
classed with the scholastics and talmudists who
are satisfied to exercise their
ingenuity uncon-
cerned how far removed their conclusions
may
be from the truth.

Notwithstanding these misgivings, which weigh
as
heavily to-day as they did then, out of the
conflict of

my motives the decision has emerged
to follow

up my first essay by this contribution.

But once again it is only a
part of the whole, and
not the most
important part.

If, then, Moses was an Egyptian, the first gain
from this

suggestion is a new riddle, one difficult
to answer. When a

people of a tribe

1

prepares

for a

great undertaking it is to be expected that
one of them should make himself their leader or
be chosen for this role. But what could have
induced a

distinguished Egyptian perhaps a
prince, priest or high official to place himself at

1

We have no inkling what numbers were concerned in the
Exodus.

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

31

the head of a

throng of culturally inferior immigrants, and to leave the country with them, is not easy to conjecture. The well-known contempt of the Egyptians for foreigners makes such a proceeding especially unlikely. Indeed, I am inclined to think this is why even those historians who recognized the name as Egyptian, and ascribed all the wisdom of Egypt to him, were not willing to entertain the obvious possibility that Moses was an Egyptian.

This first difficulty is followed by a second. We must not forget that Moses was not only the political leader of the Jews settled in Egypt, he was also their law-giver and educator and the man who forced them to adopt a new religion, which is still to-day called Mosaic after him. But can a single person create a new religion so easily? And when someone wishes to influence the religion of another would not the most natural thing be to convert him to his own? The Jewish people in Egypt were certainly not without some kind of religion, and if Moses, who gave them a new religion, was an Egyptian, then the surmise cannot be rejected that this other new religion was the Egyptian one.

This possibility encounters an obstacle: the sharp contrast between the Jewish religion attributed to Moses and the Egyptian one.

The former is a grandiosely rigid monotheism.

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There is only one God, unique, omnipotent, unapproachable. The sight of his countenance cannot be borne; one must not make an image

of him, not even breathe his name. In the Egyptian religion, on the other hand, there is a bewildering mass of deities of differing importance and provenance. Some of them are personifications of great natural powers like heaven and earth, sun and moon. Then we find an abstraction such as Maat (Justice, Truth) or a grotesque creature like the dwarfish Bes. Most of them, however, are local gods from the time when the land was divided into numerous provinces. They have the shapes of animals as if they had not yet overcome their origin from the old totem animals. They are not clearly differentiated, barely distinguished by special functions attributed to some of them. The hymns in praise of these gods tell the same thing about each of them, identify them with one another without any misgivings in a way that would confuse us hopelessly. Names of deities are combined with one another, so that one becomes degraded almost to an epithet of the other. Thus in the best period of the " New Empire " the main god of the city of Thebes is called Amon-Re in which combination the first part signifies the ram-headed city-god, whereas Re is the name of the hawk-headed Sun-God of On. Magic and ceremonial, amulets and formulas, dominated IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

33

the service of these gods, as they did the daily life of the Egyptians. Some of these differences may easily derive

from the contrast in principle between a strict monotheism and an unlimited polytheism. Others are obviously consequences of a difference in intellectual level; one religion is very near to the primitive, the other has soared to the heights of sublime abstraction. Perhaps it is these two characteristics that occasionally give one the impression that the contrast between the Mosaic and the Egyptian religion is one intended and purposely accentuated: for example, when the one religion severely condemns any kind of magic or sorcery which flourishes so abundantly in the other ; or when the insatiable zest of the Egyptian for making images of his gods in clay, stone and metal, to which our museums owe so much, is contrasted with the way in which the making of the image of any living or visionary being is bluntly forbidden. There is yet another difference between the two religions, which the explanations we have attempted do not touch. No other people of antiquity has done so much to deny death, has made such careful provision for an after-life; in accordance with this the death-god Osiris, the ruler of that other world, was the most popular and indisputable of all Egyptian gods. ^The early Jewish religion, on the other hand, had entirely relinquished immortality; the possibility of an existence after death was never mentioned in any place. And this is all the more remarkable since later experience has shown that the belief in a life beyond can very well be reconciled with a monotheistic religion.

We had hoped the suggestion that Moses was an Egyptian would prove enlightening and stimulating in many different respects. But our first deduction from this suggestion that the new

religion he gave the Jews was his own, the Egyptian one has foundered on the difference, nay the striking contrast, between the two religions.

II

A strange fact in the history of the Egyptian religion, which was recognized and appraised relatively late, opens up another point of view.

It is still

possible that the religion Moses gave to his

Jewish people was yet his own, an Egyptian religion though not the Egyptian one.

In the

glorious Eighteenth Dynasty, when

Egypt became for the first time a world power, a

young Pharaoh ascended the throne about

1

375 B.C., who first called himself Amenhotep (IV)

like his father, but later on

changed his name

and not only his name. This king undertook

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

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to force

upon his subjects a new religion, one

contrary to their ancient traditions and to all

their familiar habits. It was a strict

monotheism*,

the first

attempt of its kind in the history of the

world as far as we know and

religious intolerance,

which was foreign to antiquity before this

and for long after, was inevitably born with the

belief in one God. But

Amenhotep's reign lasted

only for seventeen years; very soon after his

death in

1358 the new religion was swept away

and the memory of the heretic king proscribed.

From the ruins of his new capital which he had

built and dedicated to his God, and from the

inscriptions in the rock tombs belonging to it, we

derive the little knowledge we

possess of him.

Everything we can learn about this remarkable,

indeed

unique, person is worthy of the greatest

interest. 1

Everything new must have its roots in what was before. The origin of Egyptian monotheism can be traced back a fair distance with some certainty.

1

In the School of the Priests in the Sun Temple at On (Heliopolis) tendencies had for some time been at work developing the idea of an universal God and stressing His ethical aspects.

Maat, the Goddess of truth, order and justice, was a daughter of the Sun God Re. Already

1

Breasted called him " The first individual in human history."

2

The account I give here follows closely J. H. Breasted's History of Egypt, 1906, and The Dawn of Conscience, 1936, and the corresponding sections in the Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II.

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under Amenhotep III, the father and predecessor of the reformer, the worship of the Sun God was in the ascendant, probably in opposition to the

worship of Amon of Thebes, who had become over

prominent. An ancient name of the Sun-God Aton or Atum was rediscovered, and in this Aton religion the young king found a movement he had no need to create, but one which he could join.

Political conditions in

Egypt had about that time

begun to exert a lasting influence on

Egyptian religion. Through the victorious sword of the

great conqueror Thothmes III Egypt had become a world power. Nubia in the south, Palestine, Syria and a part of Mesopotamia in the north had been added to the Empire. This

imperialism was reflected in religion as Universal-ity and Monotheism. Since Pharaoh's solicitude now extended beyond Egypt to Nubia and Syria, Deity itself had to give up its national limitation and the new God of the Egyptians had to become like Pharaoh the

unique and unlimited sovereign

of the world known to the

Egyptians. Besides,
it was natural that as the frontiers extended
Egypt should become accessible to foreign
influences ; some of the
king's wives were Asiatic
princesses,

1

and
possibly even direct encourage-
ment of monotheism had penetrated from
Syria.

1

Perhaps even Amenhotep's beloved spouse Nofertete.

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

37

Amenhotep never denied his accession to the
Sun Cult of On. In the two hymns to Aton, which
have been preserved to us through the
inscriptions

in the rock tombs and were
probably composed

by him, he praises the sun as the creator and
preserver of all living beings in and outside
Egypt with a fervour such as recurs many
centuries after

only in the psalms in honour of
the

Jewish god Jahve. But he did not stop at this
astonishing anticipation of scientific knowledge
concerning the effect of sunlight. There is no
doubt that he went further: that he
worshipped

the sun not as a material
object, but as a symbol
of a Divine Being whose
energy was manifested
in his
rays.

1

But we do scant justice to the king if we see in
him only the adherent and protector of an Aton
religion which had already existed before him.
His

activity was much more energetic. He added
the

something new that turned into monotheism
the doctrine of an universal
god

: the
quality of
exclusiveness. In one of his
hymns it is stated in

1

Breasted, History of Egypt, p. 360: " But however evident the Heliopolitan origin of the new state religion might be, it was not merely sun-worship; the word Aton was employed in the place of the old word for

god

(neter), and the god is clearly distinguished from the material sun." " It is evident that what the king was deifying was the force by which the Sun made itself felt on earth "

(Dawn of Conscience, p. 279). Erman's opinion of a formula in honour of the god is similar : A. Erman (Die JEgyptische Religion, 1905). " There are . . . words which are meant to express in an abstract form the fact that not the star itself was worshipped, but the Being that manifested itself in it."

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so

many words: " Oh, Thou only God! There

is no other God than Thou.

55

1

And we must not

forget that to appraise the new doctrine it is not enough to know its positive content only; nearly as

important is its negative side, the knowledge of what it repudiates. It would be a mistake, too, to

suppose that the new religion sprang to life ready and fully equipped like Athene out of Zeus

5

forehead.

Everything rather goes to show that

during Amenhotep's reign it was strengthened so as to attain greater clarity, consistency, harshness and intolerance.

Probably this development took

place under the influence of the violent opposition among the priests of Amon that raised its head

against the reforms of the king. In the sixth

year of Amenhotep's reign this enmity had grown to such an extent that the king changed his

name, of which the now proscribed name of the

god Amon was a part. Instead of Amenhotep he called himself Ikhнатon.

2

But not only from
his name did he eliminate that of the hated
God,
but also from all
inscriptions and even where he
found it in his father's name
Amenhotep III.
Soon after his
change of name Ikhnaton¹
Thebes, which was under Amon's rule, and built
a new
capital lower down the river which he

¹

Idem, History of Egypt, p. 374.

²

I follow Breasted's

(American) spelling in this name (the
accepted English spelling is Akhenaten). The king's new name
means approximately the same as his former one : God is satisfied.
Compare our Godfrey and the German Gotthold.

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

39

called Akhetaton
(Horizon of Aton) . Its ruins
are now called Tell-el-Amarna. ¹
The persecution by the king was directed fore-
most against Amon, but not
against him alone.

Everywhere in the Empire the temples were
closed, the services forbidden, and the ecclesias-
tical
property seized. Indeed, the king's zeal
went so far as to cause an
inquiry to be made into
the
inscriptions of old monuments in order to
efface the word " God " whenever it was used
in the
plural.

²

It is not to be wondered at that
these orders
produced a reaction of fanatical
vengeance among the suppressed priests and the
discontented
people, a reaction which was able
to find a free outlet after the
king's death. The
Aton religion had not
appealed to the people;
it had
probably been limited to a small circle

round Ikhnaton's
person. His end is wrapped in
mystery. We learn of a few short-lived, shadowy
successors of his own
family. Already his son-in-
law Tutankhaton was forced to return to Thebes
and to substitute Amon in his name for the god
Aton. Then there followed a
period of anarchy,
until the
general Haremhab succeeded in 1350
in
restoring order. The glorious Eighteenth
Dynasty was extinguished; at the same time their

¹
This is where in
1887 the correspondence of the Egyptian
kings with their friends and vassals in Asia was found, a cor-
respondence which proved so important for our knowledge of
history.

²
Idem, History of Egypt, p. 363.

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conquests in Nubia and Asia were lost. In this
sad interregnum
Egypt's old religions had
been reinstated. The Aton religion was at
an end, Ikhnaton's capital lay destroyed and
plundered, and his memory was scorned as that
of a felon.

It will serve a certain
purpose if we now note
several
negative characteristics of the Aton
religion. In the first place, all myth, magic and
sorcery are excluded from it.

¹
Then there is the way in which the Sun God is
represented: no longer as in earlier times by a
small
pyramid and a falcon, but and this is
almost rational
by a round disc from which
emanate rays terminating in human hands. In
spite of all the love for art in the Amarna period,
not one
personal representation of the Sun God
Aton has been found, and, we may say with
confidence, ever will be found.

²
Finally, there is a complete silence about

the death
god Osiris and the realm of the
dead. Neither
hymns nor inscriptions ON graves

1
Weigall (The Life and Times of Akhnaton, 1923, p. 121) says that
Ikhnaton would not recognize a hell
against the terrors of which
one had to guard by innumerable
magic spells. " Akhnaton flung
all these formulas into the fire.
Djins, bogies, spirits, monsters,
demigods and Osiris himself with all his court, were swept into
the blaze and reduced to ashes."

8
A. Weigall, I.e., p.
103, " Akhnaton did not permit any
graven image to be made of the Aton. The true God, said the
king, had no form; and he held to this opinion throughout his
life."

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41
know anything of what was
perhaps nearest
to the
Egyptian's heart. The contrast with the
popular religion cannot be expressed more
vividly.

1
Ill

We venture now to draw the following con-
clusion: if Moses was an
Egyptian and if he
transmitted to the
Jews his OWN religion then it
was that of Ikhnaton, the Aton religion.

We compared earlier the Jewish religion with
the
religion of the Egyptian people and noted
how different they were from each other. NOW
we shall compare the Jewish with the Aton
religion and should expect to find that they were
originally identical. We know that this is no easy
task. Of the Aton
religion we do not perhaps
know enough, thanks to the revengeful spirit of
the Amon
priests. The Mosaic religion we know
only in its final form as it was fixed by Jewish
priests in the time after the Exile about 800 years
later. If, in
spite of this unpromising material,

we should find some indications fitting in with our supposition then we may indeed value them highly.

¹

Erman, /... , p. 90: " Of Osiris and his realm no more was to be heard." Breasted, Dawn of Conscience, p. 291: "Osiris is completely ignored. He is never mentioned in any record of Ikhnaton or in any of the tombs at Amarna."

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There would be a short way of proving our thesis that the Mosaic religion is nothing else but that of Aton, namely, by a confession of faith, a proclamation. But I am afraid I should be told that such a road is impracticable. The

Jewish creed, as is well known, says: " Schema Jisroel Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echod." If the similarity of the name of the Egyptian Aton (or Atum) to the Hebrew word Adonai and the Syrian divine name Adonis is not a mere accident, but is the result of a primaeval unity in language and meaning, then one could translate the Jewish formula: Hear, oh Israel, our god Aton (Adonai) is the only God. I am, alas, entirely unqualified to answer this question and have been able to find very little about it in the literature concerned, ¹ but probably we had better not make things so simple. Moreover, we shall have to come back to the problems of the divine name.

The points of similarity as well as those of difference in the two religions are easily discerned, but do not enlighten us much. Both are forms of a strict monotheism, and we shall be inclined to reduce to this basic character what is similar in both of them.

'Jewish monotheism is in some

¹

Only a few passages in Weigall, I.e., pp. 12, 19: " The god Atum, who described RE as the setting sun, was perhaps of the same origin as Aton, generally venerated in Northern Syria. A foreign Queen, as well as her suite, might therefore have been attracted to

Heliopolis rather than to Thebes."

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points even more uncompromising than the Egyptian, for example, when it forbids all visual representation of its God. The most essential difference apart from the name of their God is that the Jewish religion entirely relinquishes the worship of the sun, to which the Egyptian one still adhered. When comparing the Jewish with the Egyptian folk religion we received the impression that, besides the contrast in principle, there was in the difference between the two religions an element of purposive contradiction. This impression appears justified when in our comparison we replace the Jewish religion by that of Aton, which Ikhnaton as we know developed in deliberate antagonism to the popular religion.

We were astonished and rightly so that the Jewish religion did not speak of anything beyond the grave, for such a doctrine is reconcilable with the strictest monotheism. This astonishment disappears if we go back from the Jewish religion to the Aton religion and surmise that this feature was taken over from the latter, since for Ikhnaton it was a necessity in fighting the popular religion where the death god Osiris played perhaps a greater part than any god of the upper regions. The agreement of the Jewish religion with that of Aton in this important point is the first strong argument in favour of our thesis. We shall see that it is not the only one.

Moses gave the Jews not only a new religion;

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it is equally certain that he introduced the custom of circumcision. This has a decisive importance for our

problem and it has hardly ever been weighed. The Biblical account, it is true, often contradicts it. On the one hand, it dates the custom back to the time of the patriarchs as a sign of the covenant concluded between God and Abraham. On the other hand, the text mentions in a specially obscure passage that God was wroth with Moses because he had neglected this holy usage and proposed to slay him as a punishment; Moses' wife, a Midianite, saved her husband from the wrath of God by speedily performing the operation. These are distortions, however, which should not lead us astray; we shall explore their motives presently. The fact remains that the question concerning the origin of circumcision has only one answer: it comes from Egypt. Herodotus, " the Father of History,"⁵⁵ tells us that the custom of circumcision had long been practised in Egypt, and his statement has been confirmed by the examination of mummies and even by drawings on the walls of graves. No other people of the Eastern Mediterranean has as far as we know followed this custom; we can assume with certainty that the Semites, Babylonians and Sumerians were not circumcised. Biblical history itself says as much of the inhabitants of Canaan; it is presupposed in the story of the adventure between Jacob⁵ daughter and

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

the Prince of Shechem. ¹ The possibility that the Jews in Egypt adopted the usage of circumcision in

any other way than in connection with the religion Moses gave them may be rejected as quite untenable. NOW let us bear in mind that circumcision was practised in Egypt by the people as a general custom, and let us adopt for the moment the usual assumption that Moses was

a Jew who wanted to free his compatriots from the service of an Egyptian overlord, and lead them out of the country to develop an independent and self-confident existence a feat he actually achieved. What sense could there be in his forcing upon them at the same time a burdensome custom which, so to speak, made them into Egyptians and was bound to keep awake their memory of Egypt, whereas his intention could only have had the opposite aim, namely, that his people should become strangers to the country of bondage and overcome the longing for the

" fleshpots of Egypt " ? No, the fact WE started

¹ When I use Biblical tradition here in such an autocratic and arbitrary way, draw on it for confirmation whenever it is convenient and dismiss its evidence without scruple when it contradicts

my conclusions, I know full well that I am exposing myself to severe criticism concerning my method and that I weaken the force of my proofs. But this is the only way in which to treat material whose trustworthiness as we know for certain was seriously damaged by the influence of distorting tendencies. Some justification will be forthcoming later, it is hoped, when we have unearthed those secret motives. Certainty is not to be gained in any case, and, moreover, we may say that all other authors have acted likewise.

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from and the suggestion WE added to it are so incompatible with each other that WE venture to draw the following conclusion: If Moses gave the

Jews not only a new religion, but also the

law of circumcision, he was no Jew but an Egyptian, and then the Mosaic religion was probably an Egyptian one, namely because of its contrast to the popular religion that of Aton with which the Jewish one shows agreement in some remarkable points.

AS I remarked earlier, my hypothesis that Moses was not a Jew but an Egyptian creates a new enigma. What he did easily understandable if he were a Jew becomes unintelligible in an Egyptian. But if we place Moses in Ikhнатon's period and associate him with that Pharaoh, then the enigma is resolved and a possible motive presents itself, answering all our questions. Let us assume that Moses was a noble and distinguished man: perhaps indeed a member of the royal house, as the myth has it. He must have been conscious of his great abilities, ambitious and energetic; perhaps he saw himself in a dim future as the leader of his people, the governor of the Empire. In close contact with Pharaoh he was a convinced adherent of the new religion, whose basic principles he fully understood and had made his own. With the king's death and the subsequent reaction he saw all his hopes and prospects destroyed. If he was not to recant the

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convictions so dear to him then Egypt had no more to give him; he had lost his native country. In this hour of need he found an unusual solution. The dreamer Ikhнатon had estranged himself from his people, had let his world empire crumble.

Moses

5

active nature conceived the
plan of found-
ing a new empire, of finding a new people, to
whom he could give the religion that Egypt
disdained. It was, as we
perceive, an heroic
attempt to struggle against his fate, to find com-
pensation in two directions for the losses he had
suffered
through Ikhnaton's catastrophe. Perhaps
he was at the time
governor of that border
province (Gosen) in which perhaps already in
"
the
Hyksos period " certain Semitic tribes had
settled. These he chose to be his new
people.

An historic decision. 1

He established relations with them, placed
himself at their head and directed the Exodus
"

by strength of hand." In full contradistinction
to the Biblical tradition we

may suppose this

Exodus to have

passed off peacefully and without

pursuit. The authority of Moses made it possible,

1

If Moses were a
high official we can understand his being
fitted for the rôle of leader he assumed with the
Jews. If he were

a

priest the thought of giving his people a new religion must have
been near to his heart. In both cases he would have continued his

former profession. A prince of royal

lineage might easily have

been both : governor and priest. In the

report of Flavius Josephus

(Antiqu. jud.) , who accepts the exposure myth, but seems to know
other traditions than the Biblical one, Moses appears as an
Egyptian field -marshal in a victorious campaign in Ethiopia.

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and there was then no central

power that could

have

prevented it.

According to our construction the Exodus from
Egypt would have taken place between 1358 and
1350, that is to say, after the death of Ikhnaton

and before the restitution of the authority of the state
by Haremhab.

1

The goal of the wandering could only be Canaan. After the supremacy of Egypt had collapsed, hordes of war-like Arameans had flooded the country, conquering and pillaging, and thus had shown where a capable people could seize new land. We know these warriors from the letters which were found in 1887 in the archives of the ruined city of Amarna. There they are called Habiru, and the name was passed on no one knows how to the Jewish invaders, Hebrews, who came later and could not have been referred to in the letters of Amarna. The tribes who were the most nearly related to the Jews now leaving Egypt also lived south of Palestine in Canaan.

The motivation that we have surmised for the Exodus as a whole covers also the institution of circumcision. We know in what manner human beings both peoples and individuals react to this ancient custom, scarcely any longer understood. Those who do not practise it regard it as

1

This would be about a century earlier than most historians assume, who place it in the Nineteenth Dynasty under Merneptah : or perhaps a little less, for official records seem to include the interregnum in Haremhab's reign.

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very odd and find it rather abhorrent; but those who have adopted circumcision are proud of the custom. They feel superior, ennobled, and look down with contempt at the others, who appear to them unclean. Even to-day the Turk hurls abuse at the Christian by calling him "an uncircumcised dog.

55

It is credible that

Moses, who

as an

Egyptian was himself circumcised, shared

this attitude. The
Jews with whom he left his
native
country were to be a better substitute for
the
Egyptians he left behind. In no circum-
stances must
they be inferior to them. He wished
to make of them a " Holy
People
55
so it is
explicitly stated in the Biblical text and as a
sign of their dedication he introduced the custom
that made them at least the
equals of the Egypt-
ians. It would, further, be welcome to him if
such a custom isolated them and
prevented them
from mingling with the other foreign
peoples they
would meet during their wanderings, just as the
Egyptians had kept apart from all foreigners.

1

1
Herodotus, who visited Egypt about 450 B.C., gives in the
account of his travels a characteristic of the Egyptians which
shows an astounding similarity with well-known features of the
later Jewish people. " They are in all
respects much more pious
than other peoples, they are also distinguished from them
by many
of their customs, such as circumcision, which for reasons of
cleanliness they introduced before others; further, by their
horror of swine, doubtless connected with the fact that Set wounded
Horus when in the guise of a black hog; and, lastly, most of all by
their reverence for cows, which
they would never eat or sacrifice
because they would thereby offend the COW -horned Isis. There-
fore no

Egyptian man or woman would ever kiss a Greek or use

D

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Jewish tradition, however, behaved later on as
if it were
oppressed by the sequence of ideas we
have
just developed. To admit that circumcision
was an
Egyptian custom introduced by Moses
would be almost to recognize that the religion
handed down to them from Moses was also
Egyptian. But the Jews had good reasons to
deny this fact; therefore the truth about circum-

cision had also to be contradicted.

IV

At this point I expect to hear the reproach that I have built

up my construction which places Moses the Egyptian in Ikhнатon's era, derives from the

political state the country was in at that time his decision to protect the Jewish people, and recognizes as the Aton religion the religion he

gave to his people or with which he burdened them, which had just been abolished in Egypt itself that I have built

up this edifice of his

knife, his spit or his cooking vessel, or eat of the meat of an (otherwise) clean ox that had been cut with a Greek knife.

. . .

In haughty narrowness they looked down on the other peoples who were unclean and not so near to the gods as they were." (After Erman, *The Egyptian Religion*, p. 181, etc.)

Naturally we do not forget here the parallels from the life of India. Whatever

gave, by the way, the Jewish poet Heine in the nineteenth century the idea of complaining about his religion as

"

the plague trailing along from the valley of the Nile, the sickly beliefs of the Ancient Egyptians " ?

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conjectures with too great a certainty for which no adequate grounds are to be found in the material itself. I think this

reproach would be unjustified.

I have

already stressed the element of doubt in the introduction, put a query in front of the brackets, so to speak, and can therefore save myself the trouble of repeating it at each point inside the brackets.

Some of my own critical observations may continue the discussion. The kernel of our thesis, the dependence of Jewish monotheism on the monotheistic

episode in Egyptian history, has
been
guessed and hinted at by several workers.
I need not cite them
here, since none of them has
been able to say by what means this influence
was exerted. Even if, as I suggest, it is bound
up
with the individuality of Moses, we shall have
to
weigh other possibilities than the one here
preferred. It is not to be supposed that the over-
throw of the official Aton religion completely
put an end to the monotheistic trend in Egypt.
The School of Priests at On, from which it
emanated, survived the catastrophe and might
have drawn whole generations after Ikhnaton
into the orbit of their
religious thought. That
Moses
performed the deed is quite thinkable,
therefore, even if he did not live in Ikhnaton's
time and had not come under his
personal
influence, even if he were simply an adherent or
merely a member of the school of On. This
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conjecture would postpone the date of the
Exodus and bring it nearer to the time
usually
assumed, the thirteenth century; otherwise it
has
nothing to recommend it. We should have
to
relinquish the insight we had gained into
Moses
5
motives and to
dispense with the idea of
the Exodus
being facilitated by the anarchy
prevailing in Egypt. The kings of the Nineteenth
Dynasty following Ikhnaton ruled the country
with a
strong hand. All conditions, internal and
external, favouring the Exodus coincide only in
the
period immediately after the death of the
heretic
king.
The Jews

possess a rich extra-biblical literature where the myths and superstitions are to be found which in the course of centuries were woven around the gigantic figure of their first leader and the founder of their religion and which have both hallowed and obscured that figure. Some fragments of sound tradition which had found no place in the Pentateuch may lie scattered in that material. One of these legends describes in an attractive fashion how the ambition of the man Moses had already displayed itself in his childhood. When Pharaoh took him into his arms and playfully tossed him high, the little three-year-old snatched the crown from Pharaoh's head and placed it on his own. The king was startled at this omen and took care to consult his sages.

1

1

The same anecdote, slightly altered, is to be found in Josephus.

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53

Then, again, we are told of victorious battles he fought as an Egyptian captain in Ethiopia and, in the same connection, that he fled the country because he had reason to fear the envy of a faction at court or even the envy of Pharaoh himself. The Biblical story itself lends Moses certain features in which one is inclined to believe. It describes him as choleric, hot-tempered as when in his indignation he kills the brutal overseer who ill-treated a Jewish workman, or when in his resentment at the defection of his people he smashes the tables he has been given on Mount

Sinai. Indeed, God himself
punished him at long
last for a deed of
impatience we are not told
what it was. Since such a trait does not lend
itself to
glorification it may very well be historical
truth. Nor can we
reject even the possibility that
many character traits the Jews incorporated into
their
early conception of God when they made
him jealous, stern and implacable, were taken
au
fond from their memory of Moses, for in truth
it was not an invisible
god, but the man Moses,
who had led them out of Egypt.
Another trait
imputed to him deserves our
special interest. Moses was said to have been
"
slow of
speech " that is to say, he must have
had a speech impediment or inhibition so that
he had to call on Aaron (who is called his brother)
for assistance in his
supposed discussions with
Pharaoh. This again may be historical truth and
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would serve as a welcome addition to the
endeavour to make the picture of this great man
live. It
may, however, have another and more
important significance. The report may, in a
slightly distorted way, recall the fact that Moses
spoke another language and was not able to
communicate with his Semitic
Neo-Egyptians
without the
help of an interpreter at least not
at the
beginning of their intercourse. Thus a
fresh confirmation of the thesis: Moses was an
Egyptian.
It looks NOW as if the train of
thought has come
to an end, at least for the time
being. From the

surmise that Moses was an Egyptian, be it proven or not, nothing more can be deduced for the moment. No historian can regard the Biblical account of Moses and the Exodus as other than a pious myth, which transformed a remote tradition in the interest of its own tendencies. How the tradition ran originally we do not know.

What the distorting tendencies were we should like to guess, but we are kept in the dark by our ignorance of the historical events. That our reconstruction leaves no room for so many spectacular features of the Biblical text the ten plagues, the passage through the Red sea, the solemn law-giving on Mount Sinai will not lead us astray. But we cannot remain indifferent on finding ourselves in opposition to the sober historical researches of our time.

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN
55

These modern historians, well represented by E. Meyer/ follow the Biblical text in one decisive point. They concur that the Jewish tribes, who later on become the people of Israel, at a certain time accepted a new religion. But this event did not take place in Egypt nor at the foot of a mount in the Sinai peninsula, but in a place called Meribat-Qades, an oasis distinguished by its abundance of springs and wells in the country south of Palestine between the eastern end of the Sinai peninsula and the western end of Arabia. There they took over the worship of a god Jahve, probably from the Arabic tribe of Midianites who

lived
near-by. Presumably other neighbouring
tribes were also followers of that
god.

Jahve was certainly a volcano god. As we know,
however, Egypt has no volcanoes and the
mountains of the Sinai
peninsula have never
been volcanic; on the other hand, volcanoes
which may have been active up to a late period
are found
along the western border of Arabia.

One of these mountains must have been the
Sinai -Horeb which was believed to be Jahve
J
S
abode.

2
In
spite of all the transformations the
Biblical text has suffered, we are able to re-
construct according to E. Meyer the
orig-
inal character of the
god: he is an uncanny,

1
E.
Meyer: Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme 1906.

2
The Biblical text retains certain passages telling us that Jahve
descended from Sinai to Meribat-Qades.

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bloodthirsty demon who walks by night and shuns
the
light of day.

1
The mediator between the people and the god
at this birth of a new
religion was called Moses.

He was the son-in-law of the Midianite priest
Jethro and was tending his flocks when he
received the divine summons. Jethro visited him
in
Qades to give him instructions.

E.
Meyer says, it is true, that he never doubted
there was a kernel of historical truth in the
story
of the
bondage in Egypt and the catastrophe of
the
Egyptians,

2
but
evidently he does not know

where that recognized fact
belongs and what to
do with it. Only the custom of circumcision is he
willing to derive from the Egyptians. He enriches
our earlier discussion
by two important sugges-
tions.

First, that Joshua asked the people to
accept circumcision " to roll away the reproach
of
Egypt " ; and, secondly, by the quotation from
Herodotus that the Phoenicians
(which probably
means the
Jews) and the Syrians in Palestine
themselves admitted
having learned the custom
of circumcision from the
Egyptians.

8

But an
Egyptian Moses does not appeal to him. " The
Moses we know was the ancestor of the
priests of
Qades ; he stood therefore in relation to the cult,
was a
figure of the genealogical myth and not an
historical
person. So not one of those who has
treated him as an historical
person except those

1

L.c., pp. 38, 58. 2 L.c., p. 49. 8 L.c., p. 449.

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN

57

who accept tradition wholesale as historical truth
has succeeded in filling this empty
shape with
any content, in describing him as a concrete
personality; they have had nothing to tell us
about what he achieved or about his mission in
history.

1

On the other hand, Meyer never wearies of
telling us about Moses' relation to Qades and
Midian. " The figure of Moses so
closely bound
up with Midian and the holy places in the
desert.

55

* "

This

figure of Moses is inextricably associated with Qades (Massa and Meriba) ; the relationship with a Midianite priest by marriage completes the picture. The connection with the Exodus, on the other hand, and the story of his youth in its entirety, are absolutely secondary and are merely the consequence of Moses having to fit into a connected, continuous story.

558

He

also observes that all the characteristics contained in the story of Moses

5

youth were later omitted.

"

Moses in Midian is no longer an Egyptian and Pharaoh

5

s

grandson, but a shepherd to whom Jahve reveals himself. In the story of the ten plagues his former relationships are no longer mentioned, although they could have been used very effectively, and the order to kill the Israelite first-born is entirely forgotten. In the Exodus and the perishing of the Egyptians Moses has no part at all; he is not even mentioned. The

1

L.c., p. 451. 2 L.c. p. 49. 3 L.c. y p. 72.

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characteristics of a hero, which the childhood story presupposes, are entirely absent in the later Moses ; he is only the man of God, a performer of miracles, provided with supernatural powers by Jahve."

*

We cannot escape the impression that this Moses of Qades and Midian, to whom tradition could even ascribe the erection of a brazen serpent as a healing god, is quite a different person from the august Egyptian we had deduced, who disclosed to his people a religion in which all magic and sorcery were most strictly abhorred. Our

Egyptian Moses differs perhaps no less from the
Midian Moses than the universal god Aton
differed from the demon
Jahve on his divine
mountain. And if we concede
any measure of
truth to the information furnished
by modern
historians, then we have to admit that the thread
we wished to draw from the surmise that Moses
was an Egyptian has broken off for the second
time; this time, so it seems, without any hope
of its
being tied again.

V

A way unexpectedly presents itself, however,
out of this
difficulty too. The efforts to recognize
in Moses a
figure transcending the priest of
!
L.c., p. 47.

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Qades, and confirming the renown with which
tradition had invested him, were continued after
E.

Meyer by Gressmann and others. In 1922

E. Sellin made a
discovery of decisive importance.

1

He found in the book of the prophet Hosea
second half of the
eighth century unmistakable
traces of a tradition to the effect that the founder
of their
religion (Moses) met a violent end in a
rebellion of his stubborn and
refractory people.

The religion he had instituted was at the same
time abandoned. This tradition is not restricted
to Hosea : it recurs in the
writings of most of the
later
prophets; indeed, according to Sellin, it
was the basis of all the later
expectations of the
Messiah. Towards the end of the
Babylonian
exile the

hope arose among the Jewish people
that the man
they had so callously murdered
would return from the realm of the dead and lead
his contrite
people and perhaps not only his
people into the land of eternal bliss. The
palpable connections with the destiny of the
Founder of a later religion do not lie in our present
course.

Naturally I am not in a position to decide
whether Sellin has correctly interpreted the
relevant
passages in the prophets. If he is right,
however, we may regard as historically credible
the tradition he
recognized: for such things are

1

E. Sellin, *Moze und seine
Bedeutung fuer die israelitisch-juediscfu
Religionsgeschichte*, 1922.

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not
readily invented there is no tangible motive
for
doing so. And if they have really happened
the wish to
forget them is easily understood. We
need not
accept every detail of the tradition.
Sellin thinks that Shittim in the land east of the
Jordan is indicated as the scene of the violent
deed. We shall see, however, that the choice of
this
locality does not accord with our argument.
Let us
adopt from Sellin the surmise that the
Egyptian Moses was killed by the Jews and the
religion he instituted abandoned. It allows us to
spin our thread further without contradicting the
trustworthy results of historical research. But we
venture to be
independent of the historians in
other
respects and to blaze our own trail. The
Exodus from
Egypt remains our starting-point.
It must have been a considerable number that
left the
country with Moses ; a small crowd would
not have been worth the while of that ambitious

man, with his great schemes. The immigrants had probably been in the country long enough to develop into a numerous people. We shall certainly not go astray, however, if we suppose with the majority of research workers that only a part of those who later became the Jewish people had undergone the fate of bondage in Egypt. In other words, the tribe returning from Egypt combined later in the country between Egypt and Canaan with other related tribes that had been settled there for some time. This union, from

IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN 6 1

which was born the people of Israel, expressed itself in the adoption of a new religion, common to all the tribes, the religion of Jahve; according to E. Meyer, this came about in Qades under the influence of the Midianites. Thereupon the people felt strong enough to undertake the invasion of Canaan. It does not fit in with this course of events that the catastrophe to Moses and his religion should have taken place in the land east of the Jordan it must have happened a long time before the union. It is certain that many very diverse elements contributed to the building up of the Jewish people, but the greatest difference among them must have depended on whether they had experienced the sojourn in Egypt and what followed it, or not. From this point of view we may say that the nation was made up by the union of two constituents, and it accords with this

fact that, after a short period of political unity, it broke asunder into two parts the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. History loves such restorations, in which later fusions are re-dissolved and former separations become once more apparent. The most impressive example a very well-known one was provided by the Reformation, when, after an interval of more than a thousand years, it brought to light again the frontier between the Germania that had been Roman and the part that had always remained independent. With the Jewish people we cannot verify such a faithful reproduction of the former state of affairs. Our knowledge of those times is too uncertain to permit the assumption that the northern Kingdom had absorbed the original settlers, the southern those returning from Egypt; but the later dissolution, in this case also, could not have been unconnected with the earlier union. The former Egyptians were probably fewer than the others, but they proved to be on a higher level culturally. They exercised a more important influence on the later development of the people because they brought with them a tradition the others lacked. Perhaps they brought something else, something more tangible than a tradition. Among the greatest riddles of Jewish prehistoric times is that concerning the antecedents of the Levites. They are said to have been derived from one of the twelve tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi, but no tradition has ever ventured to pronounce on where that tribe originally dwelt or what portion

of the
conquered country of Canaan had been
allotted to it.
They occupied the most important
priestly positions, but yet they were distinguished
from the priests. A Levite is not necessarily a
priest; it is not the name of a caste. Our sup-
position about the person of Moses suggests an
explanation. It is not credible that a great
gentleman like the Egyptian Moses approached
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a

people strange to him without an escort. He
must have brought his retinue with him, his
nearest adherents, his scribes, his servants. These
were the original Levites. Tradition maintains
that Moses was a Levite. This seems a
transparent
distortion of the actual state of affairs: the
Levites were Moses

5

people. This solution is

supported by what I mentioned in my previous
essay: that in later times we find Egyptian
names only among the Levites. 1 We may
suppose

that a fair number of these Moses
people escaped
the fate that overtook him and his
religion.

They increased in the following generations and
fused with the

people among whom they lived,
but

they remained faithful to their master,
honoured his memory and retained the tradition
of his teaching. At the time of the union with
the followers of

Jahve they formed an influential
minority, culturally superior to the rest.

I

suggest and it is only a suggestion so far
that between the downfall of Moses and the
founding of a religion at Qades two generations
were born and vanished, that
perhaps even a

century elapsed. I do not see my way to deter-
mine whether the Neo
-Egyptians as I should

like to call those who returned from
Egypt in
distinction to the other
Jews met with their

1

This
assumption fits in well with what Yahuda says about the
Egyptian influence on early Jewish writings. See A. S. Yahuda,
Die Sprache des Pentateuch in ihren
Beziehungen zum Aegyptischen, 1929.

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blood relations after these had already
accepted
the

Jahve religion or before that had happened.
Perhaps the latter is more likely. It makes no
difference to the final result. What
happened at

Qades was a compromise, in which the part
taken

by the Moses tribe is unmistakable.

Here we may call again on the custom of
circumcision which a kind of " Leitfossil " has

repeatedly rendered us important services.

This custom also became the law in the
Jahve

religion, and since it is inextricably connected
with

Egypt its adoption must signify a con-
cession to the

people of Moses. They or the
Levites

among them would not forgo this sign
of their consecration.

They wanted to save so

much of their old religion, and for that price they
were

willing to recognize the new deity and all
that the Midian

priests had to say about him.

Possibly they managed to obtain still other con-
cessions. We have

already mentioned that Jewish
ritual ordains a certain

economy in the use of the

name of God. Instead of Jahve they had to say
Adonai. It is

tempting to fit this commandment
into our

argument, but that is merely a surmise.

The prohibition upon uttering the name of God is, as is well known, a primaevial taboo. Why exactly it was renewed in the Jewish commandments is not quite clear; it is not out of the question that this happened under the influence of a new motive. There is no reason to suppose

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that the commandment was consistently followed; the word Jahve was freely used in the formation of personal theophorous names, i.e. in combinations such as Jochanan, Jehu, Joshua. Yet there is something peculiar about this name. It is well known that Biblical exegesis recognizes two sources of the Hexateuch.

They are called J and

E because the one uses the holy name of Jahve, the other that of Elohim; Elohim, it is true, not Adonai. But we

may here quote the remark of

one writer: the different names are a distinct sign of originally different gods.

1

We admitted the adherence to the custom of circumcision as evidence that at the founding of

the new

religion at Qades a compromise had taken

place. What it consisted in we learn from both

J and E; the two accounts coincide and must therefore go back to a common source,

either a written source or an oral tradition. The

guiding purpose was to prove the greatness and

power of the new god Jahve. Since the Moses

people attached such great importance to their

experience of the Exodus from Egypt, the deed of

freeing them had to be ascribed to Jahve; it had

to be adorned with features that

proved the

terrific
grandeur of this volcano god, such as, for
example, the pillar of smoke which changed to
one of fire
by night, or the storm that parted the
waters so that the
pursuers were drowned by the

1

Gressmann Mose und Seine ^{^eit^} 1913.

E

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returning floods of water. The Exodus and the
founding of the new religion were thus brought
close

together in time, the long interval between
them being denied. The bestowal of the Ten
Commandments too was said to have taken place,
not at

Qades, but at the foot of the Holy Moun-
tain amidst the

signs of a volcanic eruption. This
description, however, did a serious wrong to the
memory of the man Moses; it was he, and not
the volcano

god, who had freed his people from
Egypt. Some compensation was therefore due to
him, and it was given by transposing Moses to
Qades or to the mount Sinai -Horeb and putting
him in the place of the Midianite priest. We shall
consider later how this solution satisfied another,
irresistibly urgent, tendency. By its means a
balance, so to speak, was established

:

Jahve was
allowed to extend his reach to
Egypt from his
mountain in Midia, while the existence and
activity of Moses were transferred to Qades and
the country east of the
Jordan. This is how he

became one with the person who later established
a

religion, the son-in-law of the Midianite
Jethro, the man to whom he lent his name Moses.

We know nothing personal, however, about this
other Moses he is

entirely obscured by the first,
the

Egyptian Moses except possibly from clues
provided by the contradictions to be found in the

Bible in the characterization of Moses. He is often enough described as masterful, hot-tempered, IF MOSES WAS AN EGYPTIAN
67
even violent, and yet it is also said of him that he was the most patient and sweet-tempered of all men. It is clear that the latter qualities would have been of no use to the Egyptian Moses who planned such great and difficult projects for his people. Perhaps they belonged to the other, the Midianite. I think we are justified in separating the two persons from each other and in assuming that the Egyptian Moses never was in Qades and had never heard the name of Jahve, whereas the Midianite Moses never set foot in Egypt and knew nothing of Aton. In order to make the two people into one, tradition or legend had to bring the Egyptian Moses to Midian ; and we have seen that more than one explanation was given for it.

VI

I am quite prepared to hear anew the reproach that I have put forward my reconstruction of the early history of the tribe of Israel with undue and unjustified certitude. I shall not feel this criticism to be too harsh, since it finds an echo in my own judgement. I know myself that this reconstruction has its weak places, but it also has its strong ones. On the whole the arguments in favour of continuing this work in the same direction prevail. The Biblical record before us contains 68 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM
valuable, nay invaluable, historical evidence. It has, however, been distorted by tendentious

influences and elaborated
by the products of
poetical invention. In our work we have already
been able to divine one of these distorting ten-
dencies. This discovery shall guide us on our
way. It is a hint to uncover other similar distorting
influences. If we find reasons for
recognizing the
distortions
produced by them, then we shall be able
to
bring to light more of the true course of events.
Let us
begin by marking what critical research
work on the Bible has to say about how the
Hexateuch the five Books of Moses and the
Book of Joshua, for they alone are of interest to
us here came to be written.

1
The oldest source
is considered to be
J, the Jahvistic, in the author
of which the most modern research workers think
they can recognize the priest Ebjatar, a con-
temporary of King David.

2
A little later, it is
not known how much later, comes the so-called
Elohistic, belonging to the northern kingdom.
8
After the destruction of this kingdom, in 722 B.C.,
a
Jewish priest combined portions of J and E and
added his own contributions. His compilation
is
designated as JE. In the seventh century
Deuteronomy, the fifth book, was added, it being
alleged that the whole of it had been newly found

1
Encyclopedia Britannica, XI Edition, 1910, Art.: Bible.

2
See Auerbach, Wüste und Gelobtes Land, 1932.

3
Astruc in 1753 was the first to distinguish between Jahvist and
Elohist.

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69
in the
Temple. In the time after the destruction
of the
Temple, in 586 B.C., during the Exile and
after the return, is
placed the re-writing called

the

Priestly Code. The fifth century saw a definitive revision, and since then the work has not been materially altered.

1

The history of King David and his time is most probably the work of one of his contemporaries.

It is real

history, five hundred years before

Herodotus, the "Father of History." One would

begin to understand this achievement if one

assumed, in terms of my hypothesis, Egyptian influence.

2

The suggestion has even been made

that

early Israelites, the scribes of Moses, had a

hand in the invention of the first alphabet. 3 How

far the accounts of former times are based on

earlier sources or on oral tradition, and what

1

It is

historically certain that the Jewish type was definitely fixed as a result of the reforms by Ezra and Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C., therefore after the Exile, during the reign of the friendly Persians. According to our reckoning approximately 900 years had then passed since the appearance of Moses. By these reforms the regulations aiming at the consecration of the chosen people were taken seriously: the separation from the other tribes were put into force by forbidding mixed marriages; the Pentateuch, the real compilation of the law, was codified in its definitive form; the re-writing known as the Priestly Code was finished. It seems certain, however, that the reform did not adopt any new tendencies, but simply took over and consolidated former suggestions.

2

Gf. Yahuda, l.c.

3

If

they were bound by the prohibition against making images

they had even a motive for forsaking the hieroglyphic picture

writing when they adapted their written signs for the expression

of a new

language.

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interval

elapsed between an event and its fixation

by writing, we are naturally unable to know.

The text, however, as we find it to-day tells us

enough about its own history. Two distinct forces,

diametrically opposed to each other, have left

their traces on it. On the one hand, certain

transformations

got to work on it, falsifying the

text in accord with secret tendencies,

maiming
and extending it until it was turned into its
opposite. On the other hand, an indulgent piety
reigned over it, anxious to keep everything as it
stood, indifferent to whether the details fitted
together or nullified one another. Thus almost
everywhere there can be found striking omissions,
disturbing repetitions, palpable contradictions,
signs of things the communication of which was
never intended. The distortion of a text is not
unlike a murder. The difficulty lies not in the
execution of the deed but in the
doing away with
the traces. One could wish to
give the word

"
distortion " the double
meaning to which it
has a
right, although it is no longer used in this
sense. It should mean not
only " to change the
appearance of," but also " to wrench apart,
³⁵
"
to
put in another place.

⁵⁵
That is why in so
many textual distortions we may count on finding
the
suppressed and abnegated material hidden
away somewhere, though in an altered shape and
torn out of its
original connection. Only it is
not
always easy to recognize it.

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The distorting tendencies we want to detect
must have influenced the traditions before
they
were written down. One of them,
perhaps the
strongest of all, we have already discovered. We
said that when the new
god Jahve in Qades was
instituted
something had to be done to glorify
him. It is truer to
say: He had to be established,

made room for; traces of former religions had to be extinguished. This seems to have been done successfully with the religion of the settled tribes; no more was heard of it. With the returning tribes the task was not so easy; they were determined not to be deprived of the Exodus from Egypt, the man Moses and the custom of circumcision. It is true they had been in Egypt, but they had left it again, and from now on every trace of Egyptian influence was to be denied. Moses was disposed of by displacing him to Midian and Qades and making him into one person with the priest who founded the Jahve religion. Circumcision, the most compromising sign of the dependence on Egypt, had to be retained, but, in spite of all the existing evidence, every endeavour was made to divorce this custom from Egypt.

The enigmatic passage in Exodus, written in an almost incomprehensible style, saying that God had been wroth with Moses for neglecting circumcision and that his Midianite wife saved his life by a speedy operation, can be interpreted only as a deliberate contradiction of the significant

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truth. We shall soon come across another invention for the purpose of invalidating a piece of inconvenient evidence.

It is hardly to be described as a new tendency it is only the continuation of the same one when we find an endeavour completely to deny that

Jahve was a new god, one alien to the Jews. For that purpose the myths of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are drawn upon. Jahve maintains that He had been the God of those patriarchs; it is true and He has to admit this Himself

they did not worship Him under
this name. ¹

He does not add under what other name He used
to be
worshipped. Here the opportunity was taken
to deal a decisive blow at the
Egyptian origin of
the custom of circumcision. Jahve was said to have
already demanded it from Abraham, to have
instituted it as
sign of the bond between him and
Abraham's descendants. This, however, was a
particularly clumsy invention. If one wished
to use a
sign to distinguish someone from other
people, one would choose something that the
others did not
possess certainly not something
that millions could show. An Israelite,
finding
himself in
Egypt, would have had to recognize
all

Egyptians as brothers, bound by the same bond,
brothers in
Jahve. The fact that circumcision

¹
The restrictions in the use of the new name do not become any
more comprehensible through this, though much more suspect.

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was native to the
Egyptians could not pos-
sibly have been unknown to the Israelites who
created the text of the Bible. The
passage from
Joshua quoted by E. Meyer freely admits this; but
nevertheless the fact had at all costs to be denied.

We cannot expect religious myths to pay
scrupulous attention to logical connections.
Otherwise the
feeling of the people might have
taken
exception -justifiably so to the behaviour
of a
deity who makes a covenant with his patri-
archs
containing mutual obligations, and then
ignores his human partners for centuries until it
suddenly occurs to him to reveal himself again
to their descendants. still more

astonishing is
the
conception of a god suddenly " choosing " a
people, making it " his " people and himself its
OWN god. I believe it is the only case in the
history of human religions. In other cases the
people and their god belong inseparably together;
they are one from the beginning. Sometimes, it
is
true, WE hear of a people adopting another god,
but never of a god choosing a NEW
people.

Perhaps WE approach an understanding of this
unique happening when we reflect on the con-
nection between Moses and the Jewish
people.

Moses had stooped to the Jews, had made them
his

people; they were his " chosen people/

5

1

1

Jahve was undoubtedly a volcano god. There was no reason
for the inhabitants of Egypt to worship him. I am certainly not
the first to be struck
by the similarity of the name Jahve to the
root of the name of another
god

:

Jupiter, Jovis. The composite

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There was yet another purpose in bringing the
patriarchs into the new Jahve religion. They had
lived in Canaan; their memory was connected
with certain localities in the country. Possibly
they themselves had been Canaanite heroes or
local divinities whom the
immigrating Israelites
had adopted for their early history. By evoking
them one gave proof, so to speak, of having been
born and bred in the country, and denied the
odium that clings to the alien conqueror. It was
name Jochanaan, made up in part from the Hebrew word Jahve
and having a rather similar meaning to that of Godfrey or its
Punic equivalent Hannibal, has become one of the most
popular
names of European Christendom in the forms of Johann, John,
Jean, Juan. When the Italians reproduce it in the shape of
Giovanni and then call one day of the week Giovedi they bring to
light again a similarity which perhaps means nothing or possibly
means very much. Far-reaching possibilities, though very in-
secure ones, open out here. In those dark centuries which
historical research is only beginning to explore, the countries
around the eastern basin of the Mediterranean were apparently
the scene of frequent and violent volcanic eruptions which were

bound to make the deepest impression on the inhabitants. Evans supposes that the final destruction of the palace of Minos at Knossos was also the result of an earthquake. In Crete, as probably everywhere in the ^Sgean world, the great Mother Goddess was then worshipped. The observation that she was unable to guard her house against the attack of a stronger power might have contributed to her having to cede her place to a male deity, whereupon the volcano god had the first right to replace her. Zeus still bears the name of " the Earth -shaker." There is hardly a doubt that in those obscure times mother deities were replaced by male gods (perhaps originally their sons). Specially impressive is the fate of Pallas Athene, who was no doubt the local form of the mother deity ; through the religious revolution she was reduced to a daughter, robbed of her own mother, and eternally debarred from motherhood by the taboo of virginity.

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a clever turn: the god Jahve gave them only what their ancestors had once possessed. In the later contributions to the Biblical text the tendency to avoid mentioning Qades met with success. The site of the founding of the new religion definitely became the divine mountains Sinai-Horeb. The motive is not clearly visible; perhaps they did not want to be reminded of the influence of Midian. But all later distortions, especially those of the Priestly Code, serve another aim. There was no longer any need to alter in a particular direction descriptions of happenings of long ago; that had long been done. On the other hand, an endeavour was made to date back to an early time certain laws and institutions of the present, to base them as a rule on the Mosaic law and to derive from this their claim to holiness and binding force. However much the picture of past times in this way became falsified, the procedure does not lack a certain psychological justification. It reflected the fact that in the course of many centuries about 800 years had elapsed between the Exodus and the fixation of the Biblical text by Ezra and Nehemiah the

religion of Jahve had followed a retrograde development that had culminated in a fusion (perhaps to the point of actual identity) with the original religion of Moses.

And this is the essential outcome: the fateful content of the religious history of the Jews.

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VII

Among all the events of Jewish prehistory that poets, priests and historians of a later age undertook to

portray there was an outstanding one the suppression of which was called for by the most obvious and best of human motives. It was the murder of the great leader and liberator Moses, which Sellin divined from clues furnished by the Prophets. Sellings presumption cannot be called fanciful; it is probable enough. Moses, trained in Ikhnaton's school, employed the same methods as the

king; he gave commands and forced his religion on the people.

1

Perhaps Moses

5

doctrine

was still more

uncompromising than that of his

Master; he had no need to retain any connection with the

religion of the Sun God since the school

of On would have no

importance for his alien

people. Moses met with the same fate as Ikhnaton,

that fate which awaits all

enlightened despots.

The Jewish

people of Moses was quite as unable

to bear such a

highly spiritualized religion, to

find in what it offered satisfaction for their needs,

as were the

Egyptians of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

In both cases the same

thing happened: those

who felt themselves kept in tutelage, or who felt

dispossessed, revolted and threw off the burden

1

In those times any other form of influence would scarcely have

been possible.

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77

of a

religion that had been forced on them. But while the tame

Egyptians waited until fate had removed the sacred person of their Pharaoh, the savage Semites took their destiny into their OWN hands and did away with their tyrant.

1

Nor can we maintain that the Biblical text preserved to us does not prepare us for such an end to Moses. The account of the "

Wandering

in the Wilderness " which

might stand for the

time of Moses' rule describes a series of grave

revolts

against his authority which, by Jahve's command, were suppressed with savage chastisement. It is easy to imagine that one of those revolts came to another end than the text admits.

The

people's falling away from the new religion

is also mentioned in the

text, though as a mere

episode. It is the story of the golden calf, where

by an adroit turn the breaking of the tables of the law which has to be understood

symbolically

(= "he has broken the law ") is ascribed

to Moses himself and

imputed to his angry

indignation.

There came a time when the people regretted

the murder of Moses and tried to

forget it. This

was

certainly so at the time of the coming

1

It is

truly remarkable how seldom we hear during the millenia

of Egyptian history of violent depositions or assassinations of a

Pharaoh. A comparison with Assyrian history, for example, must

increase this astonishment. The reason may, of course, be that

with the Egyptians historical recording served exclusively official purposes.

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together at Qades. If, however, the Exodus were

brought nearer in time to the founding of their religion in the oasis, and one allowed Moses instead of the other founder to help in it, then not only were the claims of the Moses people satisfied, but the painful fact of his violent removal was also successfully denied. In reality it is most unlikely that Moses could have participated in the events at Qades, even if his life had not been shortened.

Here we must try to elucidate the sequence of

these events. We have placed the Exodus from Egypt in the time after the extinction of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1350). It might have happened then or a little later, for the Egyptian chroniclers included the subsequent years of anarchy in the reign of Haremhab, the king who brought it to an end and who reigned until 1315.

The next aid in fixing the chronology and it is the

only one is given by the stele of Merneptah (1225-1215), which extols the victory over Isiraaal (Israel) and the destruction of their seeds (sic). Unfortunately the value of this stele is doubtful; it is taken to be evidence that Israelite tribes were at that date already settled in Canaan. ¹ E. Meyer rightly concludes from this stele that

Merneptah could not have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus, as one had previously been wont to assume. The Exodus must belong

¹

E. Meyer, I.e., p. 222.

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to an earlier

period. The question who was Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus appears to

me an idle one. There was no Pharaoh at that

time, because the Exodus happened during the interregnum. But the Merneptah stele does not throw any light on the possible date of the fusion and the

acceptance of the new religion in Qades.

All we can

say with certainty is that they took place some time between 1350 and 1215. Within this

century we assume the Exodus to have been very near to the first date, the events in Qades not far from the second. The greater part of the period we would reserve for the interval between the two events. A

fairly long time would be necessary for the passions of the returning tribes to cool down after the murder of Moses and for the influence of the Moses people, the Levites, to have become so strong as the compromise in

Qades presupposes. Two generations, sixty years, might suffice, but only just. The date inferred from the stele of

Merneptah falls too early, and

as we know that in our hypothesis one assumption

only rests on another we have to admit that this discussion shows a weak spot in the construction.

Unfortunately everything connected with the settling of the Jewish people in Canaan is highly obscure and confused. We

might, of course, use the

expedient of supposing that the name in the Israel stele does not refer to the tribes whose fate

we are trying to follow and who later on were

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united in the

people of Israel. After all, the name of the Habiru

(= Hebrews) from the Amarna

time was also

passed on to this people.

Whenever it was that the different tribes were united into a nation

by accepting the same religion it might very well have been an occurrence of no great importance for the history of the world. The new religion might have been swept away by the stream of events, Jahve would then have taken his place in the procession of erstwhile gods which Flaubert visualized, and of his people all the twelve tribes would have been "

lost," not only the ten for whom the Anglo-Saxons have so

long been searching. The god

Jahve, to whom the Midianite Moses led a new people, was probably in no way a remarkable being. A rude, narrow-minded local god, violent and blood-thirsty, he had promised his adherents to

give them " a land flowing with milk and honey " and he encouraged them to rid the country of its present inhabitants " with the edge of the sword. " It is truly astonishing that in spite of all the revisions in the Biblical text so much was allowed to stand whereby we may recognize his original nature. It is not even sure that his

religion was a true monotheism, that it denied the character of god to other divinities.

It probably sufficed that one's own god was more powerful than all strange gods. When the sequence of events took quite another course than

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such

beginnings would lead us to expect there can be only one reason for it. To one part of the

people the Egyptian Moses had given another and more

spiritual conception of God, a single

God who embraces the whole world, one as all-loving as he was all-powerful, who averse to all ceremonial and

magic set humanity as its
highest aim a life of truth and justice. For,
incomplete as our information about the ethical
side of the Aton
religion may be, it is surely
significant that Ikhnaton regularly described
himself in his
inscriptions as " living in Maat "
(truth, justice).

1
In the
long run it did not matter
that the
people, probably after a very short time,
renounced the
teaching of Moses and removed
the man himself. The tradition itself remained
and its influence reached though only slowly,
in the course of centuries the aim that was
denied to Moses himself. The
god Jahve attained
undeserved honour when, from Qades onward,
Moses

5
deed of liberation was
put down to his
account; but he had to pay dear for this usurpa-
tion. The shadow of the
god whose place he had
taken became
stronger than himself; at the end
of the historical
development there arose beyond
his
Being that of the forgotten Mosaic God.

None can doubt that it was only the idea of this

1
His hymns
lay stress on not only the universality and oneness of
God, but also His loving kindness for all creatures; they invite
believers to
enjoy nature and its beauties. Gp. Breasted, The
Dawn of Conscience.

F

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other GOD that enabled the
people of Israel to
surmount all their
hardships and to survive until
our time.

It is no
longer possible to determine the part

the Levites
played in the final victory of the
Mosaic God over Jahve. When the
compromise
at
Qades was effected they had raised their voice
for Moses, their
memory being still green of the
master whose followers and
countrymen they
were.
During the centuries since then the Levites
had become one with the
people or with the
priesthood and it had become the main task of
the
priests to develop and supervise the ritual,
besides
caring for the holy texts and revising them
in accordance with their
purposes. But was not
all this sacrifice and ceremonial at bottom
only
magic and black art, such as the old doctrine of
Moses had
unconditionally condemned? There
arose from the midst of the
people an unending
succession of
men, not necessarily descended from
Moses

5

people, but seized by the great and power-
ful tradition which had
gradually grown in dark-
ness, and it was these men, the prophets, who
sedulously preached the old Mosaic doctrine:
the
Deity spurns sacrifice and ceremonial; He
demands
only belief and a life of truth and
justice (Maat)
. The efforts of the
prophets met
with
enduring success; the doctrines with which
they re-established the old belief became the
permanent content of the Jewish religion. It is
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honour
enough for the Jewish people that it has
kept alive such a tradition and produced men who
lent it their voice even if the stimulus had first
come from outside, from a great stranger.
This
description of events would leave me with
a
feeling of uncertainty were it not that I can refer
to the
judgement of other, expert, research workers
who see the importance of Moses for the history of
Jewish religion in the same light, although they
do not
recognize his Egyptian origin. Sellin says,
for
example:
1 "
Therefore we have to
picture
the true
religion of Moses, the belief he proclaimed
in
one, ethical god, as being from now on, as a
matter of course, the
possession of a small circle
within the
people. We cannot expect to find it
from the start in the official cult, the
priests
3
religion, in the general belief of the people. All
we can expect is that here and there a spark flies
up from the spiritual fire he had kindled, that
his ideas have not died out, but have
quietly
influenced beliefs and customs until, sooner or
later, under the influence of special events, or
through some personality particularly immersed
in this
belief, they broke forth again more strongly
and
gained dominance with the broad mass of
the
people. It is from this point of view that we
have to
regard the early religious history of
the old Israelites. Were we to reconstruct the
Mosaic
religion after the pattern laid down in the

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historical documents that describe the religion of the first five centuries in Canaan we should fall into the worst methodical error.

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Volz 1 expresses himself still more explicitly. He says : " that the heaven -soaring work of Moses was at first hardly understood and feebly carried out, until during the course of centuries it penetrated more and more into the spirit of the people and at last found kindred souls in the great prophets who continued the work of the lonely Founder."

With this I have come to an end, my sole purpose having been to fit the figure of an Egyptian Moses into the framework of Jewish history. I may now express my conclusion in the shortest formula: To the well-known duality of that history two peoples who fuse together to form one nation, two kingdoms into which this nation divides, two names for the Deity in the source of the Bible we add two new ones : the founding of two new religions, the first one ousted by the second and yet reappearing victorious, two founders of religions, who are both called by the same name Moses and whose personalities we have to separate from each other. And all these dualities are necessary consequences of the first: one section of the people passed through what may properly be termed a traumatic experience which the other was spared. There

still remains much to
discuss, to explain and to

1

Paul Volz: Mose, 1907,
p. 64.

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assert.

Only then would the interest in our
purely historical study be fully warranted. In
what exactly consists the intrinsic nature of a
tradition, and in what resides its peculiar power,
how impossible it is to deny the personal influence
of individual great men on the
history of the
world, what profanation of the grandiose multi-
formity of human life we commit if we recognize
as sole motives those
springing from material
needs, from what sources certain ideas, especially
religious ones, derive the power with which they
subjugate individuals and peoples to study all
this on the
particular case of Jewish history would
be an

alluring task. Such a continuation of my
essay would link up with conclusions laid down
twenty-five years ago in Totem and Taboo. But
I

hardly trust my powers any further.

PART III

MOSES, HIS PEOPLE AND
MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

Part III

MOSES, HIS PEOPLE AND
MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

PREFATORY NOTES

i. Written

before March 1938 (Vienna)

WITH the audacity of one who has little or nothing
to lose I

propose to break a well-founded resolu-
tion for the second time and to follow

up my two

essays on Moses (Imago, Bd. XXIII, Heft 1 and 3)

with the final

part, till now withheld. When I

finished the last

essay I said I knew full well that
my powers would not suffice for the task. I was,
of course,
referring to the weakening of the crea-
tive faculties which
accompanies old age,

1
but

there was also another obstacle. We live in
very
remarkable times. We find with astonishment
that
progress has concluded an alliance with bar-
barism. In Soviet Russia the
attempt has been

1
I do not share the
opinion of my gifted contemporary Bernard
Shaw that men would achieve anything worth while only if they
could attain the age of 300 years. With the mere lengthening of
the
period of life nothing would be gained unless much in the
conditions of life were radically changed as well.

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9 1

shall
guard against doing anything that would
serve his interests is more
dangerous than the old
one, with whom we have learned to live in peace.
Psycho-analytic research is in any case the subject
of
suspicious attention from Catholicism. I do
not maintain that this
suspicion is unmerited. If
our research leads us to a result that reduces
religion to the status of a neurosis of mankind and
explains its grandiose powers in the same way as
we should a neurotic obsession in our individual
patients, then we may be sure we shall incur in
this
country the greatest resentment of the powers
that be. It is not that I have
anything new to say,
nothing that I have not clearly expressed a quarter
of a
century ago. All that, however, has been for-
gotten, and it would undoubtedly have some
effect were I to
repeat it now and to illustrate it
by an example typical of the way in which re-

ligions are founded. It would probably lead to our being forbidden to work in Psycho -Analysis. Such violent methods of suppression are by no means alien to the Catholic Church ; she feels it rather as an intrusion into her privileges when other people resort to the same means. Psycho -Analysis, however, which has travelled everywhere during the course of

my long life, has not yet found a more serviceable home than in the city where it was born and grew.

I do not

only think so, I know that this external danger will deter me from publishing the last 92 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

part of my treatise on Moses. I have tried to remove this obstacle by telling myself that

my

fear is based on an over-estimation of

my

personal importance, and that the authorities would

probably be quite indifferent to what I should have to

say about Moses and the origin of monotheistic

religions. Yet I do not feel sure that

my judgement is correct. It seems to me

more likely that malice and an appetite for

sensation would make

up for the importance I

may lack in the eyes of the world. So I shall not

publish this essay. But that need not hinder me

from writing it. The more so since it was written once before, two

years ago, and thus only needs

re

-writing and adding on to the two previous

essays. Thus it may lie hid until the time comes

when it may safely venture into the light of day,

or until someone else who reaches the same opinions and conclusions can be told: " In

darker

days there lived a man who thought as
you did."

II.

June 1938 (London)

The exceptionally great difficulties which have
weighed on me during the composition of this
essay dealing with Moses inner misgivings as
well as external hindrances are the reason
why

this third and final

part comes to have two differ-
ent

prefaces which contradict, indeed even cancel,

HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

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each other. For in the short interval between
writing the two prefaces the outer conditions of
the author have

radically changed. Formerly

I lived under the

protection of the Catholic

Church and feared that by

publishing the essay

I should lose that

protection and that the practi-

tioners and students of

psycho-analysis in Austria

would be forbidden their work. Then, suddenly,

the German invasion broke in on us and Catholic-
ism

proved to be, as the Bible has it, " but a

broken reed.

35

In the

certainty of persecution

now not only because of my work, but also

because of my " race " I left with

many friends

the

city which from early childhood, through

78 years, had been a home to me.

I found the kindest welcome in

beautiful, free,

generous England. Here I live now, a welcome

guest, relieved from that oppression and happy

that I

may again speak and write I almost said

"

think " as I want or have to. I dare now to

make public the last part of my essay.
There are no more external hindrances or at
least none that need alarm one. In the few weeks
of

my stay I have received a large number of
greetings, from friends who told me how glad
they were to see me here, and from people un-
known to me, barely interested in my work, who
simply expressed their satisfaction that I had
found freedom and

security here. Besides all this
there came, with a
frequency bewildering to a

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foreigner, letters of another kind, expressing
concern for the weal of my soul, and anxious to
point me the way to Christ and to enlighten me
about the future of Israel. The good
people who

wrote thus could not have known much about me.

I

expect, however, that when this new work of
mine becomes known

among my new compatriots

I shall lose with

my correspondents and a number
of the others

something of the sympathy they now
extend to me.

The inner difficulties were not to be changed
by the different political system and the new
domicile. Now as then I am

uneasy when con-
fronted with

my own work; I miss the conscious-
ness of

unity and intimacy that should exist
between the author and his work. This does not
mean that I lack conviction in the correctness of
my conclusions. That conviction I acquired a
quarter of a century ago, when I wrote my book
on Totem and Taboo

(in 1912), and it has only
become

stronger since. From then on I have
never doubted "that

religious phenomena are to
be understood
only on the model of the neurotic
symptoms of the individual, which are so familiar
to us, as a return of
long forgotten important
happenings in the primaeval history of the human
family, that they owe their obsessive character to
that
very origin and therefore derive their effect
on mankind from the historical truth
they contain.

My uncertainty begins only at the point when I

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ask

myself the question whether I have succeeded
in

proving this for the example of Jewish Mono-
theism chosen here. To

my critical faculties this

treatise, proceeding from a study of the man
Moses, seems like a dancer balancing on one toe.

If I had not been able to find
support in the

analytic interpretation of the exposure myth and
pass thence to Sellings suggestion concerning
Moses

5

end, the whole treatise would have to

remain unwritten. However, let me
proceed.

I

begin by abstracting the results of my second
the

purely historical essay ON Moses. I shall
not examine them

critically here, since they form
the

premisses of the psychological discussions
which are based on them and which
continually
revert to them.

SECTION I

i . The Historical Premisses

The historical

background of the events which
have aroused our interest is as follows.

Through

the

conquests of the Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt
had become a world
Empire. The new Imperialism was reflected in the development of certain
religious ideas, if not in those of the whole
people, yet in those of the governing and intellectually active upper stratum. Under the
MOSES AND MONOTHEISM
influence of the
priests of the Sun God at On
(Heliopolis), possibly strengthened by suggestions
from Asia, there arose the idea of a universal God
Aton no longer restricted to one
people and one
country. With the young Amenhotep IV (who
later
changed his name to Ikhnaton) a Pharaoh
succeeded to the throne who knew no
higher interest than in
developing the idea of such a God.
He raised the Aton religion to the official religion
and
thereby the universal God became the Only
God; all that was said of the other gods became
deceit and
guile. With a superb implacability he
resisted all the
temptations of magical thought
and discarded the illusion, dear
particularly to
the
Egyptians, of a life after death. With an astonishing premonition of later scientific knowledge
he
recognised in the energy of the sun's radiation
the source of all life on earth and
worshipped the
sun as the
symbol of his God's power. He gloried
in his
joy in the Creation and in his life in Maat
(truth and justice)
.
It is the first case in the
history of mankind,
and
perhaps the purest, of a monotheistic religion.

A deeper knowledge of the historical and psychological conditions of its origin would be of inestimable value. Care was taken, however, that not much information concerning the Aton religion should come down to us. Already under the reign of Ikhnaton's weak successors everything he had created broke down. The priesthood

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he had suppressed vented their fury on his memory. The Aton religion was abolished; the capital of the heretic Pharaoh demolished and pillaged. In 1350 B.C. the Eighteenth Dynasty was extinguished; after an interval of anarchy the general Haremhab, who reigned until 1315, restored order. Ikhnaton's reforms seemed to be but an episode, doomed to be forgotten. This is what has been established historically and at this point our work of hypothesis begins. Among the intimates of Ikhnaton was a man who was perhaps called Thothmes, as so many others were at that time; the name does not matter, but its second part must have been -mose. He held high rank, and was a convinced adherent of the Aton religion, but in contradistinction to the brooding King he was forceful and passionate. For this man the death of Ikhnaton and the abolishing of his religion meant the end of all his hopes. Only proscribed or recanting could he remain in Egypt. If he were governor of a border province he might well have come into touch with a certain Semitic tribe which had immigrated several generations ago. In his disappointment and loneliness he turned to those strangers and sought in them for a compensation of what he had lost. He chose them for his

people and tried
to realize his OWN ideals
through them. After he

1

This, for example, was also the name of the sculptor whose
workroom was discovered in Tell-el-Amarna.

G

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had left Egypt with them accompanied by his
immediate followers he hallowed them by the
custom of circumcision, gave them laws and
introduced them to the Aton
religion which the
Egyptians had just discarded. Perhaps the rules
the man Moses
imposed on his Jews were even
harder than those of his master and teacher
Ikhnaton; perhaps he also relinquished the
connection with the Sun God of On, to whom the
latter had still adhered.

For the Exodus from

Egypt we must fix the
time of the interregnum after
1350. The sub-

sequent periods of time, until possession was
taken of the land of Canaan, are
especially
obscure. Out of the darkness which the Biblical
Text has here left or rather created the his-
torical research of our
days can distinguish two
facts. The first, discovered
by E. Sellin, is that
the

Jews, who even according to the Bible were
stubborn and unruly towards their
law-giver
and leader, rebelled at last, killed him and threw
off the
imposed Aton religion as the Egyptians
had done before them. The second fact,
proved

by E. Meyer, is that these Jews on their return
from Egypt united with tribes nearly related to
them, in the country bordering on Palestine, the
Sinai

peninsula and Arabia, and that there, in
a fertile
spot called Qades, they accepted under

the influence of the Arabian Midianites a new religion, the worship of the volcano God Jahve.
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Soon after this they were ready to conquer Canaan.

The relationship in time of these two events to each other and to the Exodus is very uncertain.

The next historical allusion is given in a stele of the Pharaoh

Merneptah, who reigned until 1215, which numbers " Israel " among the vanquished in his

conquests in Syria and Palestine. If we take the date of this stele as a terminus ad quern

there remains for the whole course of events, starting from the Exodus, about a century after

1350 until before 1215. It is possible, however, that the name Israel does not yet refer to the tribes whose fate we are here following and that in

reality we have a longer period at our disposal. The settling of the later Jewish people in Canaan was certainly not a swiftly achieved conquest; it was rather a series of successive struggles and must have stretched over a longish period. If we discard the restriction imposed by the

Merneptah stele we may more readily assume thirty years, a generation, as the time of Moses

1

and two generations at least, probably more, until the union in

Qades took place;

2

the interval between

Qades and the setting out for Canaan need not have been

long. Jewish tradition had

1

This would accord with the forty years' wandering in the desert of which the Bible tells us.

Thus about 1350-40 to 1320-10 for Moses, 1260 or perhaps rather later for Qades, the Merneptah stele before 1215.

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as I have shown in

my last essay good reason to shorten the interval between the Exodus and the foundation of a religion in Qades ; our argument would incline us to favour the contrary.

Till now we have been concerned with the external aspects of the story, with an attempt to fill in the gaps of our historical knowledge in part a

repetition of my second essay. Our interest follows the fate of Moses and his doctrines, to which the revolt of the Jews only apparently put an end. From the Jahvist account written down about 1000 B.C.,

though doubtless founded on earlier material we have learned that the union of the tribes and foundation of a religion in

Qades represented a compromise, the two parts of which are still easily distinguishable. One

partner was concerned only in denying the recency and foreignness of the God Jahve and in

heightening his claim to the people's devotion.

The other partner would not renounce memories, so dear to him, of the liberation from

Egypt and the

magnificent figure of his leader Moses; and, indeed, he succeeded in finding a place for the fact as well as for the man in the new

representa-
tion of

Jewish early history, in retaining at least the outer

sign of the Moses religion, namely circumcision, and in insisting on certain restrictions in the use of the new divine name. I have said that the

people who insisted on those

demands were the descendants of the Moses
HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION IOI
followers, the Levites, separated by a few genera-
tions
only from the actual contemporaries and
compatriots of Moses and attached to his memory
by a tradition still green. The poetically elabor-
ated accounts attributed to the
Jahvist and to his
later
competitor the Elohist, are like gravestones,
under which the truth about those early matters
the nature of the Mosaic
religion and the violent
removal of the
great man truths withdrawn
from the knowledge of later generations, should,
so to
speak, be laid to eternal rest. And if we
have divined aright the course of events, there is
nothing mysterious about them; it might very
well, however, have been the definite end of the
Moses
episode in the history of the Jewish people.
The remarkable thing about it is that this was
not so, that the most
important effects of that
experience should appear much later and should
in the course of
many centuries gradually force
their
way to expression. It is not likely that
Jahve was very different in character from the
gods of the neighbouring peoples and tribes; he
wrestled with the other
gods, it is true, just as
the tribes
fought among themselves, yet we may
assume that a Jahve
worshipper of that time
would never have dreamt of doubting the exis-
tence of the
gods of Canaan, Moab, Amalek and
so on,
any more than he would the existence of
the
people who believed in them. The mono-
theistic idea, which had blazed
up in Ikhnaton's
IO2 MOSES AND MONOTHEISM

time, was again obscured and was to remain in darkness for a

long time to come. On the island Elephantine, close to the first Nile cataract, discoveries have yielded the astonishing information that a Jewish military colony, settled there centuries ago, worshipped in their temples besides their chief god Jahu two female deities, one of whom was called Anat-Jahu. Those Jews, it is true, had been separated from the mother country and had not gone through the same religious development; the Persian government (in the fifth century B.C.) communicated to them the new ceremonial regulations of Jerusalem.

1

Re-

turning to earlier times we may surely say that Jahve was quite unlike the Mosaic God. Aton had been a pacifist, like his deputy on earth or rather his model the Pharaoh Ikhnoton, who looked on with folded arms as the Empire his ancestors had won fell to pieces. For a people that was preparing to conquer new lands by violence Jahve was certainly better suited. Moreover, what was worthy of honour in the Mosaic God was beyond the comprehension of a primitive people.

I have

already mentioned and in this I am supported by the opinion of other workers that the central fact of the development of Jewish religion was this: in the course of time Jahve lost his OWN character and became more and more

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Auerbach: *W*tiste und Gelobtes Land. Bd. II, 1936.

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like the old God of
Moses, Aton. Differences

remained, it is true, and at first sight they would seem important; yet they are easy to explain. Aton had begun his reign in Egypt in a happy period of security, and even when the Empire began to shake in its foundations his followers had been able to turn away from worldly matters and to continue praising and enjoying his creations. To the Jewish people fate dealt a series of severe trials and painful experiences, so their God became hard, relentless and, as it were, wrapped in gloom. He retained the character of an universal God who reigned over all lands and peoples; 'the fact, however, that his worship had passed from the Egyptians to the Jews found its expression in the added doctrine that the Jews were his chosen people, whose special obligations would in the end find their special reward. It might not have been easy for that people to reconcile their belief in their being preferred to all others by an all-powerful God with the dire experiences of their sad fate. But they did not let doubts assail them, they increased their OWN feelings of guilt to silence their mistrust and perhaps in the end they referred to " God's unfathomable will," as religious people do to this day. If there was wonder that he allowed ever new tyrants to come who subjected and ill-treated his people the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians yet his power was recognized in that

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all those wicked enemies got defeated in their turn and their empires destroyed. In three

important points the later Jewish God became identical with the old Mosaic God. The first and decisive point is that he was really recognized as the only God, beside whom another god was unthinkable. Ikhnaton's monotheism was taken seriously by an entire people; indeed, this people clung to it to such an extent that it became the principal content of their intellectual life and displaced all other interests. The people and the priesthood, now the dominating part of it, were unanimous on that point; but the priests, in confining their activities to elaborating the ceremonial for his worship, found themselves in opposition to strong tendencies within the people which endeavoured to revive two other doctrines of Moses about his God. The prophets' voices untiringly proclaimed that God disdained ceremonial and sacrifice and asked nothing but a belief in Him and a life in truth and justice.

When they praised the simplicity and holiness of their life in the desert they surely stood under the influence of Mosaic ideals.

It is time now to raise the question whether there is any need at all to invoke Moses' influence on the final shape of the Jewish idea of their God, whether it is not enough to assume a spontaneous development to a higher spirituality during a cultural life extending over many

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centuries. On this possible explanation, which would put an end to all our guessing, I would make two comments. First that it does not explain anything. The same conditions did not lead to monotheism with the Greek

people, who were
surely most gifted, but to a breaking up of poly-
theistic
religion and to the beginning of philo-
sophical thought. In Egypt monotheism had
grown as far as we understand its growth as
an
ancillary effect of imperialism ; God was the
reflection of a Pharaoh
autocratically governing
a
great world empire. With the Jews the political
conditions were most unfavourable for a
develop-
ment away from the idea of an exclusive national
God towards that of an universal ruler of the
world. Whence then did this tiny and
impotent
nation derive the audacity to
pass themselves off
for the favourite child of the
Sovereign Lord ?

The question of the origin of monotheism among
the
Jews would thus remain unanswered or else
one would have to be content with the current
answer that it was the expression of their par-
ticular
religious genius. We know that genius
is
incomprehensible and unaccountable and it
should therefore not be called
upon as an
explanation until every other solution has failed.

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Furthermore, there is the fact that Jewish
records and
history themselves show us the way
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The same consideration holds good for the remarkable case of
William Shakespeare of Stratford.

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by stating emphatically and this time without
contradicting themselves that the idea of an
Only God was given to the people by Moses.
If there is an
objection to the trustworthiness of
this
statement, it is that the priests in their re-
writing of the Biblical Text as we have it, ascribe
much too much to Moses. Institutions, as well
as ritualistic rules,

undoubtedly belonging to
later
times, are declared to be Mosaic laws, with
the clear intention of
enhancing their authority.
This is
certainly a reason for suspicion, yet hardly
enough for us to use. For the deeper motive of
such an
exaggeration is clear as daylight. The
priests, in the accounts they present, desired to
establish a
continuity between their OWN times
and the Mosaic
period. They attempted to deny
just that which we have recognized to be the
most
striking feature of Jewish religious history,
namely, that there was a gap between the
Mosaic law
-giving and the later Jewish religion
a
gap filled in at first by the worship of Jahve and
only later slowly covered over. Their presenta-
tion denies this
sequence of events with all the
means in its
power, although its historical cor-
rectness is
beyond all doubt, since throughout the
peculiar treatment the Biblical Text has under-
gone there remain more than enough statements
in
proof of it. The priests' version had an aim
similar to that of the
tendency which made the
new god Jahve the God of the Patriarchs. If we
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take into consideration this motive of the
Priestly
Code it is hard not to believe that it was really
Moses who gave his Jews the monotheistic idea.
We should find it the easier to give assent to this
since we are able to
say from where the idea
came to Moses something which the Jewish
priesthood had certainly forgotten.
Here, someone might ask, what do we gain by
deriving Jewish monotheism from the Egyptians ?

The problem has thus only been put back a step; we know no more about the genesis of the monotheistic idea. The answer is that it is not a question of gain, but of research. And perhaps we shall learn something by elucidating the real process.

2.

Latency Period and Tradition

I thus believe that the idea of an

Only God, as

well as the

emphasis laid on ethical demands in

the name of that God and the

rejection of all

magic ceremonial, were indeed Mosaic doctrines,

which at first found no hearing but came into

their OWN after a

long space of time and finally

prevailed. HOW is such a delayed effect to be

explained and where do we meet with similar

phenomena ?

Our next reflection tells us that they are often met with in very different spheres and that they probably come about in various ways which are
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more or less easy to understand. Let us take for an example the fate of any new scientific theory, for instance, the Darwinian doctrine of evolution.

At first it meets with hostile rejection and is violently debated for decades; it takes only one generation, however, before it is recognized as a

great step towards truth. Darwin himself was accorded the honour of burial in Westminster Abbey. Such a case provides no enigma. The new truth had awakened affective resistances.

These could be sustained by arguments that opposed the evidence in support of the unpleasant doctrine. The contest of opinions lasted a certain time. From the very beginning there were both adherents and opponents, but the number as well as the importance of the former steadily increased until at last they gained the upper hand. During the whole time of the conflict no one forgot what was the matter at issue. We are hardly surprised to find that the whole process took a considerable time; probably we do not adequately appreciate the fact that we have here

to do with a manifestation of mass psychology. There is no difficulty in finding a full analogy to it in the mental life of an individual. In such a case a

person would hear of something new which, on the ground of certain evidence, he is asked to accept as true; yet it contradicts many of his wishes and offends some of his highly treasured convictions. He will then hesitate, look for HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION IOQ arguments to cast doubt on the new material, and so will struggle for a while until at last he admits it himself: "all this is true after all, although I find it hard to accept and it is painful to have to believe in it." All we learn from this process is that it needs time for the intellectual work of the Ego to overcome objections that are invested

by strong feelings. This case, however, is not

very similar to the one we are trying to elucidate.

The next example we turn to seems to have

still less in common with our

problem. It may

happen that someone gets away from, apparently unharmed, the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he

develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which one can ascribe only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a "traumatic neurosis.

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This

appears quite incomprehensible

and is therefore a novel fact. The time that

elapsed between the accident and the first appear-

ance of the symptoms is called the "incubation

period," a transparent allusion to the pathology

of infectious disease. As an afterthought we

observe that in spite of the fundamental differ-

ence in the two cases, the problem of the trau-

matic neurosis and that of Jewish Monotheism

there is a correspondence in one point. It is

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the feature which one

might term latency. There

are the best grounds for thinking that in the history of the Jewish religion there is a long period after the breaking away from the Moses religion during which no trace is to be found of the monotheistic idea, the condemnation of ceremonial and the emphasis on the ethical side.

Thus we are prepared for the possibility that the solution of our problem is to be sought in a special psychological situation.

I have more than once traced the events in Qades when the two components of the later Jewish people combined in the acceptance of a new religion. With those who had been in Egypt the memory of the Exodus and of the figure of Moses was still so strong and vivid that it insisted on being incorporated into any account of their early history. There might have been among them grandsons of persons who themselves had known Moses, and some of them still felt themselves to be Egyptians and bore Egyptian names.

They had good reasons, however, for "

repressing " the memory of the fate that had befallen their leader and law-giver. For the other component of the tribe the leading motive was to

glorify the new God and deny his foreignness. Both parties were equally concerned to deny that there had been an earlier religion and especially what it contained. This is how the first

compromise came about, which probably HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION I I I was soon codified in writing; the people from

Egypt had brought with them the art of writing and the fondness for writing history. A long

time was to
elapse, however, before historians
came to
develop an ideal of objective truth. At
first
they shaped their accounts according to
their needs and tendencies of the moment, with
an
easy conscience, as if they had not yet under-
stood what falsification
signified. In consequence,
a difference
began to develop between the
written version and the oral
report, i.e. the
tradition, of the same subject-matter. What has
been deleted or altered in the written version
might quite well have been preserved uninjured
in the tradition. Tradition was the
complement
and at the same time the contradiction of the
written
history. It was less subject to distorting
influences
perhaps in part entirely free of them
and therefore might be more truthful than the
account set down in
writing. Its trustworthiness,
however, was impaired by being vaguer and more
fluid than the written text,
being exposed to many
changes and distortions as it was passed on from
one
generation to the other by word of mouth.
Such a tradition may have different outcomes.
The most likely event would be for it to be
vanquished by the written version, ousted by it,
until it
grows more and more shadowy and at last
is
forgotten. Another fate might be that the
tradition itself ends
by becoming a written
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version. There are other possibilities which will
be mentioned later.
The phenomenon of the latency period in the
history of the Jewish religion may find its explana-
tion in this : the facts which the so-called official
written history purposely tried to suppress were
in

reality never lost. The knowledge of them survived in traditions which were kept alive among the people. According to E. Sellin, there even existed a tradition concerning the end of Moses which contradicted outright the official account and came far nearer to the truth. The same thing, we may suppose, happened with other beliefs that had apparently found an end at the same time as Moses, doctrines of the Mosaic religion that had been unacceptable to the majority of Moses

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contemporaries.

Here we meet with a remarkable fact. It is that these traditions instead of growing weaker as time went on grew more and more powerful in the course of centuries, found their way into the later codifications of the official accounts, and at last proved themselves strong enough decisively to influence the thought and activity of the people. What the conditions were that made such a development possible seems, however, far from evident.

This fact is indeed strange, so much so that we feel justified in examining it afresh. Within it our problem lies. The Jewish people had HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION 113 abandoned the Aton religion which Moses had given them and had turned to the worship of another god who differed little from the Baalim of the neighbouring tribes. All the efforts of later distorting influences failed to hide this humiliating fact. Yet the religion of Moses did not disappear without leaving any trace; a kind of memory of it had survived, a tradition perhaps obscured and distorted. It was this tradition of a great past that continued to work in the background, until it slowly gained more and more power over the mind of the people and at last

succeeded in transforming the God Jahve into the Mosaic God and in waking to a new life the religion Moses had instituted centuries ago and which had later been forsaken. That a dormant tradition should exert such a powerful influence on the spiritual life of a people is not a familiar conception. There we find ourselves in a domain of mass psychology where we do not feel at home.

We must look around for analogies, for facts of a similar nature even if in other disciplines. We shall find them, I am sure.

When the time was ripening for a return of the religion of Moses, the Greek people possessed an exceptionally rich treasure of legends and myths of heroes. It is believed that the ninth or eighth century B.C. saw the creation of the Homeric epics which derived their material from this complex of myths. With our psychological

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knowledge of to-day we could long before Schliemann and Evans have put the question:

whence did the Greeks obtain all this material of

myths and legends which Homer and the great Attic dramatists transformed into immortal works of art? The answer would have had to be: this people probably passed in its early history through a

period of outward splendour and highly developed culture which ended in catastrophe as, indeed, history tells and of which a faint tradition lived on in these legends. Archaeo-

logical research of our days has confirmed this suggestion, which if made earlier would surely have been considered too bold. It has discovered the evidence of the grandiose Minoan -Mycenaeen culture which had

probably already come to an end on the Greek mainland by 1250 B.C.

The Greek historians of a later period hardly

ever refer to it. There is the remark that there was a time when the Cretans ruled the sea, a mention of the name of King Minos and his palace, and of the labyrinth; but that is all. Nothing remained of that great time but the traditions seized upon by the great writers.

Other peoples also possess such folk-epics, for example, the Indians, Finns and Germans. It is for the literary historian to investigate whether the same conditions as with the Greeks applied there as well. I think that such an investigation would yield a

positive result. The conditions we
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have specified for the origin of folk-epics are as follows : there exists a period of early history that immediately afterwards is regarded as eventful, significant, grandiose and perhaps always heroic; yet it happened so long ago and belonged to times so remote that later generations receive intelligence of it only as an obscure and incomplete tradition.

Surprise has been expressed that the epic as a literary form should have disappeared in later times. The

explanation may be that the conditions for the production of epics no longer exist. The old material has been used up and so far as later events are concerned history has taken the

place of tradition. The bravest heroic deeds of our days are no longer able to inspire an epic ; Alexander the Great himself had grounds for his complaint that he would have no Homer to celebrate his life.

Remote times have a great attraction some-

times
mysteriously so for the imagination. As
often as mankind is dissatisfied with its
present
and that
happens often enough it harks back
to the
past and hopes at last to win belief in the
never -for
gotten dream of a Golden Age.

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Prob-
ably man still stands under the magic spell of
his
childhood, which a not unbiassed memory

1

Such a situation forms the basis of Macaulay's "Lays of
Ancient Rome." He assumes the
part of a minstrel who, sadly
disappointed with the violent contests of the political parties of
his time, contrasts them with the
unity and patriotism of their
forbears.

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presents to him as a time of unalloyed bliss.
Incomplete and dim memories of the*past, which
we call tradition, are a great incentive to the
artist, for he is free to fill in the gaps in the
memories according to the behests of his
imagina-
tion and to form after his OWN
purpose the image
of the time he has undertaken to
reproduce.

One might almost say that the more shadowy
tradition has become the more meet is it for the
poet's use. The value tradition has for poetry,
therefore, need not surprise us, and the analogy
we have found of the dependence of epic poetry
on

precise conditions will make us more inclined
to
accept the strange suggestion that with the
Jews it was the tradition of Moses which turned the

Jahve worship in the direction of the old
Mosaic religion. The two cases, however, are
very different in other respects. In the one the
result is
poetry, in the other a religion, and we
have assumed that the latter under the stimulus
of a tradition was

reproduced with a faithfulness
for which, of course, the
epic cannot provide a
parallel. Enough remains, therefore, of our
problem to encourage a search for better analogies.

3. The Analogy

The only really satisfactory analogy to the
remarkable

process which we have recognized in
the
history of Jewish religion is to be found in a
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domain

apparently remote from our problem. It
is, however, very complete, approximating to
identity. Here again we find the phenomenon
of
latency, the appearance of inexplicable
manifestations which call for an
explanation,
and the strict condition of an
early, and subse-
quently forgotten, experience. Here too we find
the characteristic of
compulsiveness, which
overpowering logical thinking strongly engages
the
psychical life; it is a trait which was not
concerned in the
genesis of the epic.

This

analogy is met with in psychopathology,
in the
genesis of human neurosis

: that is to

say,

in a

discipline belonging to individual psychology,
whereas

religious phenomena must of course be
regarded as a part of mass psychology. We shall
see that this

analogy is not so startling as it
appears at first sight; indeed, it is rather in the
nature of an axiom.

The

impressions we experienced at an early age
and

forgot later, to which I have ascribed such
great importance for the aetiology of the neuroses,

are called traumata. It
may remain an open
question whether the aetiology of the neuroses
should in
general be regarded as a traumatic one.
The obvious
objection is that a trauma is not
always evident in the early history of the neurotic
individual. Often we must be content to
say that
there is
nothing else but an unusual reaction
to
experiences and demands that apply to all
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individuals; many people deal with them in
another way which we may term normal. Where
we can find no other explanation than an heredit-
ary and constitutional disposition we are naturally
tempted to say that the neurosis was not suddenly
acquired but slowly developed.
In this connection, however, two
points stand
out. The first is that the
genesis of the neurosis
always goes back to very early impressions in
childhood. 1 The second is this: it is correct to
say that there are cases which we single out as
"
traumatic " ones because the effects unmistak-
ably go back to one or more strong impressions
of this
early period. They failed to be disposed
of
normally, so that one feels inclined to say
: if
this or that had not
happened, there would have
been no neurosis. It would be sufficient for our
purposes even if we had to limit the analogy in
question to these traumatic cases. Yet the gap
between the two
groups does not seem unbridge-
able. It is
quite possible to combine both aetio-
logical conditions in one conception ; all depends
on what is defined as traumatic. If we
may
assume that an
experience acquires its traumatic

character
only in consequence of a quantitative
element that is to
say, that if the experience
evokes unusual
pathological reactions the fault

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That is why it is nonsensical to maintain that
psycho-analysis
is

practised if these early periods of life are excluded from one's
investigation; yet this claim has been made in many quarters.

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Iig

lies in its

having made too many demands on the
personality then we can formulate the con-
clusion that with one constitution
something

produces a trauma whereas with another it does

not. We then have the

conception of a sliding

scale, a so-called complementary series, where two
factors

converge to complete the aetiology; a

minus in one factor is

compensated by a plus in

the other.

Generally the two factors work together

and only at either end of the series can we speak

of a

simple motivation. In consequence of this

reasoning we can leave out of account the

difference between traumatic and non-traumatic

aetiology as being unimportant for our analogy.

Despite some risk of repetition, it may be

useful to

group together the facts relating to the

important analogy in question. They are as

follows. Our researches have shown that what

we call the phenomena or symptoms of a neurosis
are the

consequences of certain experiences and

impressions which, for this very reason, we recog-

nize to be

aetiological traumata. We wish to

ascertain, even if only in a rough schematic way,

the characteristics common to these

experiences

and to neurotic symptoms.

Let us first consider the former. All these

traumata belong to early childhood, the period up to about five years. Impressions during the time when the child begins to speak are found to be

especially interesting. The period between two and four years is the most

important. How soon after birth this sensitiveness to traumata begins

we are not able to state with any degree of certainty.

The experiences in question are as a rule entirely forgotten and remain inaccessible to memory. They belong to the period of infantile amnesia which is often interrupted by isolated fragmentary memories, the so-called "screen-memories."

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They concern impressions of a sexual and aggressive nature and also early injuries to the self (injuries to narcissism)

. We should add that children at that early age do not yet distinguish between sexual and purely aggressive actions so clearly as they do later on; (the "sadistic" misunderstanding of the sexual act belongs to this context). It is of course very striking that the sexual factor should predominate and theory must take this into account.

These three points early happenings within the first five years of life, the forgetting, and the characteristic of sexuality and aggressivity

belong closely together. The traumata are either bodily experiences or perceptions, especially those heard or seen; that is to say, they are either

experiences or impressions. What connects the three

points is established theoretically, by analytic work; this alone can yield a knowledge of the

forgotten experiences, or to put it more
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concretely, though more incorrectly is able to
bring those forgotten experiences back to memory.

The theory says that, contrary to
popular
opinion, human sexual life or what later cor-
responds with it shows an early blossoming
which comes to an end at about the
age of five.

Then follows the so-called latency period
lasting up to puberty during which there is no
further sexual
development; on the contrary,
much that had been achieved undergoes a retro-
gression. The theory is confirmed by anatomical
study of the growth of the internal genitalia;
it

suggests that man is derived from a species of
animal that was
sexually mature at five years,
and arouses the
suspicion that the postponement,
and the
beginning twice over, of sexual life has
much to do with the transition to humanity.

Man seems to be the only animal with a latency
period and delayed sexuality. Investigations of
primates, which so far as I know have not been
made, would furnish an invaluable test for this
theory. It must be significant psychologically
that the
period of infantile amnesia coincides
with this early blossoming of sexuality.

Perhaps
this state of affairs is a
necessary condition for the
existence of neurosis, which seems to be a human
privilege, and which in this light appears to be
a survival from
primaeval times like certain
parts of our body.

What features are common to all neurotic
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symptoms? Here we may note two important
points. The effects of the trauma are twofold,
positive and negative. The former are endeavours
to revive the trauma, to remember the
forgotten

experience, or, better still, to make it real
to live once more
through a repetition of it; if
it was an
early affective relationship it is revived
ii] an analogous connection with another person.
These endeavours are summed
up in the terms
"

fixation to the trauma " and "
repetition -
compulsion.

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The effects can be
incorporated
into the so-called normal
Ego and in the form of
constant tendencies lend to it immutable character
traits, although or rather because their
real cause, their historical
origin, has been forgotten. Thus a man who has spent his childhood
in an excessive and since
forgotten " mother -
fixation "

may all his life seek for a woman on
whom he can be dependent, who will feed and
keep him. A girl who was seduced in early
childhood
may orient her later sexual life towards
provoking such assaults over and over again. It
will thus be seen that to understand the
problems
of neurosis enables us to
penetrate into the secrets
of character formation in
general.

The negative reactions
pursue the opposite
aim; here nothing is to be remembered or
repeated of the forgotten traumata. They may be
grouped together as defensive reactions. They
express themselves in avoiding issues, a tendency
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which may culminate in an inhibition or
phobia.
These
negative reactions also contribute considerably to the formation of character. Actually

they represent fixations ON the trauma NO less than do the positive reactions, but they follow the opposite tendency. The symptoms of the neurosis proper constitute a compromise to which both the positive and negative effects of the trauma contribute; sometimes one component, sometimes the other, predominates. These opposite reactions create conflicts which the subject cannot as a rule resolve.

The second point is this. All these phenomena, the symptoms as well as the restrictions of personality and the lasting changes in character, display the characteristic of compulsiveness; that is to say, they possess great psychical intensity, they show a far-reaching independence of psychical processes that are adapted to the demands of the real world and obey the laws of logical thinking. They are not influenced by outer reality or not normally so; they take NO notice of real things, or the mental equivalents of these, so that they can easily COME into active opposition to either.

They are as a state within the state, an inaccessible party, useless for the COMMON weal; yet they can succeed in overcoming the other, the so-called normal, component and in forcing it into their service. If this happens then the sovereignty of an inner psychical reality

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has been established over the reality of the outer world; Tthe way to insanity is open. Even if it does not COME to this, the practical importance of the conflict is immeasurable. The

inhibitions,
or even
inability to deal with life, of people
dominated by neurosis are a very
important
factor in human
society. The neurosis may be
regarded as a direct expression of a " fixation "
to an
early period of their past.

And how about latency, a question especially
interesting in regard to our analogy ? A trauma
in childhood can be
immediately followed by a
neurosis
during childhood; this constitutes an
effort of defence
accompanied by the formation
of
symptoms. The neurosis may last a long time
and cause striking disturbances, or it
may remain
latent and be overlooked. As a
rule, defence
obtains the
upper hand in such a neurosis ; in any
event
changes of the personality remain like
scars. A childhood neurosis seldom continues
without an interval into the neurosis of the adult.

Much more often it is succeeded by a time of
undisturbed
development, a process made possible
or facilitated
by the physiological latency. Only
later does the
change appear with which the
neurosis becomes
definitely manifest as a delayed
effect of the trauma. This
happens either at
puberty or somewhat later. In the first case it
comes about because the instincts
strengthened by
physical maturity can again take up the battle

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in which at first
they were defeated. In the second
case the neurosis becomes manifest later because

the reactions and changes of the personality brought about by the defence mechanisms prove to be an obstacle for the solving of new problems of life, so that grave conflicts arise between the demands of the outer world and those of the Ego, which strives to preserve the organization it had painfully developed in its defensive struggle. The phenomenon of a latency in the neurosis between the first reactions to the trauma and the later appearance of the illness must be recognized as typical. The illness may also be regarded as an attempt at cure, an endeavour to reconcile the divided Ego divided by the trauma with the rest and to unite it into a strong whole that will be fit to cope with the outer world. Yet such an effort is rarely successful unless analytic help is sought, and even then not always. Often it ends in entirely destroying and breaking up the Ego or in the Ego being overpowered by the portion that was early split off, and has since been dominated, by the trauma.

To convince the reader of the truth of our statements the exhaustive communication of several neurotic life histories would be necessary.

The difficulty of the subject, however, would lead to great discursiveness and entirely destroy the character of this essay. It would become a treatise on the neuroses and even then would enforce conviction only on that minority of people who have devoted their life's work to the study and practice of psycho-analysis. Since I am speaking here to a larger audience I can only ask the reader to lend a tentative credence to the

abbreviated
exposition which he has just read;
I, on my part, agree that he need accept the
deductions which I
propose to lay before him
only if the theories on which they are based turn
out to be correct.
Nevertheless I can
try to relate one case
which will show clearly many of the
peculiarities of neurosis that I have mentioned above.
One case cannot, of course, display everything;
so we shall not be
disappointed if its content seems
far
away from the analogy we are seeking.

A little boy who, as so often happens in the
families of the
petite bourgeoisie, shared his parents
5
bedroom had
ample, and even regular, oppor-
tunity for observing sexual intercourse at an age
before he was able to talk. He saw much and
heard still more. In his later neurosis, which
broke out
immediately after the time of his first
seminal emission, disturbed
sleep was the earliest
and most
trying symptom. He became extra-
ordinarily sensitive to nocturnal noises and, if
once awakened, could not
get to sleep again.
This disturbance was a true
compromise symp-
tom: on the one hand the
expression of his
defence
against his nocturnal observations, ON
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the other hand the endeavour to re-establish the
wakefulness which had enabled him to listen to
those
experiences.
Stirred
early to aggressive virility by these
observations the
boy began to excite his penis by

touch and to make sexual advances towards his mother, putting himself thus in his father's place through identification with him. This went on until at last his mother forbade him to touch his penis and threatened to tell his father, who would take the offending organ away. This threat of castration had a very strong traumatic effect on the boy. He relinquished his sexual activity and his character underwent a change. Instead of identifying himself with his father he began to be afraid of him, adopted a passive attitude towards him and by means of occasional disobedience provoked his father to punish him physically. This corporal punishment had sexual significance for him and in that way he could identify himself with the ill-treated mother. He began to cling more and more closely to his mother as if he could not bear to be without her love, even for a moment, since this constituted a protection against the danger of castration from his father. The latency period was spent in this modification of the (Edipus complex; it remained free from obvious disturbances. He became a model child and was successful in school. So far we have pursued the immediate effect

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of the trauma and confirmed the existence of a latency period. The appearance of puberty brought with it the manifest neurosis and disclosed its second main symptom, sexual impotency. He had lost all sensitiveness in his penis, never tried to touch it and never dared to

approach a woman sexually.
His sexual activities remained restricted to
psychical onanism with sadistic -masochistic
phantasies in which it was easy to recognize the
consequence of those early observations of
parental coitus. The thrust of increased virility
that
puberty brought with it turned to ferocious
hatred of his father and
opposition to him. This
extreme
negative relation to his father, which
went as far as
injuring his own interests, was the
reason for his failure in life and his conflicts with
the outer world. He could not allow himself to
be successful in his
profession, because his father
had forced him to
adopt it. He made no friends
and was always on bad terms with his
superiors.
Burdened with these symptoms and
incapacities
he found at last a wife after his father's death.
Then the core of his character appeared, traits
which made him very difficult to live with. He
developed an absolutely egotistical, despotic and
brutal
personality; it was obviously necessary to
him to bully and
oppress other people. He was
the exact
copy of his father, after the image of
him he had formed in his memory; that is to
say,
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he revived the father-identification which as a
child he had
adopted for sexual motives. In this
part of the neurosis we recognize the return of
the
repressed, which together with the immedi-
ate effects of the trauma and the phenomenon of
latency we have described as among the essential
symptoms of a neurosis.

4. Application

Early trauma Defence Latency Outbreak
of the Neurosis Partial return of the repressed
material: this was the formula we drew up for

the
development of a neurosis. NOW I will
invite the reader to take a step forward and
assume that in the history of the human species
something happened similar to the events in the
life of the individual. That is to say, mankind
as a whole also
passed through conflicts of a
sexual -aggressive nature, which left permanent
traces but which were for the most part warded
off and
forgotten; later, after a long period of
latency, they came to life again and created
phenomena similar in structure and tendency to
neurotic
symptoms.
I have, I believe, divined these processes and
wish to show that their consequences, which
bear a strong resemblance to neurotic symptoms,
are the
phenomena of religion. Since it can no
longer be doubted after the discovery of evolution
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that mankind had a
pre -history, and since this
history is unknown (that is to say, forgotten),
such a conclusion has almost the
significance of
an axiom. If we should learn that the effective
and forgotten traumata relate, here as well as
there, to life in the human family, we should
greet this information as a highly welcome and
unforeseen
gift which could not have been
anticipated from the foregoing discussion.
I have
already upheld this thesis a quarter of a
century ago, in my book Totem and Taboo (1912),
and need only
repeat what I said there. The
argument started from some remarks by Charles
Darwin and embraced a suggestion of Atkinson's.
It
says that in primaeval times men lived in small
hordes, each under the domination of a strong
male. When this was is not known; no
point of
contact with
geological data has been established.

It is likely that mankind was not very far advanced in the art of speech. An essential part of the argument is that all primaeval men, including, therefore, all our ancestors, underwent the fate I shall now describe.

The story is told in a very condensed way, as if what in reality took centuries to achieve, and during that long time was repeated innumerable times, had

only happened once. The strong male was the master and father of the whole horde: unlimited in his power, which he used brutally. All females were his property, the wives and daughters HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION in his OWN horde as well as perhaps also those robbed from other hordes. The fate of the sons was a hard one; if they excited the father's jealousy they were killed or castrated or driven out.

They were forced to live in small communities and to provide themselves with wives by robbing them from others. Then one or the other son might succeed in attaining a situation similar to that of the father in the original horde.

One favoured position came about in a natural way: it was that of the youngest son who, protected by his mother's love, could profit by his father's

advancing years and replace him after his death. An echo of the expulsion of the eldest son, as well as of the favoured position of the

youngest, seems to linger in many myths and fairy tales.

The next decisive step towards changing this first kind of " social " organization lies in the following suggestion. The brothers who had

been driven out and lived together in a community clubbed together, overcame the father and according to the custom of those times all partook of his body. This cannibalism need not shock us; it survived into far later times. The essential point is, however, that we attribute to those primaeval people the same feelings and emotions that we have elucidated in the primitives of our own times, our children, by psycho-analytic research. That is to say

:
they not merely
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hated and feared their father, but also honoured him as an example to follow; in fact each son wanted to place himself in his father's position.

The cannibalistic act thus becomes comprehensible as an attempt to assure one's identification with the father by incorporating a part of him. It is a reasonable surmise that after the killing of the father a time followed when the brothers quarrelled among themselves for the succession, which each of them wanted to obtain for himself alone.

They came to see that these fights were as dangerous as they were futile. This hard-won understanding as well as the memory of the deed of liberation they had achieved together and the attachment that had grown up among them during the time of their exile led at last to a union among them, a sort of social contract.

Thus there came into being the first form of a social organization accompanied by a renunciation of instinctual gratification; recognition of mutual

Obligations; institutions declared sacred, which
could not be broken in short the
beginnings of
morality and law. Each renounced the ideal
3f
gaining for himself the position of father, of
possessing his mother or sister. With this the
taboo of incest and the law of
exogamy came into

being. A good part of the power which had
become vacant
through the father's death passed
to the

women; the time of the matriarchate
followed. The

memory of the father lived on

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during this time of the "brother horde." A
strong animal, which perhaps at first was also
dreaded, was found as a substitute. Such a
choice

may seem very strange to us, but the gulf
which man created later between himself and the
animals did not exist for
primitive man. Nor does
it with our

children, whose animal phobias we
have been able to explain as dread of the father.

The relationship to the totem animal retained
the

original ambivalency of feeling towards
the father. The totem was, on the one hand, the
corporeal ancestor and protecting spirit of the

clan; he was to be revered and protected. On
the other hand, a festival was instituted on which
day the same fate was meted out to him as the
primaeval father had encountered. He was killed
and eaten by all the brothers together. (The
Totem feast, according to Robertson Smith.)

This
great day was in reality a feast of triumph to
celebrate the
victory of the united sons over the
father.

Where, in this connection, does religion come
in? Totemism, with its
worship of a father substi-
tute, the ambivalency towards the father which

is evidenced
by the totem feast, the institution
of remembrance festivals and of laws the
breaking
of which is
punished by death this totemism,

I

conclude, may be regarded as the earliest
appearance of religion in the history of mankind,
and it illustrates the close connection existing
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from the
very beginning of time between social
institutions and moral
obligations. The further
development of religion can be treated here only
in a
very summary fashion. Without a doubt it
proceeded parallel to the cultural development
of mankind and the
changes in the structure of
human social institutions.

The next step forward from totemism is the
humanizing of the worshipped being. Human
gods, whose origin from the totem is not veiled,
take the
place previously filled by animals.
Either the
god is still represented as an animal or
at least he bears the countenance of an
animal;
the totem
may become the inseparable com-

panion of the god, or, again, the myth makes the
god vanquish just that animal which was nothing
but his
predecessor. At one period it is hard to
say when great mother-deities appeared, prob-
ably before the male gods, and they were wor-
shipped beside the latter for a long time to come.
During that time a great social revolution had
taken

place. Matriarchy was followed by a
restitution of the
patriarchal order. The new
fathers, it is true, never succeeded to the omni-
potence of the primaeval father. There were too
many of them and they lived in larger com-
munities than the
original horde had been; they

had to get on with one another and were restricted by social institutions. Probably the mother deities were

developed when the matriarchy was

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being limited, in order to compensate the

dethroned mothers. The male gods

appear at

first as sons

by the side of the great mothers; only

later do

they clearly assume the features of the

father. These male

gods of polytheism mirror the

conditions of

patriarchal times. They are numer-

ous, they have to share their authority, and

occasionally they obey a higher god. The next

step, however, leads us to the topic that interests

us here : the return of the one and

only father

deity whose power is unlimited.

I must admit that this historical

survey leaves

many a gap and in many points needs further

confirmation. Yet whoever declares our recon-

struction of

primaeval history to be fantastic

greatly underestimates the richness and the force

of the evidence that has

gone to make up this

reconstruction.

Large portions of the past, which

are here woven into a whole, are

historically

proven or even show their traces to this day, such

as matriarchal

right, totemism and male com-

munities. Others have survived in remarkable

replicas. Thus more than one author has been

struck

by the close resemblance between the rite

of Christian Communion where the believer

symbolically incorporates the blood and flesh of

his God and the Totem feast, whose inner

meaning it reproduces. Numerous survivals of

our

forgotten early history are preserved in the

legends and fairy tales of the peoples, and

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analytic study of the mental life of the child has yielded an unexpectedly rich return by filling up gaps in our knowledge of primaeval times. AS a contribution towards an understanding of the highly important relation between father and son I need only quote the animal phobias, the fear of

being eaten by the father (which seems so strange to the grown mind), and the enormous intensity of the castration complex. There is nothing in our reconstruction that is invented, nothing that is not based on good grounds.

Let us

suppose that the presentation here given of

prymaeval history is on the whole credible.

Then two elements can be recognized in religious rites and doctrines: on the one hand, fixations on the old family history and survivals of this; on the other hand, reproductions of the past and a return

long after of what had been forgotten.

It is the latter element that has until now been overlooked and therefore not understood. It will therefore be illustrated here

by at least one

impressive example.

It is

specially worthy of note that every memory returning from the forgotten past does so with great force, produces an incomparably strong influence on the mass of mankind and

puts

forward an irresistible claim to be believed, against which all logical objections remain

powerless very much like the *credo quia absurdum*. This

strange characteristic can only be

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understood by comparison with the delusions in a psychotic case. It has long been recognized that delusions contain a

piece of forgotten truth,

which had at its return to put up with being

distorted and misunderstood, and that the compulsive conviction appertaining to the delusion emanates from this core of truth and spreads to the errors that enshroud it. Such a kernel of truth which we might call historical truth must

also be conceded to the doctrines of the various religions. They are, it is true, imbued with the character of psychotic symptoms, but as mass phenomena they have escaped the curse of isolation.

NO other part of religious history has become so abundantly clear as the establishment of monotheism among the Jewish people and its continuation into Christianity if we omit the development from the animal totem to the human god with his regular (animal) companion, a development which can be traced without a gap and readily understood. (Each of the four Christian evangelists, by the way, still has his favourite animal.) If we admit for the moment that the rule of Pharaoh's empire was the external reason for the appearance of the monotheistic idea, we see that this idea uprooted from its soil and transplanted to another people after a long latency period takes hold of this people, is treasured by them as their most precious possession

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and for its part keeps this people alive by bestowing on them the pride of being the chosen people. It is the religion of the primaeval father and the hope of reward, distinction and finally world sovereignty, is bound up with it. The last-named wish -phantasy relinquished long ago by the Jewish people still survives among their enemies in their belief in the conspiracy of the "Elders of Zion." We shall consider in a later chapter how the special peculiarities of a monotheistic religion borrowed from Egypt must have worked on the Jewish people, how it formed their character for good through the disdaining of magic and mysticism and encouraging them to

progress in spirituality and sublimations. The people, happy in their conviction of possessing truth, overcome by the consciousness of being the chosen, came to value highly all intellectual and ethical achievements. I shall also show how their sad fate, and the disappointments reality had in store for them, was able to strengthen all these tendencies. At present, however, we shall follow their historical development in another direction. The restoration to the primaeval father of his historical rights marked a great progress, but this could not be the end. The other parts of the prehistoric tragedy also clamoured for recognition. How this process was set into motion it is not easy to say. It seems that a growing feeling of guiltiness had seized the Jewish people and HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

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perhaps the whole of civilization of that time- as a precursor of the return of the repressed material. This went on until a member of the Jewish people, in the guise of a political -religious agitator, founded a doctrine which together with another one, the Christian religion separated from the Jewish one. Paul, a Roman Jew from Tarsus, seized upon this feeling of guilt and correctly traced it back to its primaeval source. This he called original sin ; it was a crime against God that could be expiated only through death. Death had come into the world through original sin. In reality this crime, deserving of death, had been the murder of the Father who later was deified. The murderous deed itself, however, was not remembered ; in its

place stood the phantasy
of
expiation and that is why this phantasy could
be welcomed in the form of a
gospel of salvation

(Evangel). A Son of God, innocent himself,
had sacrificed himself and had thereby taken
over the
guilt of the world. It had to be a Son,
for the sin had been murder of the Father.
Probably traditions from Oriental and Greek
mysteries had exerted their influence on the
shaping of this phantasy of salvation. The
essence of it seems to be Paul's OWN contribution.
He was a man with a gift for religion, in the truest
sense of the
phrase. Dark traces of the past lay
in his soul,
ready to break through into the
regions of consciousness.

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That the Redeemer sacrificed himself as an
innocent man was an
obviously tendentious
distortion, difficult to reconcile with logical
thinking. How could a man who was innocent
assume the
guilt of the murderer by allowing
himself to be killed? In historical
reality there
was no such contradiction. The " redeemer "
could be no one else but he who was most
guilty,
the leader of the brother horde who had over-
powered' the Father. Whether there had been
such a chief rebel and leader must in
my
opinion remain uncertain. It is quite possible,
but we must also consider that each member of
the brother horde
certainly had the wish to do
the deed
by himself and thus to create for himself
a
unique position as a substitute for the identifica-
tion with the father which he had to
give up when
he was
submerged in the community. If there

was NO such leader, then Christ was the heir of
an unfulfilled wish
-phantasy; if there was such
a leader, then Christ was his successor and
his reincarnation. It is
unimportant, however,
whether we have here a
phantasy or the return
of a
forgotten reality ; in any case, here lies the
origin of the conception of the hero he who
rebels
against the father and kills him in some
guise or other.

1

Here we also find the real source

1

Ernest Jones calls

my attention to the probability that the
God Mithra, who slays the Bull, represented this leader, the one
who simply gloried in his deed. It is well known how long the
worship of Mithra disputed the final victory with Christianity.

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of the "

tragic guilt " of the hero in drama a

guilt hard to demonstrate otherwise. We can
scarcely doubt that in Greek tragedy the hero and
the chorus

represent this same rebel hero and the
brother horde, and it cannot be without
signifi-

cance that in the Middle Ages the theatre
began

afresh with the
story of the Passion.

I have

already mentioned that the Christian
ceremony of Holy Communion, in which the
believer

incorporates the flesh and blood of the
Redeemer, repeats the content of the old Totem
feast; it does so, it is true, only in its tender and

adoring sense, not in its aggressive sense. The
ambivalency dominating the father-son relation-
ship, however, shows clearly in the final result
of the

religious innovation. Meant to propitiate
the father

deity, it ends by his being dethroned

and set aside. The Mosaic religion had been a
Father

religion; Christianity became a Son religion. The old God, the Father, took second place; Christ, the Son, stood in His stead, just as in those dark times every son had longed to do. Paul, by developing the Jewish religion further, became its destroyer. His success was certainly mainly due to the fact that through the idea of salvation he laid the ghost of the feeling of guilt. It was also due to his giving up the idea of the chosen people and its visible sign circumcision. That is how the new religion could become all-embracing, universal. Although this

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step might have been determined by Paul's revengefulness on account of the opposition which his innovation found among the Jews, nevertheless one characteristic of the old Aton religion (universality) was reinstated; a restriction had been abolished which it had acquired while passing on to a new carrier, the Jewish people. In certain respects the new religion was a cultural regression as compared with the older Jewish religion; this happens regularly when a new mass of people of a lower cultural level effects an invasion or is admitted into an older culture. Christian religion did not keep to the lofty heights of spirituality to which the Jewish religion had soared. The former was no longer strictly monotheistic, took over from the surrounding peoples numerous symbolical rites, re-established the great Mother Goddess and found room for many deities of polytheism in an easily recognizable disguise though in subordinate positions. Above all it was not inaccessible as the Aton religion and the subsequent Mosaic religion had been to the penetration of superstitions, magical and mystical elements which

proved a great hindrance to the spiritual development of two following millenia.

The triumph of Christianity was a renewed victory of the Amon priests over the God of Ikhnaton after an interval of a millenium and a

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half and over a

larger region. And yet Christianity marked a progress in the history of religion

: that is to

say, in regard to the return of the

repressed. From now on Jewish religion was, so to

speak, a fossil.

It would be worth while to understand

why

the monotheistic idea should make such a deep

impression on just the Jewish people, and why

they adhered to it so tenaciously. I believe this

question can be answered. The great deed

and misdeed of

primaeval times, the murder of the

Father, was brought home to the Jews, for fate decreed that

they should repeat it on the person

of Moses, an eminent father substitute. It was a case of

acting instead of remembering, some-

thing which often happens during analytic work with neurotics.

They responded to the doctrine

of Moses which should have been a stimulus to their

memory by denying their act, did not

progress beyond the recognition of the great

Father and barred the

passage to the point where

later on Paul started his continuation of primaeval

history. It can scarcely be chance that the violent death of another

great man should become the

starting point for the creation of a new religion

by Paul. This was a man whom a small number

of adherents in

Judea believed to be the Son of

God and the
promised Messiah, and who later
on took over some of the childhood
history that
had been attached to Moses. In reality, however,
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we have hardly more definite knowledge of him
than we have of Moses. We do not know if he
was really the great man whom the
Gospels
depict or whether it was not rather the fact and
the circumstances of his death that were the
decisive factor in his
achieving importance. Paul,
who became his apostle, did not himself know
him.

The murder of Moses by his people which
Sellin
recognized in the traces of tradition and
which, strangely enough, the young Goethe

¹
had
assumed without any evidence has thus become
an
indispensable part of our reasoning, an impor-
tant link between the
forgotten deed of primaeval
times and its
subsequent reappearance in the
form of Monotheistic religions,

²
It is an attractive
suggestion that the guilt attached to the murder
of Moses
may have been the stimulus for the wish-
phantasy of the Messiah, who was to return and
give to his people salvation and the promised
sovereignty over the world. If Moses was this
first

Messiah, Christ became his substitute and
successor. Then Paul could with a certain
right
say to the peoples: " See, the Messiah has truly
come. He was indeed murdered before your
eyes." Then also there is some historical truth
in the rebirth of
Christ, for he was the resurrected

¹
Israel in der Wüste, Bd. VII of the Weimar Edition, S. 170.

²
Compare in this connection the well-known exposition in

Frazer's The Golden

Bough, Part III, " The Dying God, " 1911.

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Moses and the returned
primaeval Father of the
primitive horde as well only transfigured and
as a Son in the
place of his Father.

The poor Jewish people, who with its usual
stiff-necked
obduracy continued to deny the
murder of their " father/

5

has

dearly expiated

this in the course of centuries. Over and over
again they heard the reproach: you killed our
God. And this reproach is true, if rightly
interpreted. It says, in reference to the history of
religion: you won't admit that you murdered
God (the archetype of God, the primaeval Father
and his reincarnations). Something should be
added, namely: " It is true, we did the same
thing, but we admitted it, and since then we have
been
purified."

Not all accusations with which antisemitism
pursues the descendants of the Jewish people are
based on such good foundations. There must, of
course, be more than one reason for a phenomenon
of such

intensity and lasting strength as the

popular hatred of Jews. A whole series of reasons
can be divined: some of them, which need no
interpretation, arise from obvious considerations;
others lie

deeper and spring from secret sources,
which one would regard as the specific motives.

In the first

group the most fallacious is the
reproach of their being foreigners, since in many
places nowadays under the sway of antisemitism
the

Jews were the oldest constituents of the

K

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population or arrived even before the present in-
habitants. This is so, for
example, in the town
of

Cologne, where Jews came with the Romans,
before it was colonized
by Germanic tribes. Other
grounds for antisemitism are stronger, as for
example, the circumstance that Jews mostly live
as a
minority among other peoples, since the
feeling of solidarity of the masses in order to be
complete has need of an animosity against an
outside
minority and the numerical weakness of
the
minority invites suppression. Two other
peculiarities that the Jews possess, however, are
quite unpardonable. The first is that in many
respects they are different from their " hosts."
Not fundamentally so, since they are not a
foreign
Asiatic race as their enemies maintain but
mostly consist of the remnants of Mediterranean
peoples and inherit their culture. Yet they are
different
although sometimes it is hard to define
in what
respects especially from the Nordic
peoples, and racial intolerance finds stronger
expression strange to say in regard to small
differences than to fundamental ones. The second
peculiarity has an even more pronounced effect.
It is that
they defy oppression, that even the most
cruel
persecutions have not succeeded in exter-
minating them. On the contrary, they show a
capacity for holding their own in practical life
and, where they are admitted, they make valuable
contributions to the
surrounding civilization.

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The
deeper motives of antisemitism have their
roots in times
long past; they come from the
unconscious and I am
quite prepared to hear
that what I am
going to say will at first appear
incredible. I venture to assert that the
jealousy

which the Jews evoked in the other peoples by maintaining that they were the first-born, favourite child of GOD the Father has not yet been overcome by those others, just as if the latter had given credence to the assumption. Furthermore, among the customs through which the Jews marked off their aloof position, that of circumcision made a disagreeable, uncanny impression on others. The explanation probably is that it reminds them of the dreaded castration idea and of things in their primaeval past which they would fain forget. Then there is lastly the most recent motive of the series. We must not forget that all the peoples who now excel in the practice of anti-semitism became Christians only in relatively recent times, sometimes forced to it by bloody compulsion. One might say, they all are "badly christened"; under the thin veneer of Christianity they have remained what their ancestors were, barbarically polytheistic. They have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion which was forced on them, and they have projected it on to the source from which Christianity came to them. The facts that the Gospels tell a story which is enacted among Jews, and in truth

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treats only of Jews, has facilitated such a projection. The hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity, and it is not surprising that in the German National-Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds such clear expression in the hostile treatment of both.

5. Difficulties

Perhaps the preceding chapter has succeeded

in
establishing the analogy between neurotic
processes and religious events and thereby in
pointing to the unexpected origin of the latter.
In this translation from individual into mass
psychology two difficulties emerge, different in
nature and
importance, which we must now
examine. The first is that we have treated here of
only one case in the rich phenomenology of the
religions and have not thrown any light on the
others. The author
regretfully has to admit that
he cannot
give more than one sample, that he has
not the
expert knowledge necessary to complete
the
investigation. This limited knowledge will
allow him
perhaps to add that the founding of the
Mohammedan religion seems to him to be an
abbreviated
repetition of the Jewish one, in
imitation of which it made its
appearance. There
is reason to believe that the
Prophet originally
intended to
accept the Jewish religion in full for
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himself and his
people. The regaining of the one
great primaevial Father produced in the Arabs an
extraordinary advance in self-confidence which
led them to
great worldly successes, but which
it is true exhausted itself in these. Allah
proved
himself to be much more
grateful to his chosen
people than Jahve had in his time. The inner
development of the new religion, however, soon
came to a standstill,
perhaps because it lacked
the
profundity which in the Jewish religion
resulted from the murder of its founder. The
apparently rationalistic religions of the East are

in essence ancestor
cults; therefore they stop
short at an
early stage of the reconstruction of
the
past. If it is correct that in the primitive
peoples of our time we find as the sole content
:>f their
religion the worship of a highest Being,
then we can
interpret this only as a withering in
the
development of religion, and from here draw
a
parallel with the innumerable cases of rudiment-
ary neuroses which we find in clinical psychology.
Why here as well as there no further development
took

place we do not understand. We must hold
the individual
gifts of these peoples responsible
or it, the direction their activities take and their
general social condition. Besides it is a good
rule in
analytic work to be satisfied with explain-
ing what exists and not to try to explain what has
lot
happened.

The second
difficulty in this translation into
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mass

psychology is much more significant, because
it
presents a new problem of a cardinal nature.

The question arises in what form is the active
tradition in the life of the
peoples still extant.

There is no such question with individuals, for
here the matter is settled

by the existence of
memory traces of the past in the unconscious.

Let us

go back to our historical example. The
compromise in Qades, we said, was based on the
continued existence of a
powerful tradition

living on in the people who had returned from
Egypt. There is no problem here. We suggested
that such a tradition was maintained
by conscious

memory of oral communications which had been passed on from forbears of only two or three generations ago. The latter had been participants and eye-witnesses of the events in question. Can

we believe the same, however, for the later centuries, namely, that the tradition was always based on a knowledge, communicated in a normal way, which had been transmitted from forbear to descendant ? Who the

persons were that stored such

knowledge and passed it on from mouth to mouth we no longer know, as we did in the earlier case.

According to Sellin, the tradition of the murder of Moses was always

present among the Priests, until at last it was set down in writing which alone made it possible

for Sellin to divine it. Yet it could not have been known to many; it was not general knowledge.

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And is this form of transmission enough to explain its effect ? Can we credit such a knowledge on the

part of a few with the power to seize the imagination of the masses so lastingly when they learn of it ? It rather looks as if there were a something also in the ignorant mass of the people akin to this

knowledge on the part of the few, which comes forward to meet it as soon as it is uttered.

It becomes harder still to arrive at a conclusion when we turn to the analogous case in primaeval times. In the course of thousands of centuries it

certainly became forgotten that there was a primaeval father possessing the qualities we mentioned, and what fate he met. Nor can we assume an oral tradition as we did with Moses. In what sense, therefore, can there be any question of a tradition ? In what form could it have existed ?

To help readers who are unwilling or un-

prepared to plunge into complicated psychological matters I shall place the result of the following investigation at the very beginning. I hold that the concordance between the individual and the mass is in this point almost complete.

The masses, too, retain an impression of the past in unconscious memory traces.

The case of the individual seems to be clear enough. The memory trace of early events he has retained, but he has retained it in a special

psychological condition. One can say that the individual
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always knew of them, in the sense that we know repressed material. We have formed certain conceptions and they can easily be proved by analysis of how something gets forgotten and of how after a time it can come to light again. The forgotten material is not extinguished, only "repressed"; its traces are extant in the

memory in their original freshness, but they are isolated by "counter-cathexes." They cannot establish contact with the other intellectual processes; they are unconscious, inaccessible to consciousness. It

may happen that certain parts of the repressed material have escaped this process, have remained accessible to

memory and occasionally reappear in consciousness, but even then they are isolated, a foreign body without any connection with the rest of the mind. This

may happen, but it need not

happen. Repression may also be complete, and this is the case we propose to examine.

This repressed material retains its impetus to penetrate into consciousness. It reaches its aim when three conditions are

present. (i) When the strength of counter-cathexis is diminished by an illness which acts on the Ego itself, or through a different distribution of cathexis in the Ego as

happens regularly during sleep. (2) When those instincts attached to the repressed material become strengthened. The processes during puberty provide the best

example for this. (3) Whenever

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recent events

produce impressions or experiences which are so much like the repressed

material that they have the

power to awaken it.

Thus the recent material gets strengthened by the latent

energy of the repressed, and the repressed material

produces its effect behind the recent material and with its help.

In none of the three cases does the material that had been

repressed succeed in reaching consciousness

unimpeded or without change. It

must always undergo distortions which bear witness to the not

entirely overcome resistance derived

from the counter-cathexis, or else to the modifying influence of a recent experience or to both.

As a distinguishing sign and landmark we have used the difference between a psychic process

being conscious or unconscious. The repressed material is unconscious. It would be a cheering

simplification if this sentence could be reversed, i.e. if the difference of the qualities " conscious "

and " unconscious " were identical with the difference:

belonging to the Ego or repressed.

The fact that our mental life harboured such

isolated and unconscious material would be new

and
important enough. In reality things are
more complex. It is true that all repressed
material is unconscious, but not true that
every-
thing belonging to the Ego is conscious. We
become aware that being conscious is an
ephemeral quality which adheres to a psychical
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process only temporarily. This is why for our
purposes we must replace "conscious" by "capable
of
being conscious," and we call this quality "pre-
conscious." We then
say more correctly
: the
Ego
is
essentially preconscious (virtually conscious) ,
but
parts of the Ego are unconscious.
This last statement teaches us that the
qualities
to which we have attended so far do not suffice
to show us the
way in the darkness of mental life.
We must introduce another distinction, one no
longer qualitative, but topographical, and
which lends it a
special value genetic at the same
time. Now we
distinguish from our mental life
which we see to be an apparatus consisting of
several hierarchies, districts or
provinces one
region, which we term the " real Ego," from
another which we call the " Id." The Id is the
older; the Ego has developed out of it through the
influence of the outer world as the bark
develops
around a tree. Our
primary instincts start in the
Id; all processes in the Id are unconscious. The
Ego corresponds, as we have mentioned, with the
realm of the
preconscious; parts of it normally
remain unconscious. The psychical processes in
the " Id "

obey quite different laws; their course and the influence they exert on one another are different from those that reign in the Ego. It is the discovery of these differences that has guided us to our new understanding and lends confirmation to it.

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The repressed material must be regarded as belonging to the Id and obeys its mechanisms; it differs from it only in respect of its genesis. This differentiation takes place during the early period, while the Ego is developing out of the Id. Then the Ego takes possession of part of the Id and raises it on to the preconscious level; other parts are thus not affected and remain in the Id as the "unconscious" proper. In the further development of the Ego, however, certain psychical impressions and processes in it get shut out by defensive mechanisms; they are deprived of their preconscious character, so that they are degraded again to become integral parts of the Id. This, therefore, is the "repressed material" in the Id. As regards the passage between the two mental provinces we assume, on the one hand, that unconscious processes in the Id can be raised to a preconscious level and incorporated into the Ego, and, on the other hand, that preconscious material in the Ego can travel the opposite way and be shifted back into the Id. That later on another district, the "Super-ego," is delimited in the Ego, does not concern us in this context. All this may seem far from simple, but if one has become familiar with the unaccustomed topographical conception of the mental apparatus then there are no particular difficulties. I will add here that the topography of the psyche is

have here developed has in general nothing to do

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with cerebral anatomy; there is only one point

where it impinges on it. The unsatisfactoriness of this

conception which I perceive as clearly as anyone has its roots in our complete ignorance of the

dynamic nature of mental processes. We

realise that what

distinguishes a conscious idea from a

preconscious one, and this from an unconscious one, cannot be

anything else but a

modification, or perhaps also another distribution, of

psychic energy. We speak of cathexes and

hypercathexes, but beyond this we lack all knowledge and even a beginning for a useful

working hypothesis. Of the phenomenon of

consciousness we are at least able to

say that it

cleaves

originally to perception. All perceptions

which come about through

painful, tactile,

auditory or visual stimuli are the more likely to be conscious.

Thought processes, and what may

be

analogous to them in the Id, are unconscious

per se, and obtain their entry into consciousness

by their connection, via the function of speech,

with memory traces of

perceptions through touch

and ear. In the animal, which lacks

speech, these

relationships must be simpler.

The

impressions of the early traumata, from

which we started, are either not translated into the

preconscious or they are soon re-directed

into the Id

through repression. Their memory-

residues are then unconscious and

operate from

the Id. We can believe we can follow their

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further fate

distinctly as long as they deal with

personal experiences. A new complication arises,

however, when we become aware that there

probably exists in the mental life of the individual

not

only what he has experienced himself, but

also what he

brought with him at birth, fragments

of

phylogenetic origin, an archaic heritage. Then

the

question arises

: in what does this inheritance

consist, what does it contain, and what evidence

of it is there ?

The first and most certain answer is that it

consists in certain

dispositions, such as all living

beings possess: that is to say, in the ability and tendency to follow a certain direction of develop-

ment, and to react in a particular way to certain

excitations, impressions and stimuli. Since

experience shows that individuals differ in this

respect, our archaic inheritance includes these

differences; they represent what is recognized

as the constitutional element in the individual.

Since all human

beings go through the same

experiences, at least in their earliest years, they

also react to them in the same

way, and this is why

the doubt arose whether these reactions with all

their individual differences should not be reckoned

as

part of that archaic heritage. This doubt must

be

rejected; the fact of this similarity does not

enrich our

knowledge of the archaic heritage.

Meanwhile analytic research has yielded several

results which

give us food for thought. First of

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all there is the

universality of speech symbolism.

Symbolic substitution of one object through

another the same applies to actions our

children are conversant with, and it seems quite

natural to them. We cannot trace the way in which they learned it and must admit that in many cases to learn it would be impossible. It is original knowledge, which the adult later on forgets. He employs, it is true, the same symbolism in his dreams, but he does not understand them unless the analyst interprets them for him and even then he is loath to believe the translation. When he has used one of the common phrases of speech in which this symbolism is crystallized, he has to admit that its true meaning had quite escaped him. Symbolism even ignores the difference in languages; investigation would probably show that it is ubiquitous, the same with all peoples. Here there seems to be an assured case of archaic inheritance from the time when speech was developing, although one might attempt another explanation: one might say that these are thought-connections between ideas which were formed during the historical development of speech and which have to be repeated every time the individual passes through such a development. This then would be a case of inheriting a thought-disposition as elsewhere one inherits an instinctual disposition; so it again would contribute nothing new to our problem.

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Analytic research, however, has also brought to light other things, which exceed in significance anything we have so far discussed. In studying reactions to early traumata we often find to our surprise that they do not keep strictly to what the individual himself has experienced, but deviate from this in a way that would accord much better with their being reactions to genetic events and in general can be explained only through the influence of such. The behaviour of a neurotic child to his parents when under the influence of an (Edipus and castration complex is very rich in such reactions which seem unreasonable in the individual and can only be understood phylo-

genetically, in relation to the experiences of earlier generations. It would be amply worth while to collect and publish the material on which my remarks are based. In fact it seems to me convincing enough to allow me to venture further and assert that the archaic heritage of mankind includes not only dispositions, but also ideational contents, memory-traces of the experiences of former generations. In this way the extent as well as the significance of the archaic heritage would be enhanced in a remarkable degree.

On second thoughts I must admit that I have argued as if there were no question that there exists an inheritance of memory-traces of what our forefathers experienced, quite independently of direct communication and of the influence of education by example. When I speak of an old tradition still alive in a people, of the formation of a national character, it is such an inherited tradition and not one carried on by word of mouth that I have in mind. Or at least I did not distinguish between the two, and was not quite clear about what a bold step I took by neglecting this difference. This state of affairs is made more difficult, it is true, by the present attitude of biological science which rejects the idea of acquired qualities being transmitted to descendants. I admit, in all modesty, that in spite of this I cannot picture biological development proceeding without taking this factor into account. The two cases, it is true, are not quite similar; with the former it is a question of acquired qualities that are hard to conceive, with the latter memory-traces of external expressions, something almost concrete. Probably, however, we cannot find one without

the other. If we
accept the continued existence
of such
memory-traces in our archaic inheritance
then we have
bridged the gap between individual
and mass
psychology, and can treat peoples as
we do the individual neurotic. Though we may
admit that for the memory-traces in our archaic
inheritance we have so far no
stronger proof
than those remnants of
memory evoked by
analytic work, which call for a derivation from
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phylogenesis, yet this proof seems to me convinc-
ing enough to postulate such a state of affairs. If
things are different then we are unable to advance
one step further on our way, either in psycho-
analysis or in mass psychology. It is bold, but
inevitable.
In making this
postulate we also do something
else. We diminish the over-wide gap human
arrogance in former times created between man
and beast. If the so-called instincts of animals
which from the very beginning allow them to
behave in their new conditions of living as if they
were old and long-established ones if this
instinctual life of animals
permits of any explana-
tion at all, it can only be this: that they carry
over into their new existence the experience of
their kind, that is to
say, that they have preserved
in their minds memories of what their ancestors
experienced. In the human animal things should
not be fundamentally different. His own archaic
heritage though different in extent and charac-
ter
corresponds to the instincts of animals.
After these considerations I have no qualms in
saying that men have always known in this
particular way that once upon a time they had
a
primaeval father and killed him.
Two further questions must here be answered.

First under what conditions does such a memory enter into the archaic inheritance and, secondly, in what circumstances can it become active, that

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is to

say, penetrate from its unconscious state in the Id into consciousness

though in an altered

and distorted form? The answer to the first

question is easy to formulate: it happens when the

experience is important enough or is repeated often

enough or in both cases. With the father-murder both conditions are fulfilled. To the second

question I would remark: there may be

a number of influences which need not all be known; a spontaneous course is also possible in analogy with what happens in some neuroses.

The awakening, however, of the memory-trace

through a recent real repetition of the event is certainly of decisive importance. The murder of Moses was such a

repetition, and later on the supposed judicial murder of Christ, so that these

events move into the foreground as causative

agents. It seems as if the genesis of monotheism would not have been possible without these

events. We are reminded of the words of the poet:

"

All that is to live in endless song

Must in life-time first be drown'd."

1

I will conclude with a remark which furnishes a

psychological argument. A tradition based only on oral communication could not produce the

1

Schiller: The Gods of Greece (English translation by E. A. Bowring).

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obsessive character which appertains to religious

phenomena. It would be listened to, weighed
and
perhaps rejected, just like any other news
from outside ; it would never achieve the
privilege
of
being freed from the coercion of logical think-
ing. It must first have suffered the fate of
repression, the state of being unconscious, before
it could
produce such mighty effects on its
return, and force the masses under its spell, such
as we have observed with astonishment and
hitherto without
understanding in religious
tradition. And this is a consideration which tilts
the balance in favour of the belief that
things
really happened as I have tried to describe them
or at least
very much in that way.

SECTION II

i.

Summary

The following part of this essay cannot be sent
forth into the world without
lengthy explanations
and
apologies. For it is no other than a faithful,
often literal,
repetition of the first part save that
some of the critical investigations have been
condensed and that there are additions referring
to the
problem of how and why the character of
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the
Jewish people developed in the form it did.

I know that this

way of presenting my subject is
as ineffectual as it is inartistic. I
myself dis-

approve of it wholeheartedly. Why have I not
avoided it ? The answer to this
question is easy
for me to find, but rather hard to admit. I have
not been able to efface the traces of the unusual
way in which this book came to be written.
In truth it has been written twice over. The
first time was a few

years ago in Vienna, where
I did not believe in the
possibility of publishing
it. I decided to
put it away, but it haunted me
like an unlaid
ghost, and I compromised by
publishing two parts of the book independently
in the
periodical Imago. They were the psycho-
analytical starting points of the whole book:
"
Moses an
Egyptian " and the historical essay
built on it " If Moses was an
Egyptian. " The
rest, which might give offence and was danger-
ous
namely, the application of my theory to the
genesis of monotheism and my interpretation of
religion I kept back, as I thought, for ever.
Then in March 1938 came the unexpected
German invasion. It forced me to leave my home,
but it also freed me of the fear lest
my publishing
the book
might cause psycho-analysis to be for-
bidden in a
country where its practice was still
allowed. NO sooner had I arrived in
England
than I found the
temptation of making my with-
held
knowledge accessible to the world irresistible,
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and so I started to rewrite the third
part of my
essay, to follow the two already published. This
naturally necessitated a regrouping of the
material, if only in part. In this secondary re-
editing, however, I did not succeed in fitting the
whole material in. On the other hand, I could
not make
up my mind to relinquish the two
former contributions altogether, and this is how

the
compromise came about of adding unaltered
a whole
piece of the first version to the second, a
device which has the
disadvantage of extensive
repetition.

I
might, it is true, find comfort in the reflection
that the matter I treated of was so new and
significant quite apart from whether my presen-
tation of it was correct or not that it must count
as
only a minor misfortune if people are made to
read about it twice over. There are
things that
should be said more than once and cannot be
repeated often enough. It should, however, be
left to the reader's free will whether he wishes to
linger with a subject or return to it. A conclusion
should not be
emphasized by the sly device of
dishing up the same subject twice in the same
book.

By doing so one proves oneself a clumsy
writer and has to bear the blame for it. However,
the creative
power of an author does not, alas,
always follow his good will. A work grows as it
will and sometimes confronts its author as an
independent, even an alien, creation.

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2. The
People of Israel

If we are
quite clear in our minds that a pro-
cedure like the present one to take from the
traditional material what seems useful and to
reject what is unsuitable, and then to put the
individual
pieces together according to their
psychological probability does not afford any
security for finding the truth, then one is quite
right to ask why such an attempt was under-
taken. In answer to this I must cite the result.
If we substantially reduce the severe demands
usually made on an historical and psychological
investigation then it might be possible to clear
up problems that have always seemed worthy
of attention and which, in consequence of

recent events, force themselves again on our observation. We know that of all the peoples who lived in antiquity in the basin of the Mediterranean the Jewish people is perhaps the only one that still exists in name and probably also in nature. With an unexampled power of resistance it has defied misfortune and ill-treatment, developed special character traits and, incidentally, earned the hearty dislike of all other peoples. Whence comes this resistance of the Jew, and how his character is connected with his fate, are things one would like to understand better.

We may start from one character trait of the
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Jews which governs their relationship to other people. There is no doubt that they have a very good opinion of themselves, think themselves nobler, on a higher level, superior to the others from whom they are also separated by many of their customs. ¹ With this they are animated by a special trust in life, such as is bestowed by the secret possession of a precious gift; it is a kind of optimism. Religious people would call it trust in God.

We know the reason of this attitude of theirs and what their precious treasure is. They really believe themselves to be God's chosen people; they hold themselves to be specially near to Him, and this is what makes them proud and confident. According to trustworthy accounts they behaved in Hellenistic times as they do to-day. The Jewish character, therefore, even then was what it is now, and the Greeks, among whom and alongside whom they lived, reacted to the Jewish qualities in the same way as their "hosts" do to-day. They reacted, so one might think, as if they too believed in the preference which the

Israelites claimed for themselves. When one is the declared favourite of the dreaded father one need not be surprised that the other brothers and sisters are

jealous. What this jealousy can lead to

1

The insult frequently hurled at them in ancient times that they were lepers (cf. Manetho) must be read as a projection: " They keep apart from us as if WE were lepers."

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is

exquisitely shown in the Jewish legend of Joseph and his brethren. The subsequent course of world

history seemed to justify this Jewish

arrogance, for when later on God consented to

send mankind a Messiah and Redeemer He again

chose Him from among the Jewish

people. The

other

peoples would then have had reason to

say: " Indeed, they were right; they are God's

chosen

people. " Instead of which it happened

that the salvation

through Jesus Christ brought

on the Jews nothing but a stronger hatred, while

the

Jews themselves derived no advantage from

this second

proof of being favoured, because they

did not

recognize the Redeemer.

On the strength of our previous remarks we

may say that it was the man Moses who stamped

the

Jewish people with this trait, one which

became so significant to them for all time. He

enhanced their self-confidence by

assuring them

that

they were the chosen people of God; he

declared them to be

holy, and laid on them the

duty to keep apart from others. Not that the

other

peoples on their part lacked self-confidence.

Then, just as now, each nation thought itself

superior to all the others. The self-confidence of

the
Jews, however, became through Moses
anchored in
religion ; it became a part of their
religious belief. By the particularly close rela-
tionship to their God they acquired a part of His
grandeur. And since we know that behind the
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God who chose the Jews and delivered them from
Egypt stood the man Moses who achieved that
deed, ostensibly at God's command, we venture
to
say this: it was one man, the man Moses,
who created the Jews. To him this
people owes
its
tenacity in supporting life; to him, however,
also much of the
hostility which it has met and is
meeting still.

3. The Great Man

How is it possible that one single man can
develop such extraordinary effectiveness, that he
can create out of indifferent individuals and
families one
people, can stamp this people with
its definite character and determine its fate for
millenia to come ? Is not such an
assumption a
retrogression to the manner of thinking that
produced creation myths and hero worship, to
times in which historical
writing exhausted itself
in
narrating the dates and life histories of cer-
tain individuals
sovereigns or conquerors ? The
inclination of modern times tends rather to trace
back the events of human
history to more hidden,
general and impersonal factors the forcible
influence of economic circumstances,
changes in
food
supply, progress in the use of materials and
tools, migrations caused by increase in population
and
change of climate. In these factors individuals

play no other part than that of exponents or
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representatives of mass tendencies which must
come to expression and which found that
expression as it were by chance in such persons.
These are
quite legitimate points of view, but
they remind us of a significant discrepancy
between the nature of our
thinking apparatus
and the organization of the world which we are
trying to apprehend. Our imperative need for
cause and effect is satisfied when each
process
has one demonstrable cause. In
reality, outside
us this is
hardly so; each event seems to be over-
determined and turns out to be the effect of
several
converging causes. Intimidated by the
countless
complications of events research takes
the
part of one chain of events against another,
stipulates contrasts that do not exist and which
are created
merely through tearing apart more
comprehensive relations.

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If, therefore, the investigation of one particular
case demonstrates the
outstanding influence of a
single human personality, our conscience need
not
reproach us that through accepting this
conclusion we have dealt a blow at the doctrine
of the
significance of those general impersonal

1

I would
guard myself, however, against a possible misunder-
standing. I do not mean to say that the world is so complicated
that
every assertion must hit the truth somewhere. No, our
thinking has preserved the liberty of inventing dependencies and
connections that have no
equivalent in reality. It obviously prizes
this
gift very highly, since it makes such ample use of it inside as
well as outside of science.

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factors. In
point of fact there is without doubt

room for both. In the genesis of monotheism we cannot, it is true, point to any other external factor than those we have already mentioned, namely, that this development has to do with the establishing of closer connections among different nations and the existence of a great empire.

We will keep, therefore, a place for " the great man " in the chain, or rather in the network, of determining causes. It may not be quite useless, however, to ask under what condition we bestow this title of honour. We may be surprised to find that it is not so

easy to answer this question. A

first

formulation, which would define as great a human being specially endowed with qualities we value highly, is obviously in all respects unsuitable.

Beauty, for instance, and muscular strength much as they may be envied do not establish a claim to " greatness.

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There should perhaps be mental qualities present, psychical and intellectual distinction. In the latter respect we have misgivings: a man who has an outstanding knowledge in one particular field would not be called a great man without any further reason. We should certainly not apply the term to a master of chess or to a virtuoso on a musical instrument, and not necessarily to a distinguished artist or a man of science. In such a case we should be content to say: he is a great writer, painter, mathematician or physicist, a pioneer in this field or that, but we should pause before pronouncing him a great man. When we declare, for instance, Goethe, Leonardo da Vinci and Beethoven, to be great men, then something else

must move us to do so beyond the admiration of their grandiose creations. If it were not for just such examples one might very well conceive the idea that the title " a great man " is reserved by preference for men of action that is to say, conquerors, generals and rulers and was intended as a recognition of the greatness of their achievements and the strength of the influence that emanated from them. However, this too is unsatisfying, and is fully contradicted by our condemnation of so many worthless people of whom one cannot deny that they exercised a great influence on their own and later times. Nor can success be chosen as a distinguishing feature of greatness if one thinks of the vast number of great men who, instead of being successful, perished after being dogged by misfortune.

We should, therefore, tentatively, incline to the conclusion that it is hardly worth while to search for an unequivocal definition of the concept: a great man. It seems to be a rather loosely used term, one bestowed without due consideration and given to the supernormal development of certain human qualities: in doing so we keep close to the original literal sense of the word " greatness.

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We may also remember that it is
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not so much the nature of the great man that arouses our interest as the question of what are the qualities by virtue of which he influences his contemporaries. I propose to shorten this investi-

gation, however, since it threatens to lead us far from our goal.

Let us

agree, therefore, that the great man influences his

contemporaries in two ways:

through his personality and through the idea for which he stands. This idea may lay stress on an old

group of wishes in the masses, or point to a new aim for their wishes, or again lure the masses by other means. Sometimes and this is surely the more

primitive effect the personality alone exerts its influence and the idea plays a decidedly subordinate

part. Why the great man should rise to

significance at all we have no doubt

whatever. We know that the great majority of

people have a strong need for authority which it can admire, to which it can submit, and which dominates and sometimes even ill-treats it. We

have learned from the psychology of the individual

whence comes this need of the masses. It is the longing for the father that lives in each of us from his childhood

days, for the same father whom the hero of

legend boasts of having overcome. And

now it begins to dawn on us that all the features with which we furnish the

great man are traits

of the father, that in this similarity lies the essence which so far has eluded us- of the great man.

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The decisiveness of thought, the strength of will, the forcefulness of his deeds, belong to the picture of the father; above all other things, however,

the self-reliance and

independence of the great

man: his divine conviction of doing the right

thing, which may pass into ruthlessness. He must be admired, he may be trusted, but one cannot help being also afraid of him. We should have taken a cue from the word itself; who else but the father should have been in childhood the great man ? Without doubt it must have been a tremendous father imago that stooped in the person of Moses to tell the poor Jewish labourers that they were his dear children. And the conception of a unique, eternal, omnipotent God could not have been less overwhelming for them; He who thought them worthy to make a bond with Him, promised to take care of them if only they remained faithful to His worship. Probably they did not find it easy to separate the image of the man Moses from that of his God, and their instinct was right in this, since Moses might very well have incorporated into the character of his God some of his own traits, such as his irascibility and implacability. And when they killed this great man they only repeated an evil deed which in primaeval times had been a law directed against the divine king, and which as we know derives from a still older prototype.

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Frazer. Loc. cit.,
p. 192.

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When, on the one hand, the figure of the great man has grown into a divine one, it is time to remember, on the other hand, that the father also was once a child. The great religious idea

for which the man Moses stood was, as we have stated, not his own; he had taken it over from his

King Ikhnaton. And the latter whose greatness as a founder of religion is proved without a doubt followed perhaps intimations which through his mother or by other ways had reached him from the near or the far East.

We cannot trace the network any further. If the present argument, however, is correct so far, the idea of monotheism must have returned in the fashion of a boomerang into the country of its origin. It appears fruitless to attempt to ascertain what merit attaches to an individual in a new idea.

Obviously many have taken part in its development and made contributions to it.

On the other hand, it would be wrong to break off the chain of causation with Moses and to neglect what his successors, the Jewish prophets, achieved. Monotheism had not taken root in Egypt. The same failure might have happened in Israel after the people had thrown off the inconvenient and pretentious religion imposed on them. From the mass of the Jewish people, however, there arose again and again men who lent new colour to the fading tradition, renewed the admonishments and demands of Moses and

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did not rest until the lost cause was once more regained. In the constant endeavour of centuries, and last but not least through two great reforms the one before, the other after the Babylonian

exile there took

place the change of the popular

God Jahve into the God whose worship Moses

had forced

upon the Jews. And it is the proof of

a

special psychical fitness in the mass which had become the Jewish people that it could bring forth so many persons who were ready to take upon themselves the burden of the Mosaic religion for the reward of believing that their people was a chosen one and perhaps for other benefits of a similar order.

4. The Progress in Spirituality

To achieve lasting psychical effects in a people it is

obviously not sufficient to assure them that they were

specially chosen by God. This assurance must be

proved if they are to attach belief to it and draw their conclusions from that belief. In the

religion of Moses the exodus served as such a

proof; God, or Moses in his name, did not tire of

citing this proof of favour. The feast of the Passover was established to

keep this event in

mind, or rather an old feast was endowed with this

memory. Yet it was only a memory. The exodus itself

belonged to a dim past. At the time the

signs of God's favour were meagre

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enough; the fate of the people of Israel would rather indicate his disfavour. Primitive

peoples

used to

depose or even punish their gods if they

did not fulfil their

duty of granting them victory,

fortune and comfort.

Kings have often been

treated

similarly to gods in every age; the ancient

identity of king and god, i.e. their common

origin, thus becomes manifest. Modern peoples

also are in the habit of thus

getting rid of their

kings if the splendour of their reign is dulled by defeats

accompanied by the loss of land and money. Why the people of Israel, however, adhered to their God all the more devotedly the worse they were treated by Him that is a question which we must leave open for the moment.

It may stimulate us to enquire whether the religion of Moses had given the people nothing else but an increase in self-confidence through the consciousness of being "chosen." The next element is indeed easily found. Their religion also gave to the Jews a much more grandiose idea of their God or to express it more soberly the idea of a more august God. Whoever believed in this God took part in his greatness, so to speak, might feel uplifted himself. This may not be quite obvious to unbelievers, but it may be illustrated by the simile of the high confidence a Briton would feel in a foreign land, made unsafe by revolt, a confidence in which a subject of some

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small continental state would be entirely lacking. The Briton counts on his Government to send a warship if a hair of his head is touched and also on the rebels knowing very well that this is so, while the small state does not even own a warship.

The pride in the greatness of the British Empire has therefore one of its roots in the consciousness of the greater security and protection that a British subject enjoys. The same may be true of

the idea of the
great God and since one would
hardly presume to assist God in his conduct of
the world

pride in the greatness of God goes
together with that of being " chosen.

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Among the precepts of Mosaic religion is one
that has more

significance than is at first obvious.

It is the

prohibition against making an image of
God, which means the compulsion to worship an
invisible God. I surmise that in this

point Moses

had

surpassed the Aton religion in strictness.

Perhaps he meant to be consistent; his God was
to have neither a name nor a countenance. The

prohibition was perhaps a fresh precaution
against magic malpractices. If this prohibition

was

accepted, however, it was bound to exercise
a

profound influence. For it signified sub-
ordinating sense perception to an abstract idea;

it was a

triumph of spirituality over the senses;

more

precisely an instinctual renunciation

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[I use this phrase (Triebverzicht) as an abbreviation for

"

renouncing the satisfaction of an urge derived from an instinct ".
Trans.]

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accompanied by its psychologically necessary
consequences.

To make more credible what at first glance
does not

appear convincing we must call to mind
other

processes of similar character in the develop-
ment of human culture. The earliest

among them

and

perhaps the most important we can
discern

only in dim outline in the obscurity of

primaeval times. Its surprising effects make it necessary to conclude that it happened. In our children, in adult neurotics as well as in primitive people, we find the mental phenomenon which we have called the belief in the "omnipotence of thoughts." We judge it to be an over-estimation of the influence which our mental faculties the intellectual ones in this case can exert on the outer world by changing it. All magic, the predecessor of science, is basically founded on these premisses. All magic of words belongs here, as does the conviction of the power connected with the knowledge and the pronouncing of a name. We surmise that "omnipotence of thoughts" was the expression of the pride mankind took in the development of language, which had brought in its train such an extraordinary increase in the intellectual faculties. There opened then the new realm of spirituality where conceptions, memories, and deductions became of decisive importance, in contrast to the lower psychical activity which concerned itself with the

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immediate perceptions of the sense organs. It was certainly one of the most important stages on the way to becoming human. Another process of later time confronts us in a much more tangible form. Under the influence of external conditions which we need not follow up here and which in part are also not sufficiently known it happened that the matriarchal structure of society was replaced by a patriarchal one. This naturally brought with it a revolution in the existing state of the law. An echo of this revolution can still be heard, I think, in the

Oresteia of

^Eschylos. This turning from the mother to the father, however, signifies above all

a

victory of spirituality over the senses, that is to say a step forward in culture, since maternity is proved by the senses whereas paternity is a surmise based on a deduction and a premiss. This

declaration in favour of the thought process, there-

by raising it above sense perception, was proved to be a

step charged with serious consequences.

Some time between the two cases I have mentioned another event took place which shows

a closer

relationship to the ones we have investi-

gated in the history of religion. Man found that he was faced with the

acceptance of " spiritual "

forces, that is to say such forces as cannot be apprehended by the senses, particularly not by sight, and yet having undoubted, even extremely strong, effects. If we may trust to language, it

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was the movement of the air that provided the

image of spirituality, since the spirit borrows its name from the breath of wind (animus, spiritus, Hebrew: ruach= smoke). The idea of the soul

was thus born as the spiritual principle in the

individual. Observation found the breath of air again in the human breath which ceases with

death ; even to-day we talk of a dying man

breathing his last. Now the realm of spirits had

opened for man, and he was ready to endow everything in nature with the soul he had discovered in himself. The whole world became

animated, and science, coming so much later, had enough to do in disestablishing the former state of affairs and has not

yet finished this task.

Through the Mosaic prohibition God was raised to a

higher level of spirituality; the door was opened to further changes in the idea of God of which we shall speak later. At present another of its effects will

occupy us. All such progress in spirituality results in increasing self-confidence, in

making people proud so that they feel superior to those who have remained in the bondage of the

senses. We know that Moses had

given the Jews

the

proud feeling of being God's chosen people;

by de-materialising God a new, valuable contribution was made to the secret treasure of the people. The Jews preserved their inclination towards

spiritual interests. The political misfortune of the nation

taught them to appreciate

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the

only possession they had retained, their written records, at its true value.

Immediately

after the destruction of the

Temple in Jerusalem

by Titus, Rabbi Jochanaan ben Sakkai asked for

permission to open at Jabne the first school for the

study of the Torah. From now on it was the Holy Book, and the study of it, that kept the scattered

people together.

So much is

generally known and accepted. I

only wished to add that this whole development, so characteristic of the Jews, had been initiated

by Moses' prohibition against worshipping God in a visible form.

The preference which through two thousand years the Jews have given to spiritual endeavour has, of course, had its effect; it has helped to build a

dyke against brutality and the inclination

to violence which are

usually found where

athletic

development becomes the ideal of the people. The harmonious development of spiritual and bodily activity as achieved by the Greeks was denied to the Jews. In this conflict their decision was at least made in favour of what is culturally the more important.

5. Renunciation versus Gratification

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It is not at all obvious

why progress in spiritual-

ity and subordination of the senses should raise

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(See footnote ON p. 178.)

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the self-confidence of a person as well as of a

nation. This seems to

presuppose a definite

standard of value and another person or institu-

tion who uses it. For an explanation we turn to

an analogous case in the psychology of the

individual which we have learned to understand.

When the Id makes an instinctual demand of

an erotic or aggressive nature on a human being,

the most

simple and natural response for the Ego,

which governs the apparatus for thinking and

muscle innervation, is to satisfy this by an action.

This satisfaction of the instinct is felt as pleasure

by the Ego, just as not satisfying this instinct

would undoubtedly become a source of discom-

fort. Now it

may happen that the Ego eschews

satisfaction of the instinct because of external

obstacles, namely, when it realizes that the action

in

question would bring in its course serious

danger to the Ego. Such a refraining from satis-

faction, an "instinctual renunciation" because of

external obstacles as we say, in obedience to

the

reality-principle is never pleasurable. The

instinctual renunciation would

bring about a

lasting painful tension if we did not succeed in

diminishing the strength of the instinctual urge

itself

through a displacement of energy. This

instinctual renunciation may also be forced on

us, however, by other motives, which we rightly

call inner ones. In the course of individual

development a part of the inhibiting forces in the

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outer world becomes internalized; a standard
is created in the

Ego which opposes the other
faculties

by observation, criticism and prohibition.

We call this new standard the super-ego. From now

on the Ego, before undertaking to satisfy the
instincts, has to consider not only the dangers of
the outer world, but also the
objections of the

super-ego, and has therefore more occasion for
refraining from satisfying the instinct. While,
however, instinctual renunciation for external
reasons is

only painful, renunciation for internal
reasons, in obedience to the demands of the super-
ego, has another economic effect. It brings
besides the inevitable
pain a gain in pleasure to
the

Ego as it were, a substitutive satisfaction.

The Ego feels uplifted; it is proud of the renuncia-
tion as of a valuable achievement. We think we
can follow the mechanism of this gain in
pleasure.

The super-ego is the successor and representative
of the

parents (and educators), who superintended
the actions of the individual in his first
years of

life; it perpetuates their functions almost without
a

change. It keeps the Ego in lasting dependence
and exercises a steady pressure. The Ego is
concerned, just as it was in childhood, to retain
the love of its master, and it feels his
appreciation

as a relief and satisfaction, his
reproaches as

pricks of conscience. When the Ego has made
the sacrifice to the
super-ego of renouncing an
instinctual satisfaction, it
expects to be rewarded

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by being loved all the more. The consciousness
of

deserving this love is felt as pride. At a time

when the authority was not yet internalized as super-ego the relation between the threatened loss of love and the instinctual demand would have been the same. A feeling of security and satisfaction results if out of love to one's parents one achieves an instinctual renunciation. This good feeling could acquire the peculiar narcissistic character of pride only after the authority itself had become a part of the Ego.

How does this explanation of gaining satisfaction through instinctual renunciation help us in understanding the processes we wish to study, namely, the increase of self-confidence that accompanies progress in spirituality? Apparently they help very little, for the circumstances here are

very different. There is no instinctual renunciation, and there is no second person or higher standard for whose benefit the sacrifice is made. The second statement will soon appear

doubtful. One

might say: the great man is the authority for whose sake the effort is made, and since the

great man achieves this because he is a father substitute we need not be surprised if he is allotted the role of super-ego in mass psychology.

This would, therefore, hold good for the man Moses in his relationship to the Jewish people.

In other points, however, there would seem to be no

proper analogy. The progress in spirituality

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consists in deciding against the direct sense perception in favour of the so-called higher intellectual processes, that is to say, in favour of

memories, reflection and deduction. An example of this would be the decision that paternity is more important than maternity, although the former cannot be proved by the senses as the latter can. This is why the child has to have the father's name and inherit after him. Another example would be: our God is the greatest and mightiest, although He is invisible like the storm and the soul. Rejecting a sexual or aggressive instinctual demand seems to be something very different from this. In many examples of progress in spirituality for instance, in the triumph of father-right we cannot point to the authority that provides the measure for what is to be valued the more highly. In this case it cannot be the father himself, since it is only this progress that raises him to the rank of an authority. We are, therefore, confronted with the phenomenon that during the development of mankind the world of the senses becomes gradually mastered by spirituality, and that man feels proud and uplifted by each such step in progress. One does not know, however, why this should be so. Still later it happens that spirituality itself is overpowered by the altogether mysterious emotional phenomenon of belief. This is the famous credo quia absurdum, and whoever has compassed this regards it as HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION 187 the highest achievement. Perhaps what is common to all these psychological situations is some-

thing else. Perhaps man declares simply that the higher achievement is what is more difficult to attain, and his pride in it is only narcissism heightened by his consciousness of having overcome difficulty.

These considerations are certainly not very fruitful, and one might think that they have nothing to do with our investigation into what determined the character of the Jewish people. This would be only to our advantage, but that this train of thought has all the same to do with our

problem is shown by a fact that will occupy us later more extensively. The religion that began with the prohibition against making an image of its God has developed in the course of centuries more and more into a religion of instinctual renunciation. Not that it demands sexual abstinence; it is content with a considerable restriction of sexual freedom. God, however, becomes completely withdrawn from sexuality and raised to an ideal of ethical perfection.

Ethics, however, means restriction of instinctual gratification. The Prophets did not tire of maintaining that God demands nothing else from his people but a just and virtuous life: that is to say, abstention from the gratification of all impulses that according to our present-day moral standards are to be condemned as vicious. And even

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the exhortation to believe in God seems to recede in

comparison with the seriousness of these ethical demands. Instinctual renunciation thus appears to play a prominent part in religion, although it had not been present in it from the beginning.

Here is the

place to make a statement which should obviate a

misunderstanding. Though it

may seem that instinctual renunciation, and the ethics based on it, do not

belong to the essence of

religion, still they are genetically closely related to

religion. Totemism, the first form of religion of which we know, contains as an indispensable part of its system a number of laws and prohibitions which plainly mean nothing else but instinctual renunciation. There is the worship of the Totem, which contains the prohibition against killing or harming it; exogamy, that is to say, the renunciation of the passionately desired mothers and sisters of the horde; the granting of equal rights for all members of the brother horde, i.e. the restriction of the impulse to settle their rivalry by brute force. In these rules we have to discern the first beginnings of a moral and social order. It does not escape our notice that here two different motivations come into play. The first two prohibitions work in the direction of what the murdered father would have wished; they, so to speak, perpetuate his will. The third law, the one giving equal rights to the brothers, ignores the father's wishes. Its sense lies in the need of preserving permanently the new order which was established after the death of the father. Otherwise reversion to the former state would have been inevitable. Here social laws became separated from others which as we might say originated directly from a religious context. In the abbreviated development of the human individual the most important events of that process are repeated. Here also it is the parents' authority essentially that of the all-powerful

father who wields the
power of punishment
that demands instinctual renunciation on the
part of the child and determines what is allowed
and what is forbidden. What the child calls
"

good " or " naughty " becomes later, when
society and super-ego take the place of the
parents, " good,

³³

in the sense of moral, or evil,
virtuous or vicious. But it is still the same thing :
instinctual renunciation through the presence of
the
authority which replaced and continued that
of the father.

Our insight into these problems becomes further
deepened when we investigate the strange con-
ception of sanctity. What is it really that appears
"

sacred "

compared with other things which we
respect highly and admit to be important and signi-
ficant ? On the one hand the connection between
the sacred and the religious is unmistakable;

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it is so stressed as to be obvious.

Everything

connected with religion is sacred ; it is the
very core of sanctity. On the other hand our
judgement is disturbed by the numerous attempts
to

lay claim to the character of holiness by so
many other things, persons, institutions and
procedures that have little to do with religion.

These endeavours are often
plainly tendentious.

Let us

proceed from the feature of prohibition
which adheres so closely to religion. The sacred
is
obviously something that must not be touched.

A sacred prohibition has a very strong affective
note, but actually it has no rational motivation.

For why should it be such a
specially hideous
crime to commit incest with a
daughter or sister,
so much more so than

any other sexual relations ?

When we ask for an explanation we shall surely be told that all our feelings cry out against such a crime. Yet all this means is that the prohibition is taken to be self-evident, that we do not know how to explain it.

That such an explanation is illusory can easily be proved. What is reputed to offend our feelings used to be a general custom one might say a sacred tradition in the ruling families of the Ancient Egyptians and other peoples. It went without saying that each Pharaoh found his first and foremost wife in his sister, and the successors of the Pharaohs, the Greek Ptolemies, did not hesitate to follow this example. So far we seem

HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION to discern that incest in this case between brother and sister was a prerogative forbidden to

ordinary mortals and reserved for kings who represented the gods on earth. The world of the Greek and Germanic myths also took no exception to these incestuous

relationships. We may surmise that the anxious concern for "family" in our

higher nobility is a remnant of that old privilege, and we observe that, as a consequence of inbreeding continued through many generations in the highest social circles, the crowned heads of Europe to-day consist in effect of one family.

To point to the incest of gods, kings and heroes helps to dispose of another attempt at explanation, namely, the one that would explain the horror of incest

biologically and reduce it to an instinctive knowledge of the harmfulness of inbreeding. It

is not even
certain, however, that there lies any
danger in inbreeding; let alone that primitive
races
recognized it and guarded against it. The
uncertainty in determining permitted and pro-
hibited
relationships is another argument against
presupposing a " natural feeling " as an original
motive for the horror of incest.

Our reconstruction of
pre-history forces another
explanation on us. The law of Exogamy, the
negative expression of which is the fear of incest,
was the will of the father and continued it after
his murder. Hence the
strength of its affectivity
and the
impossibility of a rational motivation:

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in short its sacredness. I should confidently
anticipate that an investigation of all other cases of
sacred
prohibitions would lead to the same result
as that of the horror of incest, namely that what is
sacred was originally nothing but the perpetuated
will of the
primaeval father. This would also
elucidate the ambivalence of the word hitherto
inexplicable which expresses the conception of
sacredness. It is the ambivalence which governs
the relationship to the father. " Sacer " does not
only mean " sacred/

5 "

blessed/

5

but also some-

thing that we can only translate by " accursed/

5

"

worthy of disgust

55

(" auri sacra fames

55

).

The will of the father, however, was not only
something which one must not touch, which one
had to hold in high honour, but also something
which made one shudder because it necessitated
a
painful instinctual renunciation. When we hear
that Moses " sanctified " his people by introduc-

ing the custom of circumcision we now understand the

deep-lying meaning of this pretension. Circumcision is the symbolical substitute of castration, a punishment which the primaeval father dealt his sons long ago out of the fulness of his power; and whosoever accepted this symbol showed by so doing that he was ready to submit to the father's will, although it was at the cost of a painful sacrifice.

To return to ethics : we may say in conclusion that a

part of its precepts is explained rationally
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by the necessity to mark off the rights of the community to the individual, those of the individual to the community, and those of individuals to one another. What, however, appears mysterious, grandiose and mystically self-evident owes its character to its connection with religion, its origin from the will of the father.

6. The Truth in Religion

How we who have little belief envy those who are convinced of the existence of a Supreme Power, for whom the world holds no problems because He Himself has created all its institutions !

How comprehensive, exhaustive and final are the doctrines of the believers compared with the laboured, poor and patchy attempts at explanation which are the best we can produce. The Divine Spirit, which in itself is the ideal of ethical perfection, has planted within the soul of men the knowledge of this ideal and at the same time the urge to strive toward it. They feel immediately what is high and noble and what low and mean. Their emotional life is measured by the distance from their ideal. It affords them high gratification when they in perihelion, so to speak come nearer to it; and they are punished by severe distress when in aphelion they have

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moved further away from it. All this is so simply and unshakably established. We can

only regret
it if certain
experiences of life and observations of
nature have made it
impossible to accept the
hypothesis of such a Supreme Being. As if the
world had not
enough problems, we are con-
fronted with the task of
finding out how those who
have faith in a Divine
Being could have acquired
it, and whence this belief derives the enormous
power that enables it to overwhelm Reason and
Science. ¹

Let us return to the more modest
problem that
has

occupied us so far. We set out to explain
whence comes the
peculiar character of the Jewish
people which in all probability is what has
enabled that

people to survive until to-day. We
found that the man Moses created their character
by giving to them a religion which heightened
their self-confidence to such a
degree that they
believed themselves to be
superior to all other
peoples. They survived by keeping aloof from
the others. Admixture of blood made little
difference, since what kept them together was
something ideal the possession they had in
common of certain intellectual and emotional
values. The Mosaic
religion had this effect
because

(i) it allowed the people to share in the
grandeur of its new conception of God, (2)

¹

(An allusion to the passage in Faust " Verachte nur Vernunft
und Wissenschaft." Transl.)

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because it maintained that the people had been
"

chosen " by this great God and was destined
to

enjoy the proofs of his special favour, and

(3) because it forced upon the people a pro-

gress in spirituality which, significant enough
in itself, further

opened the way to respect for
intellectual work and to further instinctual
renunciations.

This then is the conclusion we have attained,
but, although I do not wish to retract anything
I have said before, I cannot
help feeling that it is
somehow not altogether satisfactory. The cause
does not, so to
speak, accord with the result.

The fact we are trying to explain seems to be
incommensurate with everything we adduce by
way of explanation. Is it possible that all our
investigations have so far discovered not the
whole motivation, but only a superficial layer, and
that behind this lies hidden another very signifi-
cant
component ? Considering how extraordin-
arily complicated all causation in life and history
is we should have been
prepared for something
of that kind.

The path to this deeper motivation starts at a
certain
passage in the previous discussion. The
religion of Moses did not achieve its effects
immediately, but in a strangely indirect manner.
This does not mean that it did not itself produce
the effect. It took a long time, many centuries,
to do so; that
goes without saying where the
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development of a people's character is concerned.
Our modification, however, refers to a fact which
we have taken from the history of Jewish religion
or, if one prefers, introduced into it. We said
that the
Jewish people shook off the religion of
Moses after a certain time; whether
they did so
completely or whether they retained some of its
precepts we cannot tell. In accepting the sup-
position that during the long period of the fight
for Canaan, and the
struggles with the peoples
settled there, the
Jahve religion did not sub-

stantially differ from the worship of the other Baalim, we stand on historical ground, in spite of all the later tendentious attempts to obscure this shaming state of affairs. The religion of Moses, however, had not perished. A sort of memory of it had survived, obscured and distorted, but perhaps supported by individual members of the Priest caste through the ancient scripts. It was this tradition of a great past that continued to exert its effect from the background; it slowly attained more and more power over the minds of the people, and at last succeeded in changing the god Jahve into the God of Moses and in bringing again to life the abandoned religion Moses had instituted centuries ago.

In an earlier chapter of this book we have discussed the hypothesis that would seem to be inevitable if we are to find comprehensible such an achievement on the part of tradition.

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7. The Return of the Repressed

There are a number of similar processes among those which the analytic investigation of mental life has made known to us. Some of them are termed pathological; others are counted among the varieties of the normal. This matters little, however, for the limits between the two are not strictly defined and the mechanisms are to a certain extent the same. It is much more important whether the changes in question take place in the

ego itself or whether they confront it as alien; in the latter case they are called symptoms.

From the fullness of the material at

my disposal

I will choose cases that concern the formation of character.

A young girl had developed into the most decided contrast to her mother; she had cultivated all the qualities she missed in her mother and avoided all those that reminded her of her mother. We

may add that in former years she had identified herself with her mother like any

other female child and had now come to oppose

this identification

energetically. When this girl

married, however, and became a wife and mother in her

turn, we are surprised to find that she

became more and more like the mother towards

whom she felt so inimical, until at last the mother

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identification she had overcome had once more

unmistakably won the day. The same thing

happens with boys, and even the great Goethe,

who in his Sturm und Drang period certainly did not

respect his pedantic and stiff father very

highly, developed in old age traits that belonged

to his father's character. This result will stand

out more

strikingly where the contrast between

the two

persons is more pronounced. A young

man, whose fate was determined by his having to

grow up with a good-for-nothing father,

developed at first in spite of the father into a

capable, trustworthy and honourable man. In

the

prime of life his character changed and from

now on he behaved as if he had taken this same

father as his

example. So as not to lose the

connection with our
topic WE must keep in mind
that at the
beginning of such a process there
always exists an identification with the father
from
early childhood days. This gets repudiated,
even over
-compensated, and in the end again
comes to
light.
It has

long since become COMMON knowledge
that the
experience of the first five years of child-
hood exert a decisive influence on our life, one
which later events
oppose in vain. Much could
be said about how these
early experiences resist
all efforts of more mature
years to modify them,
but this would not be relevant. It

may not be so
well known, however, that the
strongest obsessive
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influence derives from those
experiences which
the child
undergoes at a time when we have
reason to believe his
psychical apparatus to be
incompletely fitted for accepting them. The fact
itself cannot be doubted, but it seems so
strange
that WE

might try to make it easier to understand
by a simile; the process may be compared to a
photograph, which can be developed and made
into a
picture after a short or long interval. Here
I

may point out, however, that an imaginative
writer, with the boldness permitted to such
writers, made this disconcerting discovery before
me. E. T. A. Hoffmann used to
explain the
wealth of imaginative figures that offered them-

selves to him for his stories
by the quickly
changing pictures and impressions he had received
during a journey in a post-chaise, lasting for
several weeks, while he was still a babe at his
mother's breast. What a child has
experienced
and not understood by the time he has reached
the
age of two he may never again remember,
except in his dreams. Only through psycho-
analytic treatment will he become aware of those
events. At
any time in later years, however, they
may break into his life with obsessive impulsive-
ness, direct his actions, force him to like or dislike
people and often decide the choice of his love-
object by a preference that so often cannot be
rationally defended. The two points that touch
on our
problem are unmistakable. They are,
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first, the remoteness of time,
1
which is considered
here as the
really decisive factor, as, for instance,
in the
special state of memory that in these
childhood
experiences we class as " unconscious/
5
In this feature we
expect to find an analogy with
the state of mind that we ascribe to tradition when
it is active in the mental emotional life of a
people.
It was not
easy, it is true, to introduce the con-
ception of the unconscious into mass psychology.
Contributions to the
phenomena we are looking
for are
regularly made by the mechanisms that
lead to a neurosis. Here also the decisive
experi-
ences in
early childhood exert a lasting influence,
yet in this case the stress falls not on the time, but
on the process opposing that event, the reaction

against it. Schematically expressed it is so. As
a
consequence of a certain experience there arises
an instinctual demand which claims satisfaction.
The Ego forgoes this satisfaction, either because it
is
paralysed by the excessiveness of the demand
or because it
recognizes in it a danger. The first
of these reasons is the
original one ; both end in
the avoidance of a
dangerous situation. The Ego
guards against this danger by repression. The

1
Here also a poet may speak for us. To explain his attachment
he
imagines

Ach du warst in abgelebten Zeiten
Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.

Goethe, Vol. IV of the Weimar Edition, p. 97.

(For in previous lives we both have passed through
You, Love, were my sister or my wife.)

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excitation becomes inhibited in one
way or other;

the incitement, with the observations and
percep-

tions
belonging to it, is forgotten. This, however,
does not

bring the process to an end; either the
instinct has

kept its strength, or it will regain it
or it is reawakened

by a new situation. It renew*

its claim and since the

way to normal satisfac-

tion is barred
by what we may call the scar tissue
of

repression it gains at some weak point ne\\
access to a so-called substitutive satisfaction
which now

appears as a symptom, without the
acquiescence and also without the comprehensor
of the

ego. All phenomena of symptom -formation
can be

fairly described as " the return of the
repressed." The distinctive character of them
however, lies in the extensive distortion the

returning elements have undergone, compared with their original form. Perhaps the objection will be raised here that in this last group of fact* we have deviated too much from the similarity with tradition. We shall feel no regret, however, if this has led us nearer to the problems of instinctual renunciation.

8. The Historical Truth

We have made all these psychological digressions to make it more credible that the religion of Moses exercised influence on the Jewish people

Only when it had become a tradition. We have scarcely achieved more than a probability. Yet let us assume we have succeeded in proving this conclusively; the impression would still remain that we had satisfied only the qualitative factor of our task, not the quantitative as well. To all matters concerning the creation of a religion and certainly to that of the Jewish one pertains something majestic, which has not so far been covered by our explanations. Some other element should have part in it: one that has few analogies and nothing quite like it, something unique and commensurate with that which has grown out of it, something like religion itself.

Let us see if we can approach our subject from the reverse side. We understand that primitive man needs a God as creator of the world, as head of his tribe, and as one who takes care of him. This God takes his place behind the dead fathers of whom tradition still has

something to relate.

Man in later times of our time, for instance behaves

similarly. He also remains infantile and needs

protection, even when he is fully grown;

he feels he cannot

relinquish the support of his

God. So much is

indisputable, but it is not so

easily to be understood why there must be only one God,

why just the progress from Henotheism

to Monotheism

acquires such an overwhelming

significance. It is true, as we have mentioned

before, that the believer participates in the

greatness of his God and the more powerful the

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God the surer the protection he can bestow. The

power of a God, however, need not presuppose

his

being an only God: many peoples only

glorified their chief god the more if he ruled over

a multitude of inferior gods; he was not the less

great because there were other gods than He.

It also meant

sacrificing some of the intimate

relationship if the God became universal and

cared

equally for all lands and peoples. One had,

so to

speak, to share one's God with strangers and

had to compensate oneself for that by believing

that one was favoured

by him. The point could

be made that the conception of an Only God

signifies a step forward in spirituality; this point,

however, cannot be estimated so very highly.

The true believer knows of a way adequately to

fill in this obvious

gap in motivation. He says

that the idea of an

Only God has had this over-

whelming effect on mankind because it is part of

eternal truth, which, hidden for so

long, has at

last come to
light and has swept all before it.

We have to admit that at last we have an element
of an order commensurate to the greatness of
the
subject as well as to that of the success of its
influence.

I also should like to
accept this solution.

However, I have my misgivings. The religious
argument is based on an optimistic and idealistic
premiss. The human intellect has not shown
itself elsewhere to be endowed with a
very good

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scent for truth, nor has the human mind dis-
played any special readiness to accept truth. On
the
contrary, it is the general experience that the
human intellect errs very easily without our
suspecting it at all, and that nothing is more
readily believed than what regardless of the
truth meets our wishes and illusions
half-way.

That is why our agreement needs modifying.
I too should credit the believer's solution with
containing the truth; it is not, however, the
material truth, but an historical truth. I would
claim the
right to correct a certain distortion
which this truth underwent on its re-emergence.
That is to say: I do not believe that one supreme
great God "exists" to-day, but I believe that in
primaeval times there was one person who must
needs
appear gigantic and who, raised to the
status of a
deity, returned to the memory of men.

Our supposition was that the religion of Moses
was discarded and partly forgotten and that later
on it forced itself on to the notice of the
people
as a tradition. I make the
assumption that this
process was the repetition of an earlier one.

When Moses gave to his people the conception
of an

Only God it was not an altogether new
idea, for it meant the re-animation of primaeval

experience in the human family that had long ago faded from the conscious memory of mankind.

The experience was such an important one, however, and had produced, or at least prepared,

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such

far-reaching changes in the life of man, that, I cannot

help thinking, it must have left some

permanent trace in the human soul something comparable to a tradition.

The psycho-analyses of individuals have taught us that their earliest

impressions, received at a

time when

they were hardly able to talk, manifest

themselves later in an obsessive fashion,

although

those

impressions themselves are not consciously

remembered. We feel that the same must hold

good for the earliest experiences of mankind.

One result of this is the emergence of the con-

ception of one great God. It must be recognized

as a

memory, a distorted one, it is true, but never-

theless a

memory. It has an obsessive quality;

it

simply must be believed. As far as its distortion

goes it may be called a delusion; in so far as it

brings to light something from the past it must

be called truth. The

psychiatric delusion also

contains a

particle of truth; the patient's con-

viction issues from this and extends to the whole

delusional fabrication

surrounding it.

The following pages contain a scarcely altered

repetition of what I said in the first section. In

1912 I tried in my book Totem and Taboo to

reconstruct the ancient situation from which all

these effects issued. In that book I made use of

certain theoretical reflections of Charles Darwin,

Atkinson, and especially Robertson Smith, and

combined them with findings and suggestions

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from psycho-analytic practice. From Darwin I borrowed the hypothesis that men originally lived in small hordes ; each of the hordes stood under the rule of an older male, who governed by brute force, appropriated all the females and belaboured or killed all the young males, including his own sons. From Atkinson I received the suggestion that this patriarchal system came to an end through a rebellion of the sons, who united against the father, overpowered him and together consumed his body. Following Robertson Smith's totem theory I suggested that this horde, previously ruled by the father, was followed by a totemistic brother clan. In order to be able to live in peace with one another the victorious brothers renounced the women for whose sake they had killed the father, and agreed to practise exogamy. The power of the father was broken and the families regulated by matriarchy. The ambivalence of the sons towards the father remained in force during the whole further development. Instead of the father a certain animal was declared the totem; it stood for their ancestor and protecting spirit, and no one was allowed to hurt or kill it. Once a year, however, the whole clan assembled for a feast at which the otherwise revered totem was torn to pieces and eaten. No one was permitted to abstain from this feast; it was the solemn repetition of the father-murder, in which social order, moral laws and HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION

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religion had had their beginnings. The correspondence of the totem feast (according to Robertson Smith's description) with the Christian Communion has struck many authors before me.

I still adhere to this sequence of thought. I have often been vehemently reproached for not changing my opinions in later editions of my book, since more recent ethnologists have without exception discarded Robertson Smith's theories

and have in part replaced them by others which differ extensively. I would reply that these alleged advances in science are well known to me. Yet I have not been convinced either of their correctness or of Robertson Smith's errors. Contradiction is not always refutation; a new theory does not necessarily denote progress. Above all, however, I am not an ethnologist, but a psychoanalyst. It was my good right to select from ethnological data what would serve me for my analytic work. The writings of the highly gifted Robertson Smith provided me with valuable points of contact with the psychological material of analysis and suggestions for the use of it. I cannot say the same of the work of his opponents.

9. The Historical Development

I cannot reproduce here the contents of Totem and Taboo, but I must try to account for the long interval that took place between the events which we suggested happened in primaeval times and the victory of monotheism in historical times. After the combination of brother clan, matriarchy, exogamy and totemism had been established there began a development which may be described as a slow "return of the repressed.

55

The term "repressed

55

is here used not in its technical sense. Here I mean something past, vanished and overcome in the life of a people, which I venture to treat as equivalent to repressed

material in the mental life of the individual. In what psychological form the past existed during its period of darkness we cannot as yet tell. It is not easy to translate the concepts of individual psychology into mass psychology, and I do not think that much is to be gained by introducing the concept of a " collective " unconscious the content of the unconscious is collective anyhow, a general possession of mankind. So in the meantime the use of analogies must help us out. The processes we study here in the life of a people are very similar to those we know from psycho - pathology, but still they are not quite the same. We must conclude that the mental residue of those primaeval times has become a heritage which, with each new generation, needs only to be awakened, not to be re-acquired. We may think here of the example of speech symbolism, which certainly seems to be inborn. It originates in the HIS PEOPLE AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION 200 time of speech development, and it is familiar to all children without their having been specially instructed. It is the same in all peoples in spite of the differences in language. What we may still lack in certainty we may acquire from other results of psycho -analytic investigations. We learn that our children in a number of significant relationships do not react as their own experiences would lead us to expect, but instinctively, like

animals; this is explicable only by phylogenetic inheritance.

The return of the repressed proceeds slowly;

it

certainly does not occur spontaneously, but under the influence of all the changes in the

conditions of life that abound throughout the

history of civilization. I can give here neither a survey of the conditions on which it depends nor any more than a scanty enumeration of the stages in which the return

proceeds. The father became

again the head of the family, but he was no longer omnipotent as the father of the primaeval horde had been. In

clearly recognizable transitional

stages the totem animal was ousted by the god. The god, in human form, still carried at first the head of an animal

; later on he was wont to assume the

guise of the same animal. still

later the animal became sacred to him and his favourite

companion or else he was reputed to have slain the animal, when he added its name to his own. Between the totem animal and the

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god the hero made his appearance; this was often an

early stage of deification. The idea of a Highest Being seems to have appeared early; at first it was

shadowy and devoid of any connection with the

daily interests of mankind. As the tribes and

peoples were knit together into larger unities the

gods also became organized into families and hierarchies. Often one of them was elevated to be the overlord of

gods and men. The next step, to

worship only one God, was taken hesitatingly, and at

long last the decision was made to
concede all
power to one God only and not to
suffer
any other gods beside him. Only then was
the
grandeur of the primaeval father restored;
the emotions
belonging to him could now be
repeated.

The first effect of the reunion with what men
had

long missed and yearned for was overwhelm-
ing and exactly as the tradition of the law -giving
on Mount Sinai

depicts it. There was admiration,
awe and

gratitude that the people had found
favour in His

eyes: the religion of Moses knows of
only these positive feelings towards the Father -
God. The conviction that His

power was

irresistible, the subjection to His will, could not
have been more absolute with the
helpless,

intimidated son of the father of the horde than
they were here; indeed, they become fully com-
prehensible only by the transformation into the
primitive and infantile milieu. Infantile feelings

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are far more intense and inexhaustibly deep than
are those of adults; only religious ecstasy can
bring back that intensity. Thus a transport of
devotion to God is the first response to the return
of the Great Father.

The direction of this Father religion was thus
fixed for all time, but its development was not
thereby finished. Ambivalency belongs to the
essence of the father -son relationship ; it had to
happen that in the course of time the hostility
should be stirred which in ancient times had
spurred the sons to slay their admired and
dreaded father. In the religion of Moses itself
there was no room for direct expression of the
murderous father-hate. Only a powerful reaction
to it could make its
appearance: the conscious-
ness of

guilt because of that hostility, the bad conscience because one had sinned against God and continued so to sin. This feeling of guiltiness, which the Prophets incessantly kept alive and which soon became an integral part of the religious system itself, had another, superficial, motivation which cleverly veiled the true origin of the feeling. The people met with hard times; the hopes based on the favour of God were slow in being fulfilled; it became not easy to adhere to the illusion, cherished above all else, that they were God's chosen people. If they wished to keep happiness, then the consciousness of guilt because they themselves were such sinners offered a
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welcome excuse for God's severity. They deserved nothing better than to be punished by Him, because they did not observe the laws; the need for satisfying this feeling of guilt, which coming from a much deeper source was insatiable, made them render their religious precepts ever and ever more strict, more exacting, but also more petty. In a new transport of moral asceticism the Jews imposed on themselves constantly increasing instinctual renunciation, and thereby reached at least in doctrine and precepts ethical heights that had remained inaccessible to the other peoples of antiquity. Many Jews regard these aspirations as the second main characteristic, and the second great achievement, of their religion. Our investigation is intended to show how it is connected with the first one, the conception of the one and only God. The origin, however, of this ethics in feelings of guilt, due to the repressed hostility to God, cannot be gainsaid. It bears the

characteristic of
being never concluded and never
able to be concluded with which WE are familiar
in the reaction -formations of the obsessional
neurosis.

The further development transcends Judaism.

Other elements

re-emerging from the drama

enacted around the

person of the primaeval

father were in no

way to be reconciled with the

Mosaic

religion. The consciousness of guilt in

that

epoch was no longer restricted to the Jews;

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it had seized all Mediterranean

peoples as a

vague discomfort, a premonition of misfortune

the reason for which no one knew. Modern

history speaks of the ageing of antique culture.

I would surmise that it has

apprehended only

some of the casual and adjuvant causes for the

MOOD of dejection then prevailing among the

peoples. The lightening of that oppression

proceeded from the Jews. Although food for the

idea had been

provided by many suggestive

hints from various

quarters, it was, nevertheless,

in the mind of a

Jew, Saul of Tarsus, who as a

Roman citizen was called Paul, that the percep-

tion dawned: "it is because we killed God the

Father that we are so unhappy.'

5

It is

quite clear

to us now

why he could grasp this truth in no

other form but in the delusional guise of the

glad

tidings: " we have been delivered from all guilt

since one of us laid down his life to

expiate our

guilt.

55

In this formulation the murder of God was, of course, not mentioned, but a crime that had to be expiated by a sacrificial death could only have been murder. Further, the connection between the delusion and the historical truth was established by the assurance that the sacrificial victim was the Son of God. The strength which this new faith derived from its source in historical truth enabled it to overcome all obstacles; in the place of the enrapturing feeling of being the chosen ones there came now release through

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salvation. The fact of the father-murder, however, had on its return to the memory of mankind to overcome greater obstacles than the one which constituted the essence of monotheism; it had to undergo a more extensive distortion. The unmentionable crime was replaced by the tenet of the somewhat shadowy conception of original sin.

Original sin and salvation through sacrificial death became the basis of the new religion founded by Paul. The question whether there was a leader and instigator to the murder among the horde of brothers who rebelled against the primaeval father, or whether that figure was created later by poets who identified themselves with the hero and was then incorporated into tradition, must remain unanswered. After the Christian doctrine had burst the confines of Judaism, it absorbed constituents from many other sources, renounced many features of pure monotheism and adopted in many particulars the ritual of the other Mediterranean peoples. It was as if Egypt had come to wreak her vengeance on the heirs of Ikhnaton. The way in which the new religion came to terms with the ancient ambivalency in the father-son relationship is noteworthy. Its main doctrine, to be sure, was the reconciliation with God the Father, the expiation of the crime committed against Him; but the other side of the relationship manifested

itself in the Son who had taken the
guilt on his
shoulders

becoming God himself beside the
Father and in truth in
place of the Father.

Originally a Father religion, Christianity became
a Son

religion. The fate of having to displace the
Father it could not
escape.

Only a part of the Jewish people accepted the
new doctrine. Those who refused to do so are
still called

Jews. Through this decision they are
still more
sharply separated from the rest of the
world than

they were before. They had to suffer
the

reproach from the new religious community
which besides Jews included
Egyptians, Greeks,

Syrians, Romans and lastly also Teutons that
they had murdered God. In its full form this
reproach would run: " they will not admit that
they killed God, whereas we do and are cleansed
from the
guilt of it.

55

Then it is easy to understand
what truth lies behind this

reproach. Why the
Jews were unable to participate in the progress
which this confession to the murder of God
betokened

(in spite of all its distortion) might
well be the
subject of a special investigation.

Through this they have, so to speak, shouldered
a

tragic guilt. They have been made to suffer
severely for it.

Our research has perhaps thrown some light
on the

question how the Jewish people acquired
the

qualities that characterize it. The problem

how they could survive until to-day as an entity
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has not
proved so easy to solve. One cannot,
however, reasonably demand or expect exhaustive
answers of such
enigmas. All that I can offer is a
simple contribution, and one which should be
appraised with due regard to the critical limita-
tions I have
already mentioned.

GLOSSARY

^Etiology causation, particularly of disease.

Affect

pertaining to the feeling bases of emotion.

Ambivalence the co-existence of opposed
feelings, par-

ticularly love and hate.

Amnesia failure of
memory.

Cathexis the

process whereby ideas and mental attitudes
are invested with a "
charge " of emotion.

Imago a German periodical devoted to the non-medical
application of psycho-analysis.

Instinctual

pertaining to instinct.

Masochism the

obtaining of sexual pleasure in conjunction
with
suffering.

Obsessional Neurosis a neurosis characterized
by the

alternation of obsessive
(compulsive) ideas and doubts.

Onanism auto-erotic

activity, the commonest example
being masturbation.

Phylo-genetic pertaining to racial development.

Reaction -formation

development of a character trait that
keeps in check and conceals another one, usually of
the
exactly opposite kind.

Regression reversion to an earlier kind of mental life.

Repetition-compulsion the tendency to repeat, which
Freud considers the most fundamental characteristic of
the mind.

Repression the keeping of unacceptable ideas from
consciousness, i.e. in the " unconscious."

Sadism the

obtaining of sexual pleasure through the
infliction of
suffering.

Super-ego the self-criticizing part of the mind out of
which the conscience
develops.

Trayma injury, bodily or mental.

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