

**“THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SALT
IN FOLKLORE AND SUPERSTITION”**

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I

In the course of some highly suggestive remarks on the subject of superstition Freud writes:

I take it that this conscious ignorance and unconscious knowledge of the motivation of psychological accidents is one of the psychological roots of superstition.¹

He maintains in general that the undue significance attached by the superstitious to casual external happenings arises from associative connections that exist between these and important thoughts and wishes of which the subject is quite unaware, and that it constitutes a projection of the significance really belonging to these unconscious thoughts: the feeling of significance, therefore, is fully justified, though it has been displaced into a false connection. The object of the present communication is to examine in the light of this thesis one of the most familiar and wide-spread of superstitions namely, the belief that it is unlucky to spill salt at table. In doing so the endeavour will be made to use the inductive method only, that is to say, to construct hypotheses only when they appear to be legitimate inferences from definitely ascertained facts and then to test them in their capacity to resume the whole range of accessible evidence.

Two primary considerations may be mentioned at the outset. First that in all ages salt has been invested with a significance far exceeding that inherent in its natural properties, interesting and important as these are. Homer calls it a divine substance, Plato describes it as especially dear to the Gods,² and we shall presently note the importance attached to it in religious ceremonies, covenants, and magical charms. That this should have been so in all parts of the world and in all times shows that we are dealing with a general human tendency and not with any local custom, circumstance or notion. Secondly, the idea of salt has in different languages lent itself to a remarkable profusion of metaphorical connotations, so that a study of these suggests itself as being likely to indicate what the idea has essentially stood for in the human mind, and hence perhaps the source of its exaggerated significance.

We may begin by considering the chief characteristic properties of salt that have impressed themselves on popular thought and have in this way become associated with more general ideas of an allied nature. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the durability of salt and its immunity against decay. On account of this property salt was regarded as emblematic of durability and permanence,³ and hence of eternity and immortality;⁴ in the Middle Ages it was thought that the devil for this reason detested salt.⁵ In connection with eternity is also mentioned the idea of wisdom, which salt is likewise

¹ Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*, 1904, S.82

² Plutarch, *Morals* (Goodwin's English Edition), 1870, Vol.II, p.338.

³ Lawrence, *The Magic of the Horse-Shoe: with other Folk-Lore Notes*, 1899. Ch.III, "The Folk-Lore of Common Salt," p.157.

⁴ Seligmann, *Der böse Blick und Verwandtes*, 1910, Bd. II, S.33.

⁵ Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers*, 1593, p.278.

supposed to symbolize,⁶ though Pitre⁷ says that this comes merely from a play on the words *sedes sapientia and sale e sapienza*. Brand, however, quotes an introductory address delivered at a German university in the seventeenth century that seems to show an intrinsic connection between the two ideas:

The sentiments and opinions both of divines and philosophers concur in making salt the emblem of wisdom or learning and that not only on account of what it is composed of, but also with respect to the several uses to which it is applied. As to its component parts, as it consists of the purest matter, so ought wisdom to be pure, sound, immaculate, and incorruptible: and similar to the effects which salt produces upon bodies ought to be those of wisdom and learning upon the mind.⁸

This explanation of the association between the ideas of salt and wisdom sounds a little too strained to be altogether convincing and suggests that perhaps there may be other determining factors besides those just mentioned. Wisdom was frequently personified holding a salt-cellar, and the bestowal of *Sal Sapientite*, the Salt of Wisdom, is still a formality in the Latin Church. The heavenly Sophia appears in mystical science as sodium, and her colour is yellow, the colour of burning salt.⁹

The idea of durability in regard to salt is evidently an important cause of the old association between it and the topic of friendship and loyalty? Owing to its lasting and incorruptible quality it was regarded as the emblem of perpetual friendship,¹⁰ and from this several secondary meanings are derived. One corollary, for instance, is that the spilling of salt is supposed to involve a quarrel or breaking of friendship.¹¹ Salt has played an important part in matters of hospitality. Stuckius¹² tells us that the Muscovites thought a prince could not show a stranger a greater mark of affection than by sending to him salt from his own table. In Eastern countries it is a time-honoured custom to place salt before strangers as a token and pledge of friendship and good-will,¹³ and in Europe it was usually presented to guests before other food, to signify the abiding strength of friendship.¹⁴ When an Abyssinian desires to pay an especially delicate attention to a friend or guest he produces a piece of rock-salt and graciously permits the latter to lick it with his tongue.¹⁵ In the most diverse countries and at all ages, from Ancient Greece to modern Hungary, salt has been used to confirm oaths and compacts;¹⁶ according to Lawrence, 'in the East, at the present day, compacts between tribes are still confirmed by salt, and the most solemn pledges are ratified by this substance.'¹⁷ Such compacts are inviolable, and in the same way "to eat a man's salt", a phrase still in current use, carries with it the obligation of

⁶ Collin de Plancy, *Dictionnaire Infernal*, 1818, t.II, p.278; Lawrence, *ibid.*

⁷ Pitre\ *Usi e costumi, credenze e pregiudizi del popolo Siciliano*, 1889, Vol.III, p.426.

⁸ Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, 1849, Vol.I. p.433.

⁹ Bayley, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, 1912, Vol.I, p.228.

¹⁰ See Victor Hehn, *Das Salz. Eine kulturhistorische Studie*, 2e Aufl., 1901, S.10-12.

¹¹ Brand, *op. cit.*. Vol. III, p.162; Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.169, 171.

¹² Stuckius, *Antiquitatum Convivialiunt*, 1690, S.17.

¹³ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.156.

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.169.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p.188.

¹⁶ Schleiden, *Das Salz. Seine Geschichte, seine Symbolik und seine Bedeutung im Menschenleben*, 1875, S.71-3; Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-6.

¹⁷ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.164-6.

loyalty, during the Indian mutiny of 1857 a chief motive of restraint among the Sepoys was said to have been the fact that they had sworn by their salt to be loyal to the Queen.¹⁸ Byron, in *The Corsair*, refers to this group of beliefs as follows:

Why dost thou shun the salt? that sacred pledge,
Which, once partaken, blunts the sabre's edge,
Makes even contending tribes in peace unite,
And hated hosts seem brethren to the sight!

Closely allied to the preceding feature of incorruptibility is the capacity salt possesses of preserving other bodies from decay. It is generally supposed that this is the reason for the power salt has of warding off the devil and other malignant demons, who have a horror of it.¹⁹ The same property has also greatly aided in establishing the association between salt and immortality; the connection is plainly seen in the Egyptian custom of using salt for embalming. It is one reason for the custom, obtaining until recently in every part of Great Britain, of placing salt on a corpse;²⁰ usually earth was added, 'the earth being an emblem of the corruptible body, the salt an emblem of the immortal spirit.' In later years this was said to be done so as to prevent decomposition,²¹ an idea probably akin to the original one. A Welsh elaboration of the custom was to place a plate of bread and salt over the coffin (the combination of bread and salt will be discussed later); the professional "sin-eater" of the district then arrived, murmured an incantation and ate the salt, thereby taking upon himself all the sins of the deceased.²²

An important conception of salt is that of its constituting the essence of things, particularly of life itself. This seems to include two sub-ideas, those of necessary presence and of value respectively. The idea of ultimate essence no doubt underlies the Biblical phrase (Matthew v. 13) 'Ye are the salt of the earth', and in many other expressions it is used in the sense of aristocratic, quintessential, and the like.²³

In alchemy salt was considered to be one of the three ultimate elements out of which the seven noble metals were generated. Mercury symbolized the spirit, sulphur the soul, and salt the body; mercury represented the act of illumination, sulphur that of union, and salt that of purification. Herrick, in his *Hesperides* (p. 394), ranks salt even more highly:

The body's salt the soule is, which when gone,
The flesh soone sucks in putrefaction.

¹⁸ Manley, *Salt and other Condiments*, p.90.

¹⁹ Conway, *Demonology and Devil-Lore*, 1879, Vol. I, p.288; Moresin, *Papatus, etc.*, 1594, p.154; Bodin, loc. cit.

²⁰ Dalryell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, 1835, p.102; Sikes, *British Goblins*, 1880, p.328; Brand, op. cit., Vol. II. pp.234, 235.

²¹ Brand and Sikes, loc. cit.

²² Sikes, op. cit., pp.324, 326.

²³ Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VIII, p.59.

In Ancient Egypt salt and a burning candle represented life, and were placed over a dead body to express the ardent desire of prolonging the life of the deceased.²⁴ The following argument was employed by Latin writers, e.g., Plutarch:

After death all parts of the body fall apart. In life the soul maintains the parts intact and in connection with one another. In the same way salt maintains the dead body in its form and connection, thus representing so to speak the soul.²⁵

The culmination of eulogies, in which the idea of value is also prominent, is to be found in a treatise on salt, published in 1770, where the writer launches forth in impassioned style the most extravagant encomiums upon this substance, which he avers to be the quintessence of the earth. Salt is here characterized as a Treasure of Nature, an Essence of Perfection, and the Paragon of Preservatives. Moreover, whoever possesses salt thereby secures a prime factor of human happiness among material things.²⁶

Salt is closely associated with the idea of money or wealth, and indeed this is one of the connotations of the word. Nowadays the implication is even of excessive or unfairly high value, as in the colloquial phrase "a salt or salty price"; similarly in French "il me Pa bien sale" means "he has charged me an excessive price". In commercial circles the expression "to salt a mine or property" means to add a small quantity of some valuable substance to it so as artificially to raise its selling price. In Ancient Rome soldiers and officials were paid in salt instead of money, whence (from *salarium*) the modern words "salaire" and "salary" and the phrase "to be worth one's salt" (to be capable, to earn one's salary). A salt currency was in vogue in Africa in the sixth century, and in the Middle Ages this was so also in England,²⁷ as well as in China, Tibet, and other parts of Asia.²⁸ The name of the Austrian coin "Heller" is derived from an old German word for salt, "Halle".²⁹ The Montem ceremony at Eton,³⁰ which consisted in collecting money in exchange for salt, was continued until 1847. Salt-Silver was the term used to denote the money paid by tenants to their lord as a commutation for the service of bringing him salt from market.³¹ In parts of Germany the game is played of placing some sand, some salt, and a green leaf on the table and making a blind-folded person grope for them; if he seizes the salt it denotes wealth.³²

These and other considerations have invested the idea of salt in the popular mind with a sense of general importance. Waldron states that in the Isle of Man

No person will go out on any material affair without taking some salt in their pockets, much less remove from one house to another, marry, put out a child, or take one to nurse, without

²⁴ Moresin, op. cit., p.89.

²⁵ ibid.

²⁶ Elias Artista Hermetica, Das Geheimnis vom Salt, 1770.

²⁷ Brand, op. cit., Vol. I, p.436.

²⁸ Schleiden, op. tit., S.68-70, 82.

²⁹ Hehn, op. tit., S.90.

³⁰ Brand, op. tit., pp.433-40.

³¹ Brand, op. tit., p.403.

³² Wuttke, op. tit., 8.233.

salt being mutually exchanged; nay, though a poor person be almost famished in the streets, he will not accept any food you will give him, unless you join salt to the rest of your benevolence.³³

To carry salt with one on moving to a new dwelling is a very wide-spread custom;³⁴ it is related that when the poet Burns, in 1789, was about to occupy a new house at Ellisland, he was escorted there by a procession of relatives in whose midst was carried a bowl of salt.³⁵ The Arabs of Upper Egypt, before setting out on a journey, burn salt to prevent ill luck.³⁶

The laying of salt at the table was in the Middle Ages a tremendous ceremony. The other implements were disposed with minute care in their relation to the salt, which throughout was treated with special deference.³⁷ With the Romans it was a matter of religious principle that no other dish was placed upon the table until the salt was in position. Rank and precedence among the guests were precisely indicated by their seat above or below the salt and their exact distance from it. Schleiden remarks:

How great was the importance attached to salt is also seen from the fact that hardly a place existed in which salt was produced where this was not expressed in the name of the place, from the Indian Lavanapura ('Salt-town') and the Austrian Salzburg ('Salt-town') to the Prussian Salzkotten and the Scottish Salt-coats.³⁸

The high importance attaching to salt led to various magical powers being ascribed to it, and it has been very extensively employed in magical procedures. It could be used for these and other purposes by placing it on the tongue or by rubbing the body with it, but the favourite method was to dissolve it in water and bathe the person with this. The principal function of salt in this connection, like that of most other charms, was to ward off harm, chiefly by averting the influence of malignant spirits. Salt is almost universally thought to be abhorrent to evil demons,³⁹ the only exception I know of being in Hungarian folk-lore, where on the contrary evil beings are fond of salt.⁴⁰ Salt was always missing from the devil's and witches' banquets.⁴¹ Salt has therefore been one of the staple charms against the power of the devil,⁴² of magicians,⁴³ of witches,⁴⁴ of the evil eye,⁴⁵ and of evil influences in general:⁴⁶

³³ Waldron, Description of the Isle of Man, 1725, p.187.

³⁴ Wuttke, op. tit., 8.396.

³⁵ Rogers, Scotland, Social and Domestic. 1869 Vol. III, p.288.

³⁶ Burckhardt, Travels in Nubia, 1822, p.169.

³⁷ Lawrence, op. cit., pp.197-205.

³⁸ Schleiden, op. cit., S.70.

³⁹ Bodin, loc. cit.; Collin de Plancy, op. cit., pp.277, 278; Schleiden, op. cit.

⁴⁰ Lawrence, op. cit., p.159.

⁴¹ Wright, Sorcery and Magic, 1851, p.310.

⁴² Bodin and Collin de Plancy, loc. cit.

⁴³ Grimm, Deutsche Mythologie, Vierte Ausgabe, 1876, S. 876.

⁴⁴ Krauss, Slavische Volksforschungen, 1908, S. 39; Mannhardt, Germanische Mythen, 1858, S. 7; Seligmann, op. cit., Band II, S. 33; Wuttke, op. cit., S. 95, 258, 283; Grimm, op. cit., Nachtrag, S. 454.

⁴⁵ Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S. 312, 313, 320, 331, 344, 346, 365, 377, 389; Band II, S. 73, 144, 220, 376.

⁴⁶ Lawrence, op. cit., p.177.

such beliefs are found in countries so far apart as Arabia⁴⁷ and Japan.⁴⁸ Cattle are also protected against witchcraft in the same way.⁴⁹ In India and Persia one can even determine by means of salt whether a given person has been bewitched or not.⁵⁰ Salt will also protect the fields from evil influences.⁵¹ It was further used to prevent the souls of the dead from returning to earth and to secure them peace in Purgatory.⁵²

These practices were performed with especial frequency with children. The custom of rubbing new-born infants with salt is referred to in the Bible (Ezekiel xvi. 4). The use of salt to guard the new-born against evil demons and evil influences, either by placing a little on the tongue or by immersing the infant in salt and water, was in vogue throughout Europe from early times, and certainly antedated Christian baptism;⁵³ in France the custom lasted until 1408 of putting salt on children until they were baptised, when it was considered no longer necessary.⁵⁴ At the present day it is still placed in the cradle of the new-born child in Holland.⁵⁵ In Scotland it was customary to put salt into a child's mouth on entering a stranger's house for the first time.⁵⁶ Salt was also placed in the mouth of a new-born calf for similar purposes as with children.⁵⁷

Salt has been extensively used for medicinal purposes. It was believed to have the function of both preventing⁵⁸ and curing⁵⁹ diseases, as was already commented on by Pliny, particularly those caused by occult influences. It is possible that the Latin word "salus" (health), the earliest connotation of which was "well-preserved", was originally related to the word "sal".

Another important function of salt was its use in furthering fecundity. As this obviously cannot have been derived from any natural property of the substance, it must represent some symbolic significance in harmony with the general importance attached to it. Schleiden makes the following interesting remarks in this connection:

The sea was unquestionably the fructifying, creative element. Leaving aside the few marine mammals, the offspring of sea creatures are to be counted by thousands and hundreds of thousands. This was all the more easily ascribed to the salt of the sea, since other observations believed to have been made were connected with it. It was recalled that in dog-breeding the frequent use of salt increased the number of the progeny, and that on ships

⁴⁷ Burckhardt, loc. Cit.

⁴⁸ Bousquet, *Le Japon de nos jours*, 1877, t. I, p.94; Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire*.

⁴⁹ Seligmann, op. cit., Band II, S.104, 241, 329; Wuttke, op. cit., S.40, 435, 438; Krauss, loc. cit.

⁵⁰ Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S. 262, 264.

⁵¹ Seligmann, op. cit., Band II, S. 374

⁵² Wuttke, op. cit., S.465, 472.

⁵³ Conway, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 217; Lawrence, op. cit., pp. 174, 175; Seligmann, op. cit., S. 34; Wuttke, op. cit., S. 382, 387.

⁵⁴ Schleiden, op. cit., S.79.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, November 10, 1889.

⁵⁶ Dalyell, op. cit., p.96.

⁵⁷ Seligmann, op. cit.. S. 58; Wuttke, op. cit., S. 436, 443.

Wuttke, op. cit., S. 374.

⁵⁸ Dalyell, op. cit., pp. 98, 99, 102; Lawrence, op. cit., p. 180; Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S. 278; Wuttke, op. cit., S. 336.

⁵⁹ Wuttke, op. cit., S. 336.

carrying salt the number of mice multiplied to such an extent as to give rise to the idea of parthenogenesis, i.e., to the view that mice could beget young without the co-operation of a male. The conviction was thus formed that salt must stand in a close relation to physical love, so that salt became the symbol of procreation.⁶⁰

It was used in this connection in two ways, to promote fecundity and to avert barrenness or impotence. The latter is illustrated by Elisha's action of throwing salt into the fountain of Jericho (2 Kings ii. 21): 'Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; and for the future they shall not be the occasion either of death or barrenness.' Gaume⁶¹ states that salt has the specific function of promoting fecundity, and its symbolic significance in this direction is seen in the following Indian practice:⁶² A woman who wishes for a child, particularly for a son, fasts on the fourth lunar day of every dark fortnight and breaks her fast only after seeing the moon. A dish of twenty-one balls of rice, one of which contains salt, is then placed before her, and if she first lays her hand on the ball containing the salt she will be blessed with a son. In this case no more is eaten; otherwise she goes on until she takes the salted ball. The ceremony may be observed only a limited number of times; if in these she fails altogether to pick out the salted ball first she is doomed to barrenness.

In Belgium salt is mixed with the food of a pregnant mare or cow so as to make the birth easy;⁶³ in Normandy it is given to cows so as to ensure plenty of butter.⁶⁴ In East Friesland⁶⁵ and Scotland⁶⁶ salt is put into the first milk after calving with the object of securing a plentiful supply of good milk. In Bohemia a special cake containing salt is given to a pregnant cow so that she may bear a choice calf and yield plenty of milk.⁶⁷ In Ireland when the seed is being sown the mistress of the house first puts salt into the field,⁶⁸ and a similar custom exists in East Prussia.⁶⁹ In Bavaria to obtain a rich harvest the first load is sprinkled with salt and water.⁷⁰

It is only natural that the general importance attached to salt should have been reflected in the sphere of religion, and we find that this was so in a remarkable degree. Salt was an essential constituent of sacrificial offerings in Ancient Egypt,⁷¹ as well as in Greece and Rome;⁷² Brand says of the latter:

Both Greeks and Romans mixed salt with their sacrificial cakes; in their lustrations also they made use of salt and water, which gave rise in after times to the superstition of holy water.

⁶⁰ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 92, 93

⁶¹ Gaume, L'Eau Bdnite an Dix-neuvieme Siecle, 1866, Cited by Conway.

⁶² Indian Notes and Queries, Vol. IV, p.106.

⁶³ Von Reinsberg-Duringsfeld, "Volksgebrauche in Kempen," Ausland, 1874, S.471-4

⁶⁴ Kuhn, Markische Sagen und Marchen, 1843, S.388.

⁶⁵ Wuttke, op. cit., S.446.

⁶⁶ Dalyell, op. cit., p.101.

⁶⁷ Wuttke, op. cit., S.442.

⁶⁸ Cough's Edition of Camden's Britannia, 1789, Vol. III, p.659 and Vol. IV, p.470.

⁶⁹ Seligmann, op. cit, Band II, S.34; Wuttke, op. cit., S.419.

⁷⁰ Wuttke, op. cit., S.423.

⁷¹ Arrian, De Expeditions Alexandra, lib. iii, cap. I.

⁷² Brand, op. cit., Vol. III, p.161.

In Judaism we find descriptions of three different usages taught by the Bible. As in other countries, salt formed a necessary part of sacrificial offerings:

Every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt. (Leviticus ii. ij).⁷³

A covenant, especially a religious covenant, was ratified by means of salt: 'It is a covenant of salt forever, before the Lord' (Numbers xviii. 19); 'The Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him, and to his sons, by a covenant of salt' (2 Chronicles xiii. 5). The idea of a bond of loyalty through eating salt also occurs: the passage 'we have maintenance from the king's palace' (Ezra iv. 14) means literally "we are salted with the salt of the palace".⁷⁴ The salt sources in Germany, which later became associated with the doings of witches, had a considerable religious significance; Ennemoser writes of them:

Their yield was regarded as a direct gift of the near Divinity, and the winning and distributing of the salt as a holy occupation probably sacrifices and folk festivities were connected with the drying of the salt.⁷⁵

In the Roman Catholic Church salt was introduced for baptismal purposes in the fourth century⁷⁶ and has played a prominent part there ever since.⁷⁷ In St. Margaret's Church in Ipswich there is a font bearing the curious inscription "sal et saliva", which must go back to some fecundity rite, saliva being a typical unconscious symbol of the male fluid. According to Schleiden,⁷⁸ this idea was derived from the Jewish use of salt at the circumcision rite. The celebration of baptism in Scotland by a layman was afterwards confirmed by a priest administering a particle of salt.⁷⁹ Gratian, in his *Decretalia*, explains that the use of consecrated salt in the mouth of one about to be baptised is to render the rite more efficacious.⁸⁰ In the baptismal ceremonies of the Church of England in medieval times salt was placed in the child's mouth, and its ears and nostrils were touched with saliva practices which became obsolete at the time of the Reformation.⁸¹ As a rule, however, salt is applied in the dissolved state, the well-known "Salzstein",⁸² composed of salt and water that has been separately blessed beforehand. The holy water thus constituted was extensively used in both Catholic and Protestant countries, and for the identical purposes for which simple salt and water had previously been used by the common people, the only difference being that the latter was not quite so efficacious as the consecrated mixture. Thus it was officially employed by the Roman Catholic Church for profiting the health of the

⁷³ In Job I. 22, the literal rendering of the passage "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" is "In all this Job sinned not, nor gave God un-salted". (Conway, op. cit., Vol. II, p.150.)

⁷⁴ Lawrence, op. cit., p.156.

⁷⁵ Ennemoser, *Geschichte der Magie*, Zweite Aufl., 1844, S. 839.

⁷⁶ Pfannenschmid, *Das Weihwasser im heidnischen und christlichen Cullus*, 1870.

⁷⁷ See Lawrence, op. cit., p.182.

⁷⁸ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 76

⁷⁹ Dalzell, op. cit., p.97.

⁸⁰ Cited by Dalzell, loc. cit. 98

⁸¹ Lawrence, op. cit., p.176.

⁸² Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S. 322; Wuttke, op. cit., S. 142.

body and for the banishing of demons,⁸³ by the English Church to prevent the devil from entering churches and dwellings,⁸⁴ and by the Scottish Church for expelling demons, for sanctifying religious rites, and to prevent new-born babies from becoming changelings.⁸⁵ Holy water was also used, and to some extent is still used, to avert the evil eye,⁸⁶ to prepare for a journey,⁸⁷ to cure demoniac possession,⁸⁸ to make the cattle thrive,⁸⁹ to prevent witches from turning the butter sour,⁹⁰ and to ensure the fortunate delivery of a pregnant cow.⁹¹ In the same connection may be mentioned certain African taboos concerning salt. A demon who inhabited a lake in Madagascar was so averse from salt that whenever any was being carried past the lake it had to be called by another name, or it would all have been dissolved and lost.⁹² A West African story relates how a man was told that he would die if ever the word "salt" was pronounced in his hearing; one day the fatal word was pronounced, and he promptly died.⁹³

We may now consider another attribute of salt which has given rise to many symbolic connotations namely, its peculiar taste. Seligmann says: 'Salt is on account of its piquant power a life-furthering material',⁹⁴ and he associates with this the beliefs in the influence exerted by salt when it penetrates into other substances, e.g., bread, and also the belief in its capacity to cure disease. This property of salt has been especially connected with speech in various metaphorical ways. Lawrence writes:

Owing to the importance of salt as a relish, its Latin name *sal* came to be used metaphorically as signifying a savoury mental morsel, and, in a general sense, wit or sarcasm. . . . The characterization of Greece as the 'salt of nations' is attributed to Livy, and this is probably the origin of the phrase 'Attic salt', meaning delicate, refined wit.⁹⁵

A pungent or pithy remark or jest is termed salt,⁹⁶ as in such expressions as "there is no salt in his witticisms", though the use of the word in this sense is becoming obsolescent in English; in French a similar one obtains, in expressions such as "une epigramme sale", "il a repandu le sel a pleins mains dans ses ecrits", etc. In the Biblical passage (Epistle to the Corinthians iv. 6) 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt' this connotation is probably present, as well as that previously mentioned of wisdom or sense. The same metaphor is also applied in a general way, apart from speech, as in denoting an insipid man as "having no sense or salt", lacking in piquancy or liveliness, just as in Latin the word *insalsus* (=unsalted) meant stupid. This metaphorical attribute of salt is evidently closely akin to the one previously mentioned of "essentialness".

⁸³ Gaume, loc. cit.; Moresin, op. cit., pp.153 & 154.

⁸⁴ Ady, A Perfect Discovery of Witches, 1661.

⁸⁵ Napier, Folk Lore, or Superstitious Beliefs in the West of Scotland within this Century, 1879.

⁸⁶ Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S. 325; Band II, S. 315, 396.

⁸⁷ Wuttke, loc. cit.

⁸⁸ Reginald Scot, The Discoverie of Witchcraft, 1584, p.178

⁸⁹ Wuttke, op. cit., S.439.

⁹⁰ Wuttke, op. cit., S.448.

⁹¹ Wuttke, op. cit., S.142.

⁹² Sibree, The Great African Island, 1880, p.307.

⁹³ Nassau, Fetichism in West Africa, 1904, p.381.

⁹⁴ Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S.278.

⁹⁵ Lawrence, op. cit., p.161. See also Schleiden, op. cit., S.91.

⁹⁶ See Oxford English Dictionary, loc. Cit.

A property of salt that has been extensively exploited by the popular imagination is the ease with which it dissolves in water. That a substance otherwise so durable should disappear when put into water and, though leaving no visible trace of its presence, should endow the water with its peculiar properties (capacity to preserve from decay, pungent taste, etc.) has always impressed the people as being a remarkable characteristic, and is perhaps partly responsible for the mysterious significance attaching to holy water. One obvious practical application, of which frequent use has been made, is to estimate the amount of moisture in the atmosphere by the varying avidity of salt for it. It has thus been quite rationally used to foretell the weather.⁹⁷ From this have been derived the following symbolical uses of it for the same purpose.⁹⁸ An onion is cut into twelve pieces, which are strewn with salt and named after the twelve months; the piece that becomes specially moist denotes a wet month in the coming year. The same may be done with twelve nutshells, which have to be examined at midnight. Or a piece of salt is placed on each corner of the table to denote the four seasons of the year; the one that has collected most moisture by the morning indicates the wettest season. The last-mentioned practice is also used to find out if the coming harvest will be valuable or not.⁹⁹ This foretelling capacity of salt has naturally been generalized far beyond its original sphere. Thus, according as a particular heap of salt remains dry or not it is concluded that a corresponding person will or will not survive the coming year, that a given undertaking will be successful or the reverse, and so on.¹⁰⁰

Water is not the only substance into which salt can be absorbed with the production of peculiar changes. Indeed, the capacity of salt to enter into combination with a second substance may be regarded as one of its most salient characteristics. The substance with which it is by far the most often associated in this way is bread. The combination of the two has been used for practically all the purposes enumerated above in connection with salt, and in folk beliefs the two are almost synonymous. Thus bread and salt are both absent from the devil's feasts;¹⁰¹ the combination of them is potent against witches,¹⁰² and against the evil eye;¹⁰³ it guards cattle against disease,¹⁰⁴ ensures a plentiful supply of milk,¹⁰⁵ and removes obstacles to the churning of butter.¹⁰⁶ It is equally efficacious with adults and infants. It is carried into a new dwelling to avert evil influences and to bring good luck;¹⁰⁷ in Hamburg nowadays this custom is replaced by that of carrying at processional times a cake covered with chocolate, in the form of a bread roll, and a salt-cellar of marzipan filled with sugar. The

⁹⁷ Willsford, *Nature's Secrets*, p.139.

⁹⁸ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S.231.

⁹⁹ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S.230.

¹⁰⁰ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S.231.

¹⁰¹ 101. Grimm, *op. cit.*, S.877.

¹⁰² Seligmann, *op. cit.*, Band II, S. 37, 52, 93, 94; Grimm, *op. cit.*, Nachtrag, S.454; Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S. 129, 282.

¹⁰³ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S.282; Seligmann, *op. cit.*, Band I, S.398; Band II, S. 37, 38, 93, 94. ioo. 250, 334.

¹⁰⁴ Dalyell, *op. cit.*, p.100.

¹⁰⁵ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, Band II, S. 38; Dalyell, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ Seligmann, *loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, S.37.

combination of salt and bread has also been extensively used to confirm oaths,¹⁰⁸ and is still so used in Arabia at the present day.¹⁰⁹

The mixture of wheat and salt was used for the same purpose as that of bread and salt. It was an important part of the Roman propitiatory sacrifices,¹¹⁰ and also of the Jewish oblations.¹¹¹ In Russia it was offered as congratulatory to strangers,¹¹² as we have seen salt alone was in other countries. In Ireland women in the streets, and girls from the windows, sprinkled salt and wheat on public functionaries when they assumed office.¹¹³

Lastly may be mentioned the attribute of salt as a means of purification. That salt water possesses this quality in a high degree was observed at an early stage of civilization, and by Roman ladies it was actually regarded as a means of attaining beauty.¹¹⁴ Especially in regard to the sea this feature has led to numerous poetical applications and also to the development of many superstitions. It is intelligible that this purifying attribute should have played an important part in the use of salt in religious cults, and this we find was so, notably in Egypt and Greece.¹¹⁵ We shall return to the subject later on when discussing the relation of purification to baptism.

¹⁰⁸ Dekker's Honest Whore. 1635, Sc.13; Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. I, p.236; Lawrence, op. cit., p.164.

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence, op. cit., p.185.

¹¹⁰ Brand, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 163; Dalyell, op. cit., pp.99 & 100.

¹¹¹ Dalyell, op. cit., p.99.

¹¹² Dalyell, loc. cit.

¹¹³ Brand, op. cit., p. 165; Dalyell, loc. cit.

¹¹⁴ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 84

¹¹⁵ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 84, 85.

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SALT IN FOLKLORE AND SUPERSTITION II

We may now survey the facts just related. While it has only been possible in the allotted space to give a relatively few examples of the numerous ways in which ideas concerning salt have played a part in folk belief and custom it would need a special treatise to record them all it is probable that the most prominent and typical of them have been mentioned; at all events no special selection whatever has been made, beyond relegating sexual ones to the background. It is hardly necessary to say that the grouping here adopted is unduly schematic, being one of convenience in presentation only; a given custom would mostly be dictated by interest in other properties of salt as well as the one under which it is here mentioned.

In regard now to the matter that formed our starting point namely, the superstitious fear of spilling salt it is plain that here a significance is attached to an act which does not inherently belong to it, and it is equally plain that the same is true of most of the customs and beliefs related above. There are two possible explanations that may be offered for this state of affairs. The first would run somewhat as follows. The present-day superstition has no meaning beyond an historical one; it is simply an instance of the tendency of mankind to retain traditional attitudes for no intelligible reason, and is an echo of the time when the idea of salt was properly invested with a greater psychical value than it now is. In former times the significance attached to the idea of salt that we now regard as excessive was not so, being justified in fact and to be accounted for quite naturally by the real importance of the substance. There is undeniably a certain amount of truth in this view. Salt, being a substance necessary to life and in some countries obtainable only with considerable difficulty,¹¹⁶ was inevitably regarded as both important and valuable, though this consideration must lose much of its weight in regard to most parts of the world where the supply is plentiful. Again, the curious properties of salt, its preserving capacity, its power of penetrating other substances, etc., would naturally impress the primitive mind, and the view just described would doubtless try to account for the belief in its magical powers by pointing out that such minds work on a simpler plane of thought than do ours. To this argument, however, comparative psychology could object that, although this type of thought just as that of children certainly often differs from what we term rational thinking, careful investigation always shows that it is very far from being so bizarre and unintelligible as it may at first sight appear; the formation of illogical connections is not meaningless, but has a perfectly definite and comprehensible reason for it. The general criticism, therefore, that must be passed on this explanation is that while it adduces unquestionably important considerations these are only partly capable of accounting for the facts, and are inadequate as a complete explanation of them. Other factors must have been operative in addition to those just mentioned.

The second explanation would supplement the first by regarding the excessive significance attaching to the idea of salt as an example of what Wernicke called an *Vberwertige Idee*, that is to say, an idea overcharged with psychical significance. Only some of this inherently belongs to the idea itself, the rest being of adventitious origin. Such processes are, of course, very familiar in daily life: a banknote,

¹¹⁶ Lawrence, op. cit., p. 187.

for instance, is valued not for the intrinsic worth of the paper but for the worth that extrinsic circumstances give it. Psycho-analytic investigation has shown on the one hand that such transference of affect from one idea to another allied one is much commoner than was previously realized, and on the other hand that very often the subject is quite unaware of the occurrence. Thus a person may experience an intense affect fear, horror, etc. in regard to a given idea or object purely through the idea having formed strong associative connections with another idea which is justifiably invested with this affect; the intrinsic attributes of the idea do not account for the strong affect attached to it, this being in the main derived from a different source. The most striking manifestations of this process are seen in the psychoneuroses; the patient has a terror of a certain object which is not customarily regarded with terror, the reason being that the idea of the object is unconsciously connected in his mind with that of another object in regard to which the terror is quite comprehensible. In such cases the secondary idea may be said to represent or symbolize the primary one.¹¹⁷ The more bizarre and apparently unintelligible is the phobia or other symptom, the more strained is as a rule the connection between it and the original idea, and the stronger is the emotion investing the latter. Apart from the neuroses instances of exceedingly strained connections are less common. What happens as a rule is that the affect belonging to the two ideas, the symbolized and the symbolizing one, is very similar, so that the affect transferred from the one to the other accounts for only part of the affect accompanying the secondary idea. In this case the intrinsic qualities of the idea account for some of the affect, but not for all; the affect is appropriate in quality, but disproportionate in quantity. Unless the cause of this exaggeration is appreciated there is an unavoidable tendency to overlook the fact itself on rationalistic grounds; then the intrinsic qualities of the secondary idea are erroneously regarded as constituting an adequate explanation of the affect in question.

The main difference, therefore, between the two explanations is this: the first assumes that the affect, or psychological significance, attaching to the idea of salt was once not disproportionate to its real value, whereas the second, regarding the affect as disproportionate, maintains that some of it must be derived from an extraneous source.

In seeking for this source we have two distinct clues to guide us. In the first place, the universality of the beliefs and customs under discussion, and the remarkably high and even mystical significance that has been attached to the idea of salt, indicate that any further idea from which this may have been derived must be both a general one, common to all mankind, and one of fundamental psychological importance. In the second place, the association between the idea of salt and any further one must have been formed through the resemblances, real or fancied, of the corresponding qualities of the two ideas. It becomes necessary, therefore, to consider with closer attention the popular conception of these qualities that was described above.

This conception may be summarized as follows. Salt is a pure, white, immaculate and incorruptible substance, apparently irreducible into any further constituent elements, and indispensable to living beings. It has correspondingly been regarded as the essence of things in general, the quintessence of

¹¹⁷ On the precise distinction between symbolism and other forms of indirect mental representation see Ch. VII of my Papers on Psycho-Analysis. 1918, "The Theory of Symbolism".

life, and the very soul of the body. It has been invested with the highest general significance far more than that of any other article of diet was the equivalent of money and other forms of wealth, and its presence was indispensable for the undertaking of any enterprise, particularly any new one. In religion it was one of the most sacred objects, and to it were ascribed all manner of magical powers. The pungent, stimulating flavour of salt, which has found much metaphorical application in reference to pointed, telling wit or discourse, doubtless contributed to the conception of it as an essential element; to be without salt is to be insipid, to have something essential lacking. The durability of salt, and its immunity against decay, made it an emblem of immortality. It was believed to have an important influence in favouring fertility and fecundity, and in preventing barrenness; this idea is connected with other attributes than the one just mentioned, probably indeed with them all. The permanence of salt helped to create the idea that for one person to partake of the salt of another formed a bond of lasting friendship and loyalty between the two, and the substance played an important part in the rites of hospitality. A similar application of it was for confirming oaths, ratifying compacts, and sealing solemn covenants. This conception of a bond was also related to the capacity salt has for combining intimately with a second substance and imparting to this its peculiar properties, including the power to preserve against decay; for one important substance namely, water it had in fact a natural and curious affinity.

If we now try to discover what other idea these ideas could arise in reference to, besides that of salt, the task is surely not difficult. If the word salt had not been mentioned in the preceding description anyone accustomed to hidden symbolism, and many without this experience, would regard it as a circumlocutory and rather grandiloquent account of a still more familiar idea that of human semen. In any case a substance possessing the attributes just mentioned would lend itself with singular facility to such an association. Indeed, the mere fact that salt has been regarded as the emblem of immortality and wisdom is in itself suggestive to anyone who is alive to such possibilities, for the other well-known emblem of these two concepts is the snake, which is in mythology and elsewhere the phallic symbol par excellence. The surmise that the idea of salt has derived much of its significance from its being unconsciously associated with that of semen fulfils at least one postulate of all symbolic thinking namely, that the idea from which the excessive significance is derived is more important psychically than the idea to which this is transferred; the radiation of the affect, like that of electricity, is always from the site of more intense concentration to that of less.

At the present stage of our investigation it is plain that the inference just drawn cannot be regarded as being much more than a surmise, or at the most a working hypothesis, one which will appear more or less plausible according to the experience of unconscious symbolism by which it is viewed. It must next be tested by the ordinary rules of science namely, by its capacity to predict and by its power of satisfactorily reducing to simple terms a series of disparate phenomena.

If the hypothesis is correct then one could foretell that customs and beliefs would be found showing a direct relation between the idea of salt on the one hand and such ideas as those of marriage, sexual intercourse, and potency on the other, as well as a larger number showing a plainly symbolical relation between the two sets of ideas; further, that the ideas concerning salt and water mirror similar, more primitive ones concerning semen and urine, and that the partaking of salt would be connected with ideas relating to sexual intercourse and impregnation. It will presently be seen that anthropological and folkloristic material provides ample confirmation of these expectations.

The supposed action of salt in favouring fecundity and in preventing barrenness has been mentioned above. It was a classical belief that mice became impregnated through eating salt;¹¹⁸ any objection to our hypothesis, therefore, that the connection between the ideas of salt and semen is too remote for them ever to have been brought together, except artificially, at once falls to the ground, for here we have a direct identification of the two substances. In the Pyrenees the wedding couple before setting out for church put salt into their left pocket to guard against the man's being impotent. In Limousin, Poitou, and Haut-Vienne the bridegroom alone does this, in Altmark the bride alone. In Pamproux salt is put into the clothes of the wedding couple with the same motive.¹¹⁹ In Germany salt is strewn in the bride's shoe.¹²⁰ In Scotland on the night before the wedding salt is strewn on the floor of the new home with the object of protecting the young couple against the evil eye;¹²¹ I have elsewhere¹²² shown that the idea of maleficium, with which that of the evil eye is practically identical, mainly arises from the pervading dread of impotence, and Seligmann¹²³ actually mentions the use of salt to counteract the "ligature", i.e., the spell cast over the sexual functions by evil influences. Frobenius¹²⁴ relates a folkloristic story told with the directness of peasant thought. A penis and vagina once went together on a journey to buy salt. Each carried its portion. On the way back it began to rain. The vagina said to her comrade: 'Our salt will get wet if we carry it on our heads. Let us put it in my opening; then it will keep dry.' They did this, and there we have the reason why the penis ever seeks the vagina since it contains the daintiest delicacy (i.e., salt), while the vagina always wants salt (i.e., semen) from the penis.

Salt has often, especially in former times, been considered to have an exciting influence on the nervous system, and it was thus thought to possess the attribute of arousing passion and desire.¹²⁵ Schleiden writes:

The Romans termed a man in love "salax", (whence our "salacious") and this view still survives with us when we jokingly say that the cook who has put too much salt into the soup must be in love.¹²⁶

In Belgium the custom of visiting one's sweetheart in the nights after festivals is called "turning one's love into salt".¹²⁷ Shakespeare evidently uses it in the same sense in the passage, 'though we are justices ... we have some salt of our youth in us.'¹²⁸ In some stories collected among African natives by

¹¹⁸ Pliny, Nat. Hist.. X,85.

¹¹⁹ The preceding examples are all taken from Seligmann, op. cit., Band II, S.35, 36, or from Schleiden, op. cit., S.71, 79.

¹²⁰ Schell, "Das Salz im Volksglauben", Zeitschrift des Vereines für Volkskunde, Jahrg. XV, S. 137

¹²¹ Seligmann, op. cit., S. 35.

¹²² Ernest Jones, Der Alptraum in seiner Beziehung zu gewissen Formen des mittelalterlichen Aberglaubens, 1912, S. 107, 108.

¹²³ Seligmann, op. cit., Band I, S. 291.

¹²⁴ Leo Frobenius, Schwarze Seelen, 1913, S. 433.

¹²⁵ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 92.

¹²⁶ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 93.

¹²⁷ Von Reinsberg-Diiringsfeld, op. cit., S. 472.

¹²⁸ The Merry Wives of Windsor, Act II, Sc. 3.

Frobenius¹²⁹ salt is referred to as a direct equivalent of semen. Paracelsus, in his *De Origine Morborum Invisibilium* teaches that Incubi and Succubi emanate from the sperma found in the imagination of those who commit the unnatural sin of Onan, but that this is no true sperma, only corrupted salt.

The following are two metaphorical applications of the same idea. Salt is used to keep the fire always burning,¹³⁰ and there are examples, which need not be quoted, of the combination of salt and fire being used for every purpose in regard to which salt alone has superstitiously been used. At the Osiris festivals in Egypt all those taking part had to light lamps the oil of which had had salt mixed with it.¹³¹ The idea of fire, however, in poetry as well as in mythology,¹³² is constantly used to represent the ideas of the fire of life and the fire of love. Again, lameness is often brought into symbolic association with impotence (incapacity, inability), and in Sicily salt is used specifically to prevent lameness.¹³³

The initiatory ceremonies universally performed by ruder peoples at the age of puberty commonly include a sacrificial or propitiatory act; circumcision is a replacement of such ceremonies, having been put back to the age of infancy just as baptism has been by most Christian Churches. In Egypt salt is strewn when circumcision is performed.¹³⁴ In various initiations, both earnest and jocular, at universities and schools salt played a central part, and the phrase "to salt a freshman" is still in vogue.¹³⁵ Of late years it has been replaced in this respect by the more convenient alcohol, another unconscious symbol for semen,¹³⁶ but the feeling-attitude remains the same namely, that the young man needs the administration of an essential substance before he can be regarded as having attained full virility.

It is known that there exists an intimate connection between extreme abstinence attitudes of all kinds and excessive sexual "repression"; over-great prudishness is apt to be accompanied by a desire to abolish all alcohol from the universe, as we see at the present day in America. In the same way salt has been brought into manifold relation with the idea of sexual abstinence. The workers in the salt-pans near Siphoum, in Laos, must abstain from all sexual relations at the place where they are at work, the motive being a purely superstitious one.¹³⁷ The celibate Egyptian priests had at certain times to abstain wholly from the use of salt, on the ground of its being a material that excited sensual desires too much.¹³⁸ Abstinence both from sexual relations and from the partaking of salt is enjoined for several days on men of the Dyak tribes after returning from an expedition in which they have

¹²⁹ Frobenius, *Schwarze Seelen* (Privately printed), 1913, S. 433. Dr. Otto Rank kindly informs me of this.

¹³⁰ Mühlhauser, *Urreligion des deutschen Volkes*, 1860, S. 133.

¹³¹ Hartmann's *Life of Paracelsus*, 1667, p. 90.

¹³² Abraham, *Traum und Mythos*, 1909, S. 31, etc.

¹³³ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, Band II, S. 37.

¹³⁴ Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 433-9.

¹³⁵ *ibid*

¹³⁶ Abraham, "Die psychologischen Beziehungen zwischen Sexualität und Alkoholismus", *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, 1908, S. 449.

¹³⁷ Aymonier, *Notes sur le Laos*, 1885, p.141.

¹³⁸ Schleiden, *op. cit.*, S.93.

taken human heads,¹³⁹ and for three weeks on a Pima Indian who has killed an Apache;¹⁴⁰ in the latter case the man's wife also has to abstain from salt during the same period.¹⁴¹ The full account of these customs clearly shows that they constitute rites of purification and expiation. Abstinence both from sexual relations and from salt is also frequently prescribed during important undertakings or on weighty occasions: thus on Lake Victoria Nyanza while fishing,¹⁴² and in the island of Nias while traps are being laid for wild animals.¹⁴³ In Uganda any man who has either committed adultery or eaten salt is not allowed to partake of the sacred fish-offering.¹⁴⁴ In Mexico the Huichol Indians undergo the same double abstinence while the sacred cactus plant, the gourd of the God of Fire, is being gathered.¹⁴⁵

Similar double observances obtain in other countries in connection with the promotion of fertility; in fact the last-named custom is related to this, for the main benefits that the sacred cactus is supposed to bestow are plentiful rain-supply, good crops, and the like. The Indians of Peru abstain for as long as six months both from sexual intercourse and from eating salt on the occasion of the birth of twins; one of the twins was believed to be the son of the lightning, the lord and creator of rain.¹⁴⁶ Other examples of the same double abstinence are: in Peru preceding the Acatay mita festival, the object of which is to ripen the fruit, and which is followed by a sexual orgy;¹⁴⁷ in Nicaragua from the time that the maize is sown until it is reaped.¹⁴⁸ In Behar in India the Nagin women, sacred prostitutes known as "wives of the Snake-God", periodically go about begging and during this time they may not touch salt; half of their proceeds go to the priests and half to buying salt and sweetmeats for the villagers.¹⁴⁹

Attention may be called to two features of the preceding collection of customs. First that they occur in all parts of the globe, instances having been cited from Europe, Africa, Asia, and America, North, South, and Central. Secondly, that to a great extent they duplicate the customs previously described in connection with salt alone, thus in relation to religion, to the weather, to important undertakings, and to the production of fertility. Where in one country the presence of salt is indispensable, in another one abstinence from salt and at the same time from sexual intercourse is equally essential. Both cases agree in regarding salt as an important agent in these respects; whether this is for good or for evil is of secondary interest, the main point being its significance. If, as is here suggested, the idea of salt is generally connected in the unconscious mind with that of semen, it is throughout intelligible that abstinence from sexual relations should tend to be accompanied by abstinence from salt as well

¹³⁹ Tromp, "Uit de Salasial van Koetei", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie*, 1888, Vol. XXXVII, p.74.

¹⁴⁰ Bancroft, *Native Races of the Pacific States*, 1875, Vol. I, p.553; Grossman, in *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, 1892, p.475.

¹⁴¹ Russell, "The Pima Indians", *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1908, p.204.

¹⁴² Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Part II, *Taboo*, 1911, p.194.

¹⁴³ Thomas, "De jacht op het eiland Nias", *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land-en Volkenkunde*, 1880, Vol. XXVI.

¹⁴⁴ Roscoe, "Further Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Baganda", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1902, Vol. XXXII, p.56.

¹⁴⁵ Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, 1903, Vol. II, p.126.

¹⁴⁶ Frazer, *op. cit.*, Part I, *The Magic Art*, 1911, Vol. I, p.266.

¹⁴⁷ Frazer, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p.98.

¹⁴⁸ Frazer, *op. cit.*, p.105.

¹⁴⁹ Crooke, *Popular Religion and Folk-Lore of Northern India*, 1896, Vol. II. p.138.

(radiation of the affect); it is in perfect accord with all we know of primitive, symbolic thinking. The unconscious logic of the argument seems to be that abstinence from sexuality is incomplete unless all forms of semen, even symbolic forms, are abstained from.

This bipolar attitude of regarding salt as either exceedingly beneficial or exceedingly harmful reminds one of two current controversies namely, whether alcohol and sexual intercourse respectively are beneficial or harmful to health. Indeed, as with these, there have been at various times propagandist movements started in which salt has been denounced as the cause of numerous bodily evils.¹⁵⁰ In 1851 there was published a volume by a Dr. Arthur Howard entitled: "Salt, the Forbidden Fruit or Food The Whole Mystery now Revealed. Its Hurtful Effects on Man (chiefly Woman) and on Animals, showing itself to be the Chief Cause of Diseases of the Body and Mind of Man and of Animals, as taught by the ancient Egyptian priests and Wise Men and by Scripture, in accordance with the Author's Experience of many years." It was described by the *Lancet* as "worthy of immortality". As may be imagined from the title, the author treats of salt as a most obnoxious substance, abstinence from which is essential to the maintenance of health. It is possible even that unconscious associations of the kind under consideration may not have been altogether without influence in relation to more recent medical views. It had long been noticed that urine contained solid constituents which were either evident as such or could be recovered from their soluble state by means of evaporation; these were regarded on the one hand as comprising the essence of the fluid, being thus identified with semen, and on the other as salts, which indeed they mostly are.¹⁵¹ The sufferings due to the excessive accumulation of these salts, in the form of calculi, attracted a great deal of attention and play a very important part in early surgical writings. When the chemical constituents of urine came to be carefully studied by exact methods there arose a tendency, which reached its acme in the late 'eighties, to attribute a considerable number of disorders to the presence in the system of an excessive amount of these constituents. Thus, to mention only a few examples, gout was thought to be simply a question of poisoning by uric acid, uraemia to be poisoning with urea, diabetic coma (exhaustion following on the continued loss of a vital substance) poisoning by acetone (an occasional urinary constituent), rheumatism poisoning by lactic acid (milk, a sexual secretion, is almost constantly identified with semen in the unconscious), and so on. It is interesting that the two diseases in regard to which this idea was most firmly fixed namely, gout and rheumatism are joint diseases, and hence lend themselves to the series of unconscious associations "lameness, incapacity, impotence". Of late years the tendency has taken at the same time simpler and more complex directions. On the one hand there is a return to salt itself, and a "salt-free diet" is vaunted as the sovereign agent for the prevention of arterial disease and old age (impotency), for the cure of epilepsy, and so on. It will also be remembered how, when Brown-Sequard's attempt to recapture youthful vigour by means of the injection of canine semen shocked the medical profession in London, efforts were made to substitute the more respectable, because unconscious, symbol of this common salt. On the other hand there is a restless search for more complex organic poisons, usually in the intestinal contents, which are now being as extensively exploited as the urine was forty years ago. The belief in the prime importance of organic poisons is even generally extended to psychosexual maladies, such as hysteria, "neurasthenia", and dementia praecox. It may be questioned whether the

¹⁵⁰ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.189-92.

¹⁵¹ The unconscious association between semen and urine on the one hand and salt and water on the other will be dealt with at length later in this essay.

important advance in knowledge represented by the toxic theory of disease would not have met with more resistance than it did had it not appealed to a fundamental complex in the human mind, in which, among others, the ideas of poison and semen are closely associated.

A few derivative symbolisms concerning salt may next be considered, which receive an added significance in the light of the hypothesis put forward above. The power of salt is enhanced when it is placed on an object resembling the male organ. Cattle are thus protected by making them step over a bar of iron, or a hatchet, which has been sprinkled with salt;¹⁵² the Esthonians cut a cross¹⁵³ under the door through which the cattle have to pass, and fill the furrows of it with salt to prevent evil spirits from harming them.¹⁵⁴

According to Clement of Alexandria, in the rites that celebrate the voluptuousness of the sea as a token of Aphrodite's birth there a lump of salt and a phallus was handed to the youths who are being initiated into the lore of adultery. In their turn they present her with a coin, as if they were her lovers and she their paid mistress.¹⁵⁵ A similar meaning must originally have attached to the Ancient Greek custom of tossing to the spectators of a comedy barley cakes in the shape of phalli, mixed with salt.¹⁵⁶

In Bohemia when a girl goes out for a walk her mother sprinkles salt on the ground so that she may not "lose her way";¹⁵⁷ this over-solicitous precaution becomes more intelligible when we read Wuttke's explanation that the object of it is to prevent the girl from falling in love.¹⁵⁸ A belief at first sight quite foolish and meaningless is that a boy can be cured of home-sickness by placing salt in the hem of his trousers(!) and making him look up the chimney.¹⁵⁹ We now know, however, that excessive homesickness is due to over-attachment, rooted in unconscious incestuous wishes, to some member of the family, usually the mother, which has the effect of "fixing" his powers of love and rendering it incapable of being transferred in the normal way to a stranger. To look up the chimney symbolizes the daring to face another dark, inaccessible and dangerous passage (the very word "chimney" is derived from the Greek "kaminos" meaning "funace" or "oven", a common unconscious equivalent for the mother's lap or womb). The belief, therefore, which means that if someone can succeed in "making a man of him" he will be freed from his homesickness, is not so unintelligible as it appears, and is merely the clothing in symbolic language of a fundamental fact in human nature. One may learn from it how invaluable a knowledge of unconscious symbolism is for the understanding of superstition, and how impossible it is to comprehend it without this knowledge.

¹⁵² Wuttke, op. cit., S.440.

¹⁵³ The phallic significance of the cross symbolism has been pointed out by many investigators. See, for instance, Inman, *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism*, 1874.

¹⁵⁴ Frazer, op. cit., p.351.

¹⁵⁵ J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Religion and Ancient Greek Folklore*, 1910, p.581.

¹⁵⁶ F. H. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, 1914, p.102.

¹⁵⁷ Lawrence, op. cit., p.182

¹⁵⁸ Wuttke, op. cit., S.367.

¹⁵⁹ Lawrence, op. cit., p.181.

The Salt-cellar the receptacle of the salt, has been held in as much superstitious reverence as its contents.¹⁶⁰ The symbolism of it is usually a feminine one,¹⁶¹ as indeed is indicated by the Spanish compliment of calling a sweetheart "salt-cellar of my love".¹⁶² Salt-cellars, often of great magnificence, were, and still are, favourite wedding-presents. In Rome they constituted a special heirloom, the *paternum salinum*, which was handed down from generation to generation with especial care. In general it is just as evident that an excessive amount of affect, of extraneous origin, has been invested in the idea of a salt-cellar as it is in salt itself. In classical times the salt-cellar partook of the nature of a holy vessel, associated with the temple in general, and more particularly with the altar.¹⁶³ To those who are familiar with the female symbolism of the altar¹⁶⁴ this will be quite comprehensible. The etymology of the word "salt-cellar" is of considerable interest in the present connection. The second part "cellar" is derived from the French "saliere" (salt-cellar), so that the whole is a redundancy, meaning salt receptacle. We see here an instructive example of linguistic assimilation, for a "cellar" (a dark chamber under the house) has the same feminine symbolic meaning as "saliere" itself. The sound resemblance of the words "saliere" and cellar naturally made the assimilation easier, but the instinctive intuition of the people was probably the underlying factor in bringing it about.

The offering of salt as a special mark of favour, and as a sign of hospitality, has been mentioned above; we have now to note the reverse of this. In England¹⁶⁵ and France¹⁶⁶ it was considered unlucky to be helped to salt at table; this superstition still obtains in Anglican circles and finds popular expression in the saying "help me to salt, help me to sorrow". In Russia the quarrel that would otherwise follow can be averted if one smiles amicably when proffering the salt.¹⁶⁷ A clue to the original meaning of the superstition is found in the attitude formerly obtaining in Italy,¹⁶⁸ where a courtesy of this kind was thought to be a mark of undue familiarity; when salt was offered by one man to the wife of another it was a sufficient cause for jealousy and even quarrel. This is perfectly intelligible in the light of the hypothesis advanced above, but is hardly otherwise to be explained.

In the North of England to give salt to someone is considered dangerous, for it puts the giver into the power of the recipient;¹⁶⁹ the same belief also used to be held in Russia.¹⁷⁰ In other places the act gives one possession or power over the recipient, and with salt one can acquire either men or knowledge;¹⁷¹ this idea is probably allied to those of loyalty and of the magical properties of salt (see above). Light is thus thrown on the quaint saying: "to catch a bird you must put salt on his tail." This is commonly accounted for with the obvious remark that to catch a bird one must get near enough to it

¹⁶⁰ Schleiden op. cit., S.74; Lawrence, op. cit., pp.196-205.

¹⁶¹ Though the late Dr. Putnam related to me the case of a man in whose dreams a salt-cellar appeared as a symbol of the scrotum.

¹⁶² Andre, Globus, 1867, Band XI. S.140.

¹⁶³ Schleiden, op. cit., S.74.

¹⁶⁴ G. W. Cox, The Mythology of the Aryan Nations, 1870, Vol. II, pp.113-21; Inman, op. cit., p.74.

¹⁶⁵ Brand, op. cit., Vol. III, p.162.

¹⁶⁶ ibid., p.163.

¹⁶⁷ Revue des Traditions populaires, 1886, t. I; Sikes, op. cit., p. 329.

¹⁶⁸ Boyle, A Theological and Philosophical Treatise of the Nature and Goodness of Salt, 1612.

¹⁶⁹ Henderson, Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England, 1879, p. 217.

¹⁷⁰ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 71.

¹⁷¹ Oxford Dictionary, loc. Cit

to be able to touch it, but this does not explain why it should be just salt that has to be applied, nor why it should be just to the tail.

Realization of the belief in the magical power of salt makes the saying rather more intelligible, but the explanation thus afforded is still only a general one; constructions of the phantasy, including superstitious beliefs and sayings, are determined not only generally, but precisely and in their finest details. Additional help is furnished by an old legend narrated by Lawrence,¹⁷² in which a young man playfully threw some salt on to the back of a woman who was sitting next to him at table; she happened to be a witch, and was so weighted down by the salt that she was unable to move until it was brushed away. We have here, therefore, again the idea of salt brought into relation with that of weight which prevents movement. Now witches were conceived to be incorporeal beings, and in fact one of the chief ways of finding out whether a given woman was a witch was by weighing her.¹⁷³ The difference in weight made by a pinch of salt was therefore quite considerable, or could metaphorically be imagined to be so. This attribute of witches was closely related to their power of flying by night, and therefore with bird mythology altogether. The bird has always been a common phallic symbol¹⁷⁴ sometimes quite consciously so, as with the winged phallus charms of the Roman ladies and the tail is a still more familiar one in common speech; further the act of flying from the ground is frequently associated in the unconscious with the phenomenon of erection.¹⁷⁵ The significance of salt (=semen) in this connection is obvious; favouring and hindering are treated as synonymous terms here as elsewhere in superstition, just as in the unconscious mind, the main point being the significance.

Finally may be mentioned the belief that to see salt in a dream indicates illness.¹⁷⁶ When one recalls the frequency with which the ideas of nocturnal emission and of illness or loss of strength are associated, it is not difficult to divine the source of this particular belief.

¹⁷² Lawrence, op. cit., p. 179.

¹⁷³ Bekker, *Die Bezauberte Welt*, 1692, Theil I, S. 209.

¹⁷⁴ Abraham, *Traum und Mythos*, 1909, S. 30, 63, etc.

¹⁷⁵ Federn, Cited by Freud. *Die Traumdeutung*, Dritte Aufl., 1911. S. 204.

¹⁷⁶ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 80.

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SALT IN FOLKLORE AND SUPERSTITION III

In the preceding section of this essay we dealt chiefly with the adult roots of salt symbolism and superstitions, and we have now to turn our attention to the deeper infantile roots. The reason why the word "deeper" is used here will presently become evident; it has to do with the ontogenetic, as well as phylogenetic, antiquity of symbolism in general.

Before passing to the next stage of the investigation, therefore, it will be necessary briefly to refer to some aspects of infantile mental life that without being realized play an important part in adult life namely, certain views developed by young children concerning the begetting of children.¹⁷⁷ These are forgotten long before puberty, so that the adult is quite unaware of their existence and is extremely surprised to hear of their great frequency in childhood life. They survive nevertheless in the unconscious mind, and exert a considerable influence on later interests and views.

Early realizing, in spite of the untruths told him by the parents, that a baby is born of the mother and grows inside her, the child sets to work to solve the problem as best he can, the full answer being concealed from him. Knowing nothing of other organs he conceives of the "inside", particularly the abdomen, as simply a receptacle for food, a view amply confirmed by his experience of indigestion and other sensations. The baby, therefore, must have been formed out of food, an inference that is largely correct. Further, there being no other mode of exit possible at least so far as he is aware the baby must have then reached the exterior in the same way as digested food (cloaca theory), as it actually does in all animals except mammalia. There is thus established in the child's mind a close connection between the ideas of food, faeces, and babies, one that explains among many other things many a hysterical symptom in later life.

The child next comes to the notion that, since food alone does not in his personal experience have this result, a mixing of two substances must be necessary. On the basis of his excremental interests he observes that there are three possible materials available, for it is only exceptionally that he thinks the fertilizing material is of non-human origin. The phantasy may combine these three materials solid, liquid, and gaseous in different ways, the commonest of which, in my experience and in that of other observers, are in order: liquid solid, liquid liquid, solid solid, and gaseous solid. A knowledge of these facts is indispensable for the full understanding of salt symbolism. As the objection may be raised that they are artefacts of the psychoanalytic method of investigation, it will be well to refer to a little of the mass of purely anthropological evidence that proves the universal occurrence of similar beliefs in what corresponds with the childhood of the race.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ See Freud, *Sammlung kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre*, Zweite Folge, 1911, S. 159-64, "Über infantile Sexualtheorien".

¹⁷⁸ Since this essay was written a highly interesting paper of Otto Rank's has appeared ("*Vaikerpsychologische Parallelen zu den infantilen Sexualtheorien*", *Zentr abblatt für Psychoanalyse*, Jahrg. II, Heft 8) in which a large quantity of additional data is given that both confirms and amplifies the conclusions here enunciated.

The belief that fertilization, and even delivery, can take place through some other orifice than the vagina has been held in the most diverse countries of the world and is still quite prevalent. Any orifice or indentation may be implicated, the nostril, eye, ear, navel, and so on. An interesting historical example was the medieval belief that the Virgin Mary conceived through the ear, one widely held in the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁷⁹ The mouth, however, was the orifice most frequently thought of in this connection, as is apparent from the very numerous legends and beliefs in which eating or drinking bring about pregnancy. The peasantry in England still believe that peahens are impregnated in this way¹⁸⁰ and similar views are entertained in other countries in respect of different animals; we noted above that according to which female mice are impregnated by eating salt.

The belief that women can conceive as the result of eating various articles of diet has existed in most parts of the world;¹⁸¹ usually the particular food is one to which some sexual symbolism is attached, such as rice, fish, coconuts, and so on. In the more civilized countries this has been reduced to the belief that partaking of such substances will cure barrenness in women or promote their fecundity; Hartland¹⁸² relates a huge number of practices of this kind carried out, mostly at the present day, for the purpose of securing conception.

A digression must here be made on a matter of some importance to the present theme namely, the association between food as taken into the body and food as it is given out, two ideas which are by no means so remote from each other in the primitive mind, including that of the child, as they usually are in that of the civilized adult. In the first place many savage tribes have the custom of devouring ordure of all kinds, including their own, and indeed seem to partake of it with special relish,¹⁸³ a contemptuous reference to it may be found in 2 Kings xviii. In more civilized countries this has long been replaced by sausages¹⁸⁴ (a word, by the way, of the same etymological derivation as salt), and other products of abdominal organs.¹⁸⁵

The ordure of sacred men has in many countries, e.g., Tibet, a high religious significance, being used to anoint kings, to guard against evil demons, and so on.¹⁸⁶ That it is not very rare for insane patients to eat their own excrement is of course well known;¹⁸⁷ in such cases the long-buried infantile association may come to open expression in the patient's remark, pointing to the excrement, that he

¹⁷⁹ See Ch. XIII of these Essays, which is devoted to an examination of this belief.

¹⁸⁰ Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, igog, Vol. I, p. 151.

¹⁸¹ Hartland, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-16. Numerous examples.

¹⁸² Hartland, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-41, 47, 48, 54-72.

¹⁸³ Bourke, *Scatalogic Rites of All Nations*, 1891, pp. 33-7.

¹⁸⁴ In England in the present generation the belief was acted on that a stolen sausage had the power of curing barrenness (Hartland, *op. cit.*, p. 56).

¹⁸⁵ The wife of the Elector of Hanover, in a letter to her niece, the sister-in-law of Louis XIV, writes as follows:

Si la viande fait la merde, il est vrai de dire que la merde fait la viande. Est-ce que dans les tables les plus dedicates, la merde n'y est pas servie en ragouts? Les boudins, les andouilles, les saucisses, ne sont-ce pas de ragouts dans des sacs & merde? (Hanovre, 31 Octobre, 1694.)

¹⁸⁶ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.42-53.

¹⁸⁷ According to Obersteiner (*Psychiatrisches Centralblatt*, 1871, Band III, S.95 this is true of one per cent of such patients, more often with men.

has just produced a baby. Cases of stercophagy are occasionally met with apart from any psychosis, as I know from personal experience of several instances. An association is often formed between the ideas of excrement and corpses, probably through the common notion of decomposition of something that was once a living human body, or part of one. Both ideas are connected with that of fecundity. Hartland¹⁸⁸ refers to 'numerous stories wherein portions of dead bodies, given to maidens and other women, render them pregnant'. One of the most widely-spread practices in India and elsewhere for remedying sterility is to perform various symbolic acts in relation to dead bodies: thus, to creep under the coffin, to wash in the blood of decapitated criminals, to bathe over a dead body or underneath a person who has been hanged, and so on.¹⁸⁹ The Hungarians hold that a dead man's bone shaved into drink and given to a woman will promote conception, or if given to a man will enhance his potency.¹⁹⁰

It is clear that other factors also enter into these last mentioned beliefs, notably forms of ancestor-worship, but we are concerned here only with the one element of the association between putrefaction and fecundity, one which has of course an extensive real justification in agriculture (manure and fertility). The bone, being a rigid hollow tube containing a vital marrow,¹⁹¹ is a very frequent phallic symbol in anthropological data and in the unconscious mind generally: the following Egyptian myth also illustrates its power of impregnation.¹⁹² A bone thrown on a dung-heap(!) grew up into so fine a tree (another familiar symbol) that no one had ever seen its like. The daughter of the man who had thrown the bone was desirous of seeing this wonderful tree; when she witnessed its beauty she was so entranced that she embraced it and kissing it took a leaf into her mouth. As she chewed it she found the taste sweet and agreeable and swallowed the leaf; at the same instant she conceived by the will of God.

Mainly derived from the same source are the beliefs and customs relating to the endless magical properties attaching to dead bodies, and notably to their most putrefactive elements (saliva, excretions, etc.).¹⁹³ It would be out of place to follow this subject further here, but mention may be made of a West German belief to the effect that unless the person who has clothed the dead body rubs his hands with salt his limbs will go to sleep.¹⁹⁴ This is evidently akin to sympathetic magic, the meaning being that close contact with the corpse may transfer his state of deadness to the person; the deeper meaning is that salt (=semen) will protect the member(s) from the risk of death, i.e., impotency.

A more constant unconscious association is that between the ideas of gold and faeces,¹⁹⁵ one of far-reaching significance in mythology as well as in the reactions of every-day life. Gold as fertilizing principle usually in conjunction with a second sexual symbol is a favourite theme in mythology;

¹⁸⁸ Hartland, op. cit., p.77.

¹⁸⁹ Hartland, op. cit., pp.74-6.

¹⁹⁰ Von Wlislocki, *Aus dem Volksleben der Magyaren*, 1893, S.77.

¹⁹¹ Cp. the curse, "May his bones lose their sap".

¹⁹² Oestrup, *Conies de Damas*, 1897, p.26.

¹⁹³ Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, 1895, Vol. II, pp.162-74

¹⁹⁴ Wuttke, op. cit., S.463.

¹⁹⁵ Freud, op. cit., S.136, 137; Ferenczi, *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, 1916, Ch. XIII, "The Ontogenesis of the Interest in Money"; Ernest Jones, *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, 1918, pp.676-8.

perhaps the best known instance is that of Danae being impregnated by a shower of golden rain. Apples, fish, and other objects, made of or resembling gold, are also familiar instances of the same type of story. This association explains the extensive connection noted earlier between salt and money or wealth (both being symbols of fertilizing excrement), of which a few other examples may be given. In Pomerania at the close of a wedding breakfast a servant carries round a plate containing salt, upon which the guests put money;¹⁹⁶ the combination of the two substances plainly symbolizes fertility. Seligmann¹⁹⁷ refers to a German custom of carrying salt and money together in the pocket as a protection against impotence, so that here we have our surmise directly confirmed as to the meaning of the combination. A more complex variant is found in the Chemnitz saying: "If one washes one's money in clear water and puts it with salt and bread, the dragon and evil people cannot get it."¹⁹⁸

Pregnancy has been brought about just as frequently by drinking as it has by eating: all manner of fluids have been efficacious in this respect, the sacred soma-juice milk, the sap of grass, leaves and plants, the juice of roots, fruit and flowers, and so on.¹⁹⁹ The idea of a liquid stimulus to conception thus stands in contrast with that of a solid one. The practice of drinking various fluids for the purpose of aiding conception is even more widely spread, and exists throughout Europe at the present day. In every country women wishing to have children drink water from various holy springs or wells, the most potent of which is perhaps that at Lourdes.²⁰⁰ Apart from this numerous allied practices exist, of which the following selection may be given.²⁰¹ In Thuringia and Transylvania women who wished to be healed of unfruitfulness drank consecrated (salt) water from the baptismal font; in Riigen such water was efficacious if poured before the door of a childless couple. In Hungary a barren woman drinks from a spring that she has never before seen. A Malagasy woman who has not been blessed with issue is made to go on swallowing water until her stomach is so full that it will not hold another drop. Masur women in West Prussia make use of the water that drips from a stallion's mouth after he has drunk.

As might be expected, more personal fluids are extensively used for the same purpose, this being the primary sense of the proceeding. In Bombay a woman cuts off the end of the robe of another woman who has borne children, steeps it, and drinks the infusion. Other women in India drink the water squeezed from the loin-cloth of a sanyasi or devotee. Saliva has been very extensively employed in this connection, it being almost universally treated as a seminal equivalent (hence the expression "he is the very spit of his father"). Saliva in fact forms throughout in folklore and superstition a regular duplicate of salt, bearing the same relation to hospitality, friendship, compacts, baptism, magical powers and charms, religious significance, and the rest;²⁰² the theme cannot be further pursued here and obviously needs separate exposition. Other fluids that may be mentioned are: the milk of another woman, blood from the navel of a new-born child, water in which the navel has been soaked, the lochial discharge of a woman at her first child-bed, water in which the placenta has been soaked,

¹⁹⁶ Schleiden, *op. cit.*, S.71.

¹⁹⁷ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, S.38.

¹⁹⁸ Grimm, *op. cit.*, Nachtrag, S.434.

¹⁹⁹ Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, 1909, Vol. I. Numerous instances

²⁰⁰ *ibid.* pp.64-7.

²⁰¹ *ibid.* pp.67-71.

²⁰² Hartland, *Perseus*, *op. cit.*, pp.258-75.

water from the first bath of a woman after delivery. The original sense of all these beliefs and customs is revealed by consideration of the numerous myths and legends, which recur in every part of the world without exception, describing how pregnancy followed the imbibing of semen, deliberate or accidental.

A great part of our mental life, however, is the echo of childhood thoughts, and the child knows nothing about semen. To him the corresponding potent fluid is urine, a topic which must next concern us. The prediction was ventured above that the various ideas noted in regard to salt and water would be found to mirror earlier corresponding ones relating to semen and urine. Confining ourselves for the present to the subject of salt water and urine, we find that the resemblances between the ideas relating to them are very striking. They may be considered by following the order in which the properties of salt were enumerated at the outset.

The significance of salt for friendship, loyalty, hospitality, and the ratifying of pacts, was dwelt on above: the same customs and ideas can be duplicated in respect of urine. Until about three centuries ago it was the vogue in Europe to pledge a friend's health in urine,²⁰³ exactly as we now do in wine, and in the same circumstances; by this, perpetual friendship and loyalty, or even love attachment, might be ensured. The same custom still obtains in Siberia, where it also signifies a pact of peace.²⁰⁴ At a Moorish wedding the bride's urine is thrown in the face of any unmarried man or stranger on whom it is wished to bestow a distinguished favour,²⁰⁵ just as in other countries salt is presented with the same intention. In parts of Russia it was customary for the bride to wash her feet and then use the water for sprinkling the bridal bed and the assembled guests; it is probable, as Bourke suggests,²⁰⁶ that the water thus used represents a survival of a former practice in which the aspersion was with the urine of the bride. The old English custom of the bride selling alcoholic liquor the so-called Bride-Ale on the wedding-day²⁰⁷ is also likely to be ultimately derived from the same primitive source. The Jews still retain the following allied custom at their weddings: A goblet of wine is handed to the bridegroom by the best man, and after the bridegroom has sipped from it he passes it to the principal bridesmaid; she hands it to the bride, who also drinks from it. The following custom, related by Dulaure, seems to be a question both of hospitality and a test of friendship:

The Tchuktchees offer their women to travelers; but the latter, to become worthy of the offer, have to submit to a disgusting test. The daughter or wife who has to pass the night with her new guest presents him with a cupful of her urine; with this he has to rinse out his mouth. If he is brave enough to do so, he is regarded as a sincere friend; if not, he is treated as an enemy of the family.²⁰⁸

It may be doubted whether the construction Dulaure places on this is objectively arrived at; at all events it is not likely to be the original explanation.

²⁰³ Bourke, op. cit., p.129. Numerous references. ("Cobblers' punch" means urine with a cinder in it.)

²⁰⁴ Melville, In the Lena Delta, 1885, p.318.

²⁰⁵ Mungo Park: Travels into the Interior of Africa 1813, pp.109. 135.

²⁰⁶ Bourke, op. cit., p.232.

²⁰⁷ Brand, op. cit., Vol. II, p.143 et seq.

²⁰⁸ Dulaure, Les DiviniUs Generatrices, 1825, p.400.

The magical powers of salt are fully equaled by those of urine. In connection with evil spirits and witches it played a triple part. In the first place it was used actually to bewitch people for evil purposes.²⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that this might occur even unintentionally. In Africa, for instance, it is believed that²¹⁰ 'to add one's urine, even unintentionally, to the food of another bewitches that other, and does him grievous harm', this may be compared with the belief, mentioned above, that to give salt to someone puts him in one's power. Secondly, like salt, it was used for the detection of witchcraft and of witches.²¹¹ Thirdly it was one of the most potent charms against evil spirits and witches, and was used as such throughout the Middle Ages.²¹² In Ireland²¹³ urine, especially when combined with dung, was invaluable in frustrating the mischief of fairies. It is still used against witches by the Eskimos in disorders of childbirth.²¹⁴ The Shamans of Alaska do the same to keep off evil spirits.²¹⁵ Os thanes, the magician, prescribed the dipping of our feet, in the morning, in human urine, as a preventative against evil charms.²¹⁶ It is still a practice in France to wash in urine so as to guard against the devil and other maleficent influences.²¹⁷

In regard to disease there was still more extensive application made of urine than of salt, both for diagnostic and for therapeutic purposes. As is well-known, urinoscopy was in the Middle Ages one of the principal means of recognizing different diseases, and it was used for this purpose not only in Europe but in Arabia, Tibet, and other parts of the world;²¹⁸ for instance, in the index to the works of Avicenna there are no fewer than two hundred and seventy five references to the appearance and other physical properties of urine in disease. As in the case of salt, this divination was connected with ideas of urine, rain, and weather prophesying in general. The use of urine in the treatment of disease has been so remarkably comprehensive that it is impossible even to touch on the subject here; Bourke has collected a vast amount of information dealing with it.²¹⁹ It may be added that sometimes we find salt combined with urine for medical purposes, e.g., to get rid of a fever.²²⁰

The importance of salt for fecundity is if anything exceeded by that of urine.²²¹ It formed the essential constituent of many love-philtres and magical procedures having as their object the winning of affection.²²² Pliny describes the aphrodisiac properties of the urine voided by a bull immediately after copulation; it may either be drunk or used to moisten earth which is then rubbed into the groin. Characteristically enough, urine can also be used as an anti-aphrodisiac or as a charm against love-philtres.²²³ At Hottentot weddings the priest urinates over the bride and bridegroom, and the latter,

²⁰⁹ Frommann, *Tractatus de Fascinatione*, 1674, p.683.

²¹⁰ Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.376.

²¹¹ Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.397. Several references.

²¹² Frommann, *op. cit.*, pp.961, 962; Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p.13.

²¹³ Mooney, "The Medical Mythology of Ireland," *Trans. of the American Philosophical Society*, 1887.

²¹⁴ Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.378.

²¹⁵ Boas, *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, Vol. I, p.218.

²¹⁶ Quoted from Brand, *op. cit.*, p.286.

²¹⁷ Luzel, "Le Nirang des Parsis en Basse Bretagne", *Mttusine*, Mai 1888; Reclus: *Les Primitifs*, 1885, p.98.

²¹⁸ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.272-4,385,386.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.277-369,375,384.

²²⁰ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, p.354.

²²¹ See Walter Gallichan, *Golden Urine: The Elixir of Life*.

²²² Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.216, 217 & 223.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp.224-7.

receiving the stream with eagerness, makes furrows with his nails so that the urine may penetrate the farther.²²⁴

The practice described by Pliny, referred to above, has also been recommended as a remedy for the cure of impotence. The sovereign cure for this, however, consisted in urinating through the wedding-ring, i.e., into an exquisite female symbol. This practice is mentioned by most of the older writers,²²⁵ and has persisted among the German peasantry until the present generation.²²⁶ Pliny states that the urine of eunuchs was considered to be highly beneficial as a promoter of fruitfulness in women.²²⁷ In Algiers a woman seeks to cure barrenness by drinking sheep's urine.²²⁸ Schurig²²⁹ describes as a method of inducing conception the use of a bath of urine poured over old iron, with which may be compared the magical properties mentioned above as being ascribed to the combination of salt and iron.

Finally two Asiatic legends narrated by Bab²³⁰ may be referred to, in which the symbolical equivalence of urine and semen appears in the most unmistakable manner. In the first one, from Siam, a man urinated daily on to a certain apple-tree, with the result that it bore especially large fruit. A princess ate one of the apples and thereupon became pregnant. In the other, from Cambodia, a hermit had the habit of urinating on to a hollowed-out stone. A girl who had got lost in the woods (her mother had evidently omitted to strew salt as she left the house) drank the liquid out of the stone, and likewise became pregnant.

The use of salt at initiation ceremonies can also be paralleled with that of urine. A young Parsee undergoes a kind of confirmation during which he is made to drink a small quantity of the urine of a bull.²³¹ At the Hottentot initiation ceremony one of the medicine-men urinates over the youth, who proudly rubs the fluid into his skin.²³² Corresponding with the Christian and Jewish displacement of their initiation ceremonies (baptism, circumcision) from the time of puberty to that of infancy we find a similar displacement in respect of urine ceremonies. The Californian Indians give their children a draught of urine as soon as they are born,²³³ and this custom is also in vogue amongst Americans in the country districts;²³⁴ these are of course not pure examples of initiation. The Injit child selected to be trained as an Angekok was bathed in urine soon after birth as a religious ceremony.²³⁵ When Parsee children are invested with the Sudra and Koshti the badges of the Zoroastrian faith they are sprinkled with the urine of a sacred cow and they also have to drink some of it.²³⁶

²²⁴ Cook, in Hawkesworth's *Voyages 1773*, Vol.III, p.387; Kolbein, in Knox's *Voyages 1777*, Vol. II, pp.399, 400; Thurnberg, in Pinkerton's *Voyages 1814*, Vol. XVI, pp.89, 141.

²²⁵ Reginald Scot, *op. cit.*, p.64; Frommann, *op. cit.*, p.997; Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p.305.

²²⁶ Birlinger and Buck, *Sagen, Marchen und Volksaberglauben aus Schwaben*, 1861, S.486.

²²⁷ Pliny, *Nat History ... XXVIII*. 18.

²²⁸ Ploss, *Das Weib in der Natur- und Volkerkunde*, 1891, Bd. I, S.

²²⁹ Schurig, *Chylogia*, 1725, Vol. II, p.712.

²³⁰ Bab, *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologic*, 1906, Band XXXVIII, S. 281.

²³¹ Monier Williams, *Modern India*, 1878, p.178.

²³² Kolbein, *op. cit.*, pp.202-4; Thurnberg, *loc. cit.*

²³³ Bancroft, *op. cit.*, p. 413.

²³⁴ Trumbull, Quoted by Bourke, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

²³⁵ 1 Reclus, *op. cit.*, p.84.

²³⁶ Max Muller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, 1869, p.164.

The interest aroused by the taste of salt may be compared with that taken in the peculiar taste of urine, a matter that played a considerable part in medical urinoscopy. All bodily fluids, including tears, semen, sweat, blood, etc., owe of course most of their taste to the presence of salt in them. The natives of Northern Siberia habitually drink each other's urine.²³⁷ The African Shillooks regularly wash out their milk vessels with urine "probably", so Schweinfurth²³⁸ thinks, 'to compensate for a lack of salt' ; this is also done by the natives of Eastern Siberia.²³⁹ The Obbe²⁴⁰ and other²⁴¹ natives of Central Africa never drink milk unless it is mixed with urine, the reason given being that otherwise the cow would lose her milk; we have here a counterpart of the custom of mixing salt with the milk so as to ensure a plentiful supply. "Chinook olives" are acorns that have been steeped for five months in human urine.²⁴² Of interest is the relation of urine to the manufacture of intoxicating drinks, it being thus an equivalent to alcohol, as we have noted above. When the supply of alcohol runs short in Siberia the natives eke it out by making a mixture of equal parts of urine and alcohol.²⁴³ In Queensland there is an edible nut of a particular species of pine, which is prepared for consumption in the following way: clay pans are formed in the soil, into which the men urinate; the nuts are then steeped in this, when a fermentation takes place. The eating of the nuts causes a temporary madness, and even delirium tremens.²⁴⁴

We have next to note the analogies between the significance of salt and that of urine in regard to religious performances. In both cases the substance might be either swallowed or applied to the surface of the body, and concerning the latter practice it is expedient to make a few preliminary remarks. The religious practice of sprinkling or baptizing with a holy fluid (salt and water in the Roman Catholic Church, plain water in the Protestant Church) has evidently two principal meanings. In the first place it symbolizes purification, particularly from sin. Probably the simplest and most accurate expression for the psychological meaning of baptism, as perhaps for that of any religious rite, is "purification through re-birth". The earthly incestuous libido, which is now known to be the deepest source of the sense of sin in general,²⁴⁵ is overcome and purified in a homoeopathic manner by passing through a symbolic act of heavenly incest. Purification by fire is a distorted form of the more original purification by water. It will be noticed that in baptism the liquid symbolises both the father's urine (or semen) and the mother's uterine waters, satisfying thus both the male and the female components of the libido. The oldest association between the ideas of liquid and purification is of course the child's experience of urine washing away faeces, thus cleansing dirt (the deepest source for the objectionableness of sexuality).²⁴⁶

In the second place baptism imbues the participant with the mystic properties conveyed by, or belonging to, the holy fluid. This meaning, which was probably the original one of the two, is well

²³⁷ Melville, Quoted by Bourke, op. cit., p.38.

²³⁸ Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*. 1872, Vol. I, p.16.

²³⁹ Melville, Quoted by Bourke, op. cit., p.200.

²⁴⁰ Baker, *The Albert Nyanza*, 1869, p.240.

²⁴¹ Long, *Central Africa*, 1877, p.70.

²⁴² Kane, *An Artist's Wanderings in North America*, 1859, p.187.

²⁴³ Melville, Quoted by Bourke, op. cit., p.39.

²⁴⁴ Mann, Quoted by Bourke, op. cit., p.38.

²⁴⁵ Freud, *Totem und Tabu*, 1913, S.144, 145.

²⁴⁶ Freud, *Jahrbuch der Psychoanalyse*, Band IV, S. 49, 50

illustrated in the Hottentot rite described above, where the participant scratches his skin so as to absorb as much as possible of the precious fluid. At all events we find that the acts of ablution²⁴⁷ and of swallowing are throughout treated as though they were identical. Where one is performed in one country the other is in another country in exactly corresponding circumstances, and in numberless instances the two are regarded as equivalent. For example, the practice of imbibing water, particularly holy water, for the cure of barrenness, as described above, is throughout paralleled by the equally common one of bathing in water for the same purpose, and often at the same place; Hartland²⁴⁸ has collected an enormous number of instances of this from every part of the world and shows that it is to-day as frequent as ever.

All the evidence, from comparative religions, from history, anthropology and folk-lore, converges to the conclusion, not only that Christian and other rites of baptism symbolize the bestowment of a vital fluid (semen or urine) on the initiate, but that the holy water there used is a lineal descendant of urine, the use of which it gradually displaced. Strange as this conclusion may seem it is definitely supported by the following facts selected from a vast number of similar ones.

To begin with, it is known that salt and water has historically replaced urine in various non-religious or semi-religious usages. Bourke writes:

We shall have occasion to show that salt and water, holy water, and other liquids superseded human urine in several localities, Scotland included.²⁴⁹

The following is an example of this. One of the superstitious uses of urine was to wash the breasts of a woman after delivery, no doubt with the aim of securing a good supply of milk. Jouan²⁵⁰ reports from personal experience that this was still customary in France so late as in 1847. In Scotland the custom widely prevailed of washing the breasts with salt and water in the same circumstances and for the same object.²⁵¹ Again, whenever the supply of salt falls short in a given country, particularly in an uncivilized one, the natives are apt to resort to urine as a substitute. Gomara²⁵² states that human urine served as salt to the Indians of Bogota. The Latookas of the White Nile make salt from the ashes of goat's dung,²⁵³ which again illustrates the conception of salt as the essence of excrement, particularly urine. Pallas²⁵⁴ says that the Buriats of Siberia, in collecting salts from the shores of certain lakes, are careful as to the taste of the same: 'They employ only those which have a taste of urine and of alkali'; Bourke,²⁵⁵ referring to this, adds: 'this shows that they must once have used urine for salt, as so many other tribes have done'.

²⁴⁷ It should not be forgotten that the original form of Christian baptism was complete immersion; the relatively modern custom of christening, or sprinkling, is a later replacement of this, and is still repudiated by, for instance, the Baptist sect.

²⁴⁸ Hartland, *Paternity*, op. cit., pp.77-89.

²⁴⁹ Bourke, op. cit., p.211.

²⁵⁰ Jouan, Quoted by Bourke, loc. cit.

²⁵¹ Black, *Folk-Medicine*, 1883, p.23; Napier, op. cit., pp.36-37.

²⁵² Gomara, *Historia de las Indias*, p.202.

²⁵³ Baker, op. cit., p.224.

²⁵⁴ Pallas, *Voyages*, 1793, Vol. IV, p.246.

²⁵⁵ Bourke, op. cit., p.193.

The Siberians gave human urine to their reindeer in place of salt,²⁵⁶ presumably to improve their yield of milk. They also used urine to obtain water from snow by melting it, just as we use salt to prevent the formation of ice on our doorsteps. The Dinkas of Central Africa use the urine of cows for washing and as a substitute for salt, but here other motives also enter in, for with them cattle are sacred animals.²⁵⁷ Urine has been used for a very great number of industrial purposes, in many of which it has since been superseded by salt;²⁵⁸ it is not necessary to enumerate them here.

One of the earliest uses of salt was for cleansing purposes. In Ancient Rome salt and water was used instead of toilet paper, every latrine containing a bucket of it.²⁵⁹ The use of urine as a fluid for washing the body has been reported from the most diverse parts of the world: thus, in Alaska,²⁶⁰ in Iceland,²⁶¹ in Ounalashka (in Russia),²⁶² amongst the Californian Pericuis,²⁶³ the Siberian Tchuktchees,²⁶⁴ and the Vancouver Indians.²⁶⁵ The custom persisted in Spain until quite recent times, and even in the present generation it was to be traced among the Spanish settlers in Florida.²⁶⁶ Petroff²⁶⁷ states that the peasants of Portugal still wash their clothes in urine, and German, Irish and Scandinavian immigrants in the United States persist in adding human urine to the water to be used in cleansing blankets.²⁶⁸ The use of urine as a mouth-wash is also very prevalent. Baker writes:

The Obbo natives wash out their mouths with their own urine. This habit may have originated in the total absence of salt in their country.²⁶⁹

The Basques and some Hindus do the same, and the custom used to obtain in England and Germany; in Spain and Portugal it persisted until the end of the eighteenth century.²⁷⁰

We may now return to the religious aspects of the subject. The Romans held a feast to the mother of all the Gods, Berecinthia, at which the matrons took their idol and sprinkled it with their urine.²⁷¹ Berecinthia was one of the names under which Cybele or Rhea, the primal earth Goddess, was worshipped by the Romans and by many nations of the East. Juvenal (Sixth Satire) describes how in the rites of the Bona Dea her image used to be sprinkled with copious irrigations of urine. In the early

²⁵⁶ Cochrane, *Pedestrian Journey through Siberian Tartary*, 1824, p.235.

²⁵⁷ Schweinfurth, *op. cit.*, p.58.

²⁵⁸ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.177-200.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.135.

²⁶⁰ Coxe, *Russian Discoveries*, 1803, p.225, quoting Krenitzin.

²⁶¹ Hakluyt, *Voyages*, 1599, Vol. I, p.664.

²⁶² Solovoof, *Voyages*, 1764, p.226.

²⁶³ Clavigero, *Historia de Baja California*, 1852, p.28; Bancroft, *op. cit.*, p.559.

²⁶⁴ Lisiansky, *Voyage round the World*, 1811, p.214; Melville, *In the Lena Delta*, *loc. cit.*; Gilder, quoted by Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.202, 203.

²⁶⁵ Swan, "The Indians of Cape Flattery," *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, No. 220, p.19.

²⁶⁶ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.203, 205. Many references.

²⁶⁷ Petroff, *Trans. of the American Anthropological Society*, 1882, Vol.

²⁶⁸ McGillicuddy, Quoted by Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.205.

²⁶⁹ Baker, *op. cit.*, p.240.

²⁷⁰ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.203-5.

²⁷¹ Torquemada, Quoted by Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.394.

days of Christianity the Manichaeen sect used to bathe in urine.²⁷² It is related of an Irish king, Aedh, that he obtained some urine of the chief priest, bathed his face in it, drank some with gusto, and said that he prized it more highly than the Eucharist itself.²⁷³ In modern religions of civilized peoples, however, human urine is never used, having been replaced by water, salt and water, or cow's urine. The sacred drink hum of the Parsees has the "urine of a young, pure cow" as one of the ingredients.²⁷⁴ In the Bareshnun ceremony the Parsee priest has to undergo certain ablutions wherein he applies to his body cow's urine,²⁷⁵ and to rub the nirang (cow's urine) over his face and hands is the second thing every Parsee does after rising in the morning.²⁷⁶ The latter ceremony is by no means a simple one; for instance, he is not allowed to touch anything directly with his hands until the sacred nirang has first been washed off with water. In India the urine of a cow is a holy water of the very highest religious significance. It is used in ceremonies of purification, during which it is drunk.²⁷⁷ Dubois²⁷⁸ says that a Hindu penitent 'must drink the pancbakaryam a word which literally signifies the five things, namely, milk, butter, curd, dung, and urine, all mixed together', and he adds:

The urine of a cow is held to be the most efficacious of any for purifying all imaginable uncleanness. I have often seen the superstitious Hindu accompanying these animals when in the pasture, and watching the moment for receiving the urine as it fell, in vessels which he had brought for the purpose, to carry it home in a fresh state; or, catching it in the hollow of his hand, to bedew his face and all his body. When so used it removes all external impurity, and when taken internally, which is very common, it cleanses all within.

Moor similarly writes:

The greatest ... of all purifiers is the urine of a cow. Images are sprinkled with it. No man of any pretensions to piety or cleanliness would pass a cow in the act of staling without receiving the holy stream in his hand and sipping a few drops.²⁷⁹

Hindu merchants at Bokhara mix with their food, that it may do them good, the urine of a sacred cow kept in that place.²⁸⁰ At the Poojah sacrifice the Brahmans prepare the room by sprinkling the floor with cow's urine.²⁸¹ In one of the Hindu fasts the devotee adopts as his food the excreta of cows, the urine being allowed as a beverage for the fourth day.²⁸² The antiquity of urine rites in India is shown by the fact that they are frequently referred to in the oldest of their canonical books. The Brahminical authors of the MahaBharata describe how, at the coronation of a Maharajah, Krishna brings the urine of the sacred cow and pours it over the King's head.²⁸³ In the Shapast la Shayast much stress is laid on

²⁷² Picart, *Cofitumes et Ce're'monies Religieuses*, 1729, p.18.

²⁷³ Mttusine, Mai 5, 1888.

²⁷⁴ Max Müller, *Biographies of Words*, 1888, p.237.

²⁷⁵ Kingsley, Quoted by Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.211.

²⁷⁶ Max Müller, *Chips, etc.*, *op. cit.*, p.163.

²⁷⁷ De Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, Engl. Transl., 1872, Vol. I, p.95.

²⁷⁸ Abbe J.A. Dubois, *The People of India*, 1817, p.29.

²⁷⁹ Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon*, 1810, p.143.

²⁸⁰ Erman, *Siberia*, 1848, Vol. I, p.384.

²⁸¹ Maurice, *Indian Antiquities*, 1800, Vol. I, p.77.

²⁸² Maurice, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p.222.

²⁸³ Wheeler, *History of India*, 1867, Vol. I, p.371.

bull's urine as a purifier.²⁸⁴ These rites exist not only in India proper, but also on the slopes of the Himalayas,²⁸⁵ and from India they were introduced into Persia; the Khorda Avesta has preserved the formula to be recited by a devotee while he holds in his hand the urine of a cow, preparatory to washing his face with it.²⁸⁶

We need not discuss the various cloud, moon, and other supposed symbolisms of the rites in question, for it is no longer tenable that these are anything more than secondary developments of more primitive interests. After dealing with the subject of animal sacrifice, and showing that this is a later development of the original human sacrifice, a conclusion amply confirmed by the work done since his time, Bourke pertinently asks:

If the cow have displaced a human victim, may it not be within the limits of probability that the ordure and urine of the sacred bovine are substitutes, not only for the complete carcass, but that they symbolize a former use of human excreta?²⁸⁷

This question we can to-day with a high degree of probability answer in the affirmative, for both anthropological and psychoanalytical research agree in the conclusion that excessive, e.g., religious, interest in any animal is only a substitute for a corresponding interest in some human being. There can be no doubt that the cow, for instance, is a typical mother symbol, just as the Lamb of God in Christian mythology is a symbol of Christ, i.e., of the son.

From this point of view the devil's custom of using his urine to baptize, and bless, his worshippers at the witches' Sabbath²⁸⁸ must be regarded, not as the medieval theologians indignantly thought as constituting a wanton caricature of the Christian rites, but as a reversion to the most primitive form of these. Caricature, like wit, is often really a reversion to the unconscious source of the caricatured idea. An example of it may be quoted from another field, one which also depends on the symbolic equivalent of urine and holy water: In a caricature by Isaac Cruikshank, dated 17th March, 1797, of Napoleon giving audience to the Pope, a French grenadier is represented urinating into a chamber-pot which is labelled Holy Water.²⁸⁹

The almost universal custom of rubbing a new-born child with salt, or bathing it in salt and water, has been noted above. In some parts of the world the original fluid, urine, which has been so widely displaced for this purpose by salt, is still in use, or was in historical times.²⁹⁰ Soranus discusses at length the Roman custom of bathing infants with the urine of a boy who has not reached puberty (thus a peculiarly innocent and pure fluid). The Hottentots use fresh cow's urine for this purpose, while the Indians in Alaska employ horse urine.

²⁸⁴ Sacred Books of the East, Vol. V, Part I.

²⁸⁵ Short, "Notes on the Hill Tribes of the Neilgherries," Trans. of the Ethnological Society, 1868, p.268.

²⁸⁶ De Gubernatis, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

²⁸⁷ Bourke, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁸⁸ Thiers, Traite des Superstitions, 1741, Vol. II, p. 367; Picart, op. cit., Vol. VIII. p. 69.

²⁸⁹ Broadley, Napoleon in Caricature, 1911, p. 94.

²⁹⁰ Numerous instances are related by Ploss, Das Kind in Brauch und Sitte der Volker, Zweite Aufl., 1911.

The association between urine rites and religious dancing is especially close in many parts of the world. Bourke²⁹¹ gives a detailed account of the "urine dance" of the Zunis in New Mexico, and draws an instructive analogy between it and the famous Feast of Fools in medieval Europe.²⁹² In a painstaking analysis of the circumstances in which dancers in Alaska bathe in urine he has further established the religious significance of this custom there also.²⁹³ The same association exists as well in various other parts of the world, in Africa, Siberia, North America, etc.²⁹⁴ The ideas that are connected together in these ceremonies are: alcoholic or other intoxication, religious ecstasies, urine rites (drinking and bathing), and sexual excitement. In this connection I venture to throw out the suggestion that perhaps philological research might establish an etymological relationship between the Latin word *sal* and the verbs "saltare" and "salire" (= to leap or dance).²⁹⁵ From "saltus" (= leap) comes the English "saltier" (St. Andrew's cross), the substantive salt (meaning sexual desire, especially of animals), and the adjective salt (= lecherous);²⁹⁶ further words from the same source are "assault" (*adsaltare*), "assail" (*adsalire*) "sally", "exult" and "salient", all of which stand in a psychological relationship to the present subject. The idea of dancing is of course, now as formerly,²⁹⁷ closely connected with eroticism, and often also with religion.²⁹⁸

Something will now be said about the symbolic significance attaching to the mingling of two liquids, which is ultimately derived from the infantile idea, mentioned above, that the sexual act consists in the combining of the urine of two people. In various customs and beliefs urine has, quite comprehensibly, been replaced by other bodily fluids, particularly the vital ones such as blood. Salt and water has also played an important part in this way.

The interchange of blood as a means of binding two people together with lasting ties is a very general rite. Hartland says of it:

The Blood-Covenant, as it is called, is a simple ceremony. It is sufficient that an incision be made in the neophyte's arm and the flowing blood sucked from it by one of the clansmen, upon whom the operation is repeated in turn by the neophyte. . . . Sometimes the blood is dropped into a cup and diluted with water or wine. Sometimes food eaten together is impregnated with the blood.²⁹⁹ Sometimes it is enough to rub the bleeding wounds together, so that the blood of both parties is mixed and smeared upon them both. Among the Kayans of Borneo the drops are allowed to fall upon a cigarette, which is then lighted and smoked alternately by both parties. But, whatever may be the exact form adopted, the essence of the rite is the same, and its range is world-wide. It is mentioned by classical writers as practised by the Arabs, the Lydians, and Iberians of Asia Minor, and apparently the Medes. Many

²⁹¹ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.4-10.

²⁹² *ibid.*, pp.11-23.

²⁹³ *ibid.*, pp.206-8.

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp.208-10.

²⁹⁵ Since writing the above I find that Schleiden (*op. cit.*, S. 17) expresses a similar thought, suggesting that *sal* and *salire* are both derived from the Sanscrit 'sar', a root which will be considered later in this essay.

²⁹⁶ Cp. Shakespeare's "salt as wolves in pride" (*Othello*, Act III, Sc. 3).

²⁹⁷ Brill, "The Psychopathology of the New Dances," *New York Medical Journal*, April 25, 1914.

²⁹⁸ Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.24.

²⁹⁹ The resemblance of these two last-mentioned customs to the Eucharist of the Christian Churches is unmistakable.

passages of the Bible, many of the Egyptian Book of the Dead) are inexplicable apart from it. Ancient Arab historians are full of allusions to it. Odin and Liki entered into the bond, which means for us that it was customary among the Norsemen as we know, in fact, from other sources. It is recorded by Giraldus of the Irish of his day. It is described in the *Gesta Romanorum*. It is related of the Huns or Magyars, and of the medieval Rumanians. Joinville ascribes it to one of the tribes of the Caucasus; and the Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbon, who travelled in Ukraina in the twelfth century, found it there. In modern times every African traveler mentions it; and most of them have had to undergo the ceremony. In the neighbouring island of Madagascar it is well known. All over the Eastern Archipelago, in Australia, in the Malay peninsula, among the Karens, the Siamese, the Dards on the northern border of our Indian empire, and many of the aboriginal tribes of Bengal, the wild tribes of China, the Syrians of Lebanon and the Bedouins, and among the autochthonous peoples of North and South America, the rite is, or has been quite recently, in use. Nor has it ceased to be practised in Europe by the Gypsies, the Southern Slavs and the Italians of the Abruzzi. The band of the *Mala Vita* in Southern Italy, only broken up a year or two ago, was a blood-brotherhood formed in this way. Most savage peoples require their youths at the age of puberty to submit to a ceremony which admits them into the brotherhood of the grown men, and into all the rights and privileges of the tribe. Of this ceremony the blood-covenant is usually an essential part, as it is also, either actually or by symbol, in the initiation-rite not only of the *Mala Vita*, but of almost all secret societies, both civilized and uncivilized.³⁰⁰

The giving of blood, therefore, exactly like that of salt, symbolizes friendship, loyalty, compact, and initiation into manhood. More than this, in many countries it is closely connected with marriage, and may actually constitute the marriage ceremony. The marriage rite of the Dusuns, in Banguay, consists in transferring a drop of blood from a small incision made in the calf of a man's leg to a similar cut in the woman's leg.³⁰¹ The marriage of the Wukas, a tribe of New Guinea, is performed by mutual cuts made by the husband and wife in each other's forehead.³⁰² Among the Birhors of India the wedding ceremony consists entirely in drawing blood from the little fingers of the bride and bridegroom, and smearing it on each other;³⁰³ a similar, though more complicated, ceremony is performed by the Kayasth, or writer caste of Behar.

Among several races of India, in the wedding ceremony known as "sindur dan" the substance used is red lead, which the bridegroom smears on the bride's forehead with his little finger or a knife; Hartland³⁰⁴ has shown that this is a later development of the more primitive custom, the red lead simply replacing the blood. In some instances the two are combined: in the Kewat caste the sindur dan rite is first carried out, and then blood is drawn from the little finger of the bridegroom's right hand and of the bride's left; the blood is mingled in a dish of boiled rice and milk, and each person eats the food containing the other's blood.³⁰⁵ Similarly in the Rajput ritual the family priest fills the

³⁰⁰ Hartland, *Perseus*, op. cit., pp. 237, 238. See in general pp. 236-58, also Strack, *Das Blut im Glauben und Aberglauben der Menschheit*, 1900.

³⁰¹ Hartland, op. cit., p. 339, The original references may be found there.

³⁰² *ibid.*

³⁰³ *ibid.*, p.336.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*, pp.334-6.

³⁰⁵ Hartland, op. cit., p.337.

bridegroom's hand with sindur and marks the bride's forehead with it; on the next day each of them is made to chew betel with which a drop of blood from the other's little finger has been mixed.³⁰⁶ Among the Kharwar, and also the Kurmi, the bridegroom smears the bride with a mixture of his own blood and of paint.³⁰⁷ Blood rites of the same kind were also performed at Finnish and Norwegian marriages.³⁰⁸

More or less elaborate symbolisms of the primitive rite are frequent enough. An Australian bridegroom spits on his bride, and then streaks her with red powder down to the navel.³⁰⁹ A Carib will sometimes betroth himself to an unborn babe, conditionally on its being a girl, by making a red mark over the mother's womb.³¹⁰ In the East Indies, in Borneo, and in parts of Southern India, fowl's blood is used instead of human blood.³¹¹ Blood, like urine, has also been extensively used in Europe as a love charm or philtre,³¹² of which custom one example will suffice: lovers who wished to heighten the affections of their mistresses used to transfuse their own blood into the loved one's veins.³¹³ An example of condensed symbolism is afforded by a Mexican saga, according to which a dead man's bone (i.e., the phallus of an ancestor, or father) when sprinkled with blood produced the father and mother of the present race of mankind.³¹⁴

We see from the facts just quoted that blood, like urine, has all over the world been treated as an equivalent of salt, as a vital or holy material. The thesis that external application is symbolically the same as drinking is confirmed in this case as well. Customs and beliefs very similar to those just mentioned could be collected in respect of various other bodily fluids, of which only one or two instances will be given. The sweat of the Finnish deity Wainemoinen was a balm for all diseases, and the same was true of the Egyptian God Ra.³¹⁵ The Scandinavian Frost-Giants were born of the sweat of the Giant Ymir.³¹⁶ It is probable that the salt taste of sweat has always struck the observation of mankind. This is certainly so with tears, where literary allusions to their saltiness abound: thus in King John (Act V, Sc. 7):

Prince Henry: O, that there were some virtue in my tears, That might relieve you!
King John: The salt in them is hot.

The interest in the combination of salt and water has naturally been extended to the sea, which has always played an important part in the birth fancies of mankind. The association is evident in the use of the Greek word ἄλας; (Latin sale) to express both "salt" and "sea". The contrast between fire and water has often been seized upon to represent the contrast between male and female elements respectively. The relation between salt and fire is much more extensive than we have here described;

³⁰⁶ Hartland, loc. cit.

³⁰⁷ Hartland, loc. cit.

³⁰⁸ Hartland, op. cit., p.341.

³⁰⁹ Hartland, op. cit., p.342.

³¹⁰ Hartland, loc. cit.

³¹¹ Hartland, op. cit., p.343

³¹² Numerous examples are given by Hartland, op. cit., pp.124 & 125.

³¹³ Flemming, *De Remediis ex Corpore Humano desuntis*, 1738, p.15.

³¹⁴ Southey's *Commonplace Book*, Edited by Waiter, 1850, Vol. IV, p.142.

³¹⁵ Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic: Its Origin and Development*, Engl. Transl., 1877, p.247.

³¹⁶ Hartland, *Paternity*, op. cit., p. 2.

most of the customs and beliefs mentioned above could be paralleled by similar ones in which it is necessary to throw salt into the fire in order to produce the desired effect.³¹⁷ In mythology the combination of fire and water (male and female elements) is symbolized with especial frequency by alcohol, which presumably was the essential constituent of the various sacred drinks of which we read; with singular appropriateness the North American Indians refer to alcoholic beverages as "fire-water".

The association between the ideas fire salt sea are well shown in the following myths. From the mythical lore of Finland we learn that Ukko, the mighty God of the sky, struck fire in the heavens; a spark descended from this was received by the waves and became salt.³¹⁸ This example is especially instructive for more than one reason. In the first place we here have salt directly derived from fire, thus confirming our previous surmise of the symbolic equivalency of the two. In the next place, as Abraham³¹⁹ has clearly demonstrated, heavenly fire descending upon earth, e.g., lightning, is mythologically only another variant of the various divine foods (soma, ambrosia, nectar) that symbolize the male fertilizing fluid; this is in obvious accord with the view here maintained of the seminal symbolism of salt.

In another myth we have the Prometheus-like bringer of salt regarded as a Messiah. Lawrence writes:

The Chinese worship an idol called Phelo, in honour of a mythological personage of that name, whom they believe to have been the discoverer of salt and the originator of its use. His ungrateful countrymen, however, were tardy in their recognition of Phelo's merits, and that worthy thereupon left his native land and did not return. Then the Chinese declared him to be a deity, and in the month of June each year they hold a festival in his honour, during which he is everywhere sought, but in vain; he will not appear until he comes to announce the end of the world.³²⁰

The Prometheus theme of a God bringing an all-precious substance as a gift to mankind³²¹ is here worked into a form that closely resembles the Jewish conception of a Messiah that has to be sought and the Christian one of a prophet who was not received when he delivered his message, but who will return to announce the end of the world.

Tacitus³²² refers to the belief that salt is the product of the strife between fire and water, a belief evidently mirroring the infantile sadistic conception of coitus, but one that happens to have an objective basis in regard to the evaporating action of the sun's heat. On a lowlier plane we may refer to the connection between fire and water as shown by some practices carried out for the purpose of obtaining children. A Transylvanian Gipsy woman is said to drink water into which her husband has

³¹⁷ The etymological aspects of this relationship will be discussed later.

³¹⁸ Quoted from Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.154.

³¹⁹ Abraham, *op. cit.*, S. 49, 62, etc.

³²⁰ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.154 & 155.

³²¹ See Abraham, *op. cit.*, for a full analysis of the Prometheus myth.

³²² Cited by Schleiden, *op. cit.*, S. u.

cast hot coals, or, better still, has spit, saying as she does so: 'Where I am flame, be thou the coals! Where I am rain be thou the water!'³²³

A South Slavonic woman holds a wooden bowl of water near the fire on the hearth. Her husband then strikes two firebrands together until the sparks fly. Some of them fall into the bowl, and she then drinks the water.³²⁴ Of the many instances of association between the ideas of fire and urine one only need be mentioned: At the yearly ceremony held by the Eskimos for the purpose of driving out an evil spirit called Tuna, one of the performers brings a vessel of urine and flings it on the fire.³²⁵ The ideas, therefore, of fire-salt, fire-water, and fire-urine are thus seen to be closely related in the primitive mind, a fact which stands in full harmony with the clinical psycho-analytic finding that the ideas of fire, water, urine, and semen are interchangeable equivalents in the unconscious, fire being a typical symbol for urine.

Leaving now the subject of fire we have to note a few more beliefs concerning salt and water, particularly in a female sense (receptive urine). In the cosmogonical myths of the islanders of Kadiack it is related that the first woman 'by making water, produced the seas'.³²⁶ In South Africa it is also believed that the sea was created by a woman, doubtless in the same way. In the creation myth of the Australians,³²⁷ on the other hand, it is a God, Bundjil, who creates the sea by urinating over the earth for many days.³²⁸ Among the Mexican Nahuas, again, the sea is of female origin: there the women and girls employed in the preparation of salt dance at a yearly festival held in honour of the Goddess of Salt, Huixocihuatl, whose brothers the rain gods, as the result of a quarrel, drove her into the sea, where she invented the art of making the precious substance. In European mythology the sea is conceived of as either male or female, though much more often as the latter. It stands in especially close association with the various love Goddesses, Aphrodite, Astarte, and the rest. Jennings writes:

Blue is the colour of the 'Virgin Maria'. Maria, Mary, mare, mar, mara, means the 'bitterness', or the 'saltiness' of the sea. Blue is expressive of the Hellenic, Isidian, Ionian, Yonian (Yoni Indian), Watery, Female, and Moonlike Principle in the universal theogony. It runs through all the mythologies.³²⁹

As is well known, Friday is holy to this Goddess in most religions, and is named after her in all European languages. On Friday, the day of the Virgin Mary, salted meat must not be eaten by strict Catholics (compare this with the ascetic abstinence from salt noted above), and, further, the staple food is, appropriately enough, fish. There exists in the South of England a spell for turning the heart of a recalcitrant lover, which consists in throwing a little salt into the fire on three successive Friday nights; on the third one the lover is expected to return.³³⁰ That the spell has to be carried out just on

³²³ Ploss, *Das Weib*, loc. cit.

³²⁴ Krauss, *Sitte und Branch der Siidslaven*, 1885, S. 531.

³²⁵ Report of the International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Washington, 1885, p.42.

³²⁶ Lisiansky, op. cit., p.197.

³²⁷ Smyth, *The Aborigines of Australia*, 1878, Vol. I, p. 429.

³²⁸ Lang, *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, 1887, Vol. I, p. 91.

³²⁹ Hargrave Jennings, *The Rosicrucians*, 1887, Vol. I, p. 57

³³⁰ Henderson, loc. cit.

Friday illustrates very well how detailed is the determination of superstitions, and how careful one should be before concluding that any minor feature of one is devoid of meaning.

As might have been expected, bathing in the sea has been recommended for most of the purposes for which the combination of salt and water has been used. The following instances are characteristic. In Sardinia to drink from, or especially to bathe in, the sea is held to be a cure for childlessness.³³¹ Among the negroes in Guinea when a woman is pregnant for the first time she has to go through an elaborate ceremony of being purified in the sea.³³² Probably the original sense was to ensure an easy and successful labour.

The whole subject of the relation between salt and water may be concluded by referring to two practices that have nothing to do with the sea. A method of curing disease in Germany is to throw a handful of salt into water while these words are being repeated: 'I strew this seed(!) in the name of God; when this seed grows I shall see my fever again'.³³³ A superstition in Bohemia says that when milk is being carried over water one should throw some salt into the water, otherwise the cow will be harmed.³³⁴ It was remarked above that milk has the same symbolic significance as salt and here we see the two substances treated interchangeably. In this connection it is of interest that Browning, in his "Pietro of Abano", changes the usual belief that sorcerers cannot tolerate salt by describing how a magician dare not drink milk; the poet's insight reveals the meaning of this:

All's but daily dry bread: what makes moist the ration?
Love, the milk that sweetens man his meal alas, you lack:

In several of the varieties of the Cinderella theme (e.g., in No. 179 of Grimm's fairy tales) salt is equally plainly taken to be equivalent of love: the third daughter, on being asked by her father to describe her love for him, likens it to salt.

We have next to consider the female, recipient substance conceived of as a solid: namely, beliefs developed from the liquid-solid and solid-solid hypotheses of childhood that were mentioned above. The substance most frequently used in this respect is bread, which, from its consistence and food-value, readily lends itself to symbolic purposes. Many of the superstitious beliefs in which it is concerned have already been referred to. Its fertilizing powers may be illustrated by the Indian practice, performed for the cure of barrenness, of

eating a loaf of bread cooked on the still burning pyre of a man who was never married, and who was the only or eldest son in his family, and so received the fullest possible measure of vitality.³³⁵

The association between bread and excrement is even more plainly shown in the following Slavonic beliefs. The spirits of fruit fullness were supposed to dwell in the dung-heaps, and offerings used to

³³¹ Rivista delle Tradizioni Popolari Italiane, 1894, Vol. II. p. 423.

³³² Bosnian, In Pinkerton, op. cit., Vol. XVI, p. 423.

³³³ Wuttke, op. cit., S. 335.

³³⁴ Wuttke, op. cit., S. 447.

³³⁵ Census of India, 1901, XVII, p.164.

be made to them there. In later times witches were believed to hold their revels there, and it was not safe for a peasant to relieve himself on the spot without having in his mouth a piece of bread as a charm.³³⁶ In England the people used to throw wheat on the bride's head as she returned from the church,³³⁷ evidently a precursor of the more modern fertility (seminal) symbol of rice.

The wide-spread use of the combination of salt and bread for all the purposes for which salt alone is used (confirming oaths, warding off evil, etc.) has been previously described. The sexual significance of the combination comes to open expression in the following instances. In Waldenburg the bride secretly places salt and bread in her shoe so that she may be blessed with children;³³⁸ the fecundity significance of the shoe, which is a typical yoni symbol (hence the throwing of it at weddings), has been fully described by Aigremont.³³⁹ In the Potsdam Kreis betrothed couples place salt and bread in their shoes,³⁴⁰ with of course the same meaning. In Russia salt and bread are the first articles to be carried into the dwelling of a newly married pair.³⁴¹ Among the Southern Slavs the combination in question is used as a love charm,³⁴² while in the more pious canton of Berne it has the function of fortifying against temptation the person who carries it.³⁴³ Going back to Ancient Rome we find that Ceres, the grain Goddess, and Neptune, the sea God, were worshipped together in the same temple;³⁴⁴ the wife of Neptune, however, was called Salacia³⁴⁵ (compare our word "salacious" = libidinous).

Other substances than salt were used together with bread at times, with a similar significance. Perhaps the commonest of these was cheese. The combination is very potent against the evil eye, especially when carried round the neck;³⁴⁶ it was also used to protect children from witches and malignant spirits.³⁴⁷ In an old Welsh legend bread and cheese is used as a love charm to seduce the Lady of the Lake.³⁴⁸ In this combination cheese is evidently the active element, while in others it is treated as the passive, recipient one. This is so in the various customs relating to what is called, from its association with child-birth, the "Groaning Cheese" or "Groaning Cake"; pieces of this, tossed in the midwife's smock, or placed under the pillow at night, cause young women to dream of their lovers.³⁴⁹ The same is true of the custom, which still occasionally obtains in Europe, of using urine in the manufacture of cheese.³⁵⁰ Urine is also used in some countries in bread-making, and there is reason to think that this was so even in Europe prior to the introduction of barm and yeast;³⁵¹ in 1886 a baker in Paris "regressed" so far as to be detected in using water-closet refuse in the preparation of bread,

³³⁶ Krauss, *Slavische Volksforschungen*, 1908, S. 71.

³³⁷ Moffet, *Health's Improvement*, 1655, p.218.

³³⁸ "Aigremont, *Fuss- und Schuk-Symbolik und Erotik*, 1909, S. 55; Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S. 370.

³³⁹ Aigremont, *op. cit.*, S. 42-64.

³⁴⁰ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, S. 38.

³⁴¹ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.185.

³⁴² Krauss, *op. cit.*, S. 169.

³⁴³ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.182.

³⁴⁴ Plutarch, *op. cit.*

³⁴⁵ Frazer, *op. cit.*, Second Edition, 1907, Part IV, "Adonis, Attis, Osiris," p.412.

³⁴⁶ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, S. 38, 94.

³⁴⁷ Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 79.

³⁴⁸ Rhys, *Celtic Folklore*, 1901, Vol. I, Ch. I, "Undine's Cymric Sisters." pp.3, 17 & 18.

³⁴⁹ Brand, *op. cit.*, p.71.

³⁵⁰ Bourke, *op. cit.*, pp.181-2.

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, p.39.

which was said to deteriorate in quality as soon as the practice was put an end to.³⁵² The theme of moisture and dryness of bread plays a central part in an interesting Welsh legend:³⁵³ A young man who had fallen desperately in love with a Lake Maiden sought, on his mother's advice, to woo her with the offer of some bread a naive proposal which would be simply foolish if taken literally, but which when read symbolically is seen to be full of meaning. The maiden rejected the offer on the ground that the bread was too hard-baked. He returned, again on his mother's advice, with some unbaked dough, but was once more unsuccessful for the opposite reason to the previous one. On the third attempt, having achieved the proper consistence, he was successful. In another version of the same group of legends the suitor was enabled to capture the maiden through the magic power he had attained to by eating a piece of moist bread that she had allowed to float ashore.³⁵⁴ In the Bible (Ezekiel iv. 15) it is stated that the Lord commanded the Jews to prepare their bread with cow's dung instead of with human ordure.

Finally in this connection may be mentioned the combination of sweat and bread. This was believed to have powerful aphrodisiac properties, doubtless an extension of the exciting effect that the odour of sweat has on many people, and at the time of the witches women were accused of rubbing dough on their bodies and giving it to men to eat in whom they wished to arouse satanic love.³⁵⁵ We probably have here, as Aubrey suggested,³⁵⁶ the explanation of the ancient game of cockle-bread,³⁵⁷ in which the players, young women, go through the pretence of moulding bread with their back. It is a Negro, as well as a Belgian, superstition that if you give a dog some bread soaked in your sweat he will follow you to the ends of the earth: he is yours.³⁵⁸ We have here a repetition of the loyalty idea so characteristic of salt, the bond, however, being cemented here by the combination of the male and female elements in place of the male alone.

Nor is bread the only recipient substance in such customs. Of the many other combinations may be mentioned: milk and resin,³⁵⁹ curds and beans³⁶⁰ both of these combinations are cures for sterility salt and meal³⁶¹ a charm to enable girls to see their future lover in a dream sweat and cake³⁶² used throughout Northern and Central Europe as a love charm blood and cake³⁶³ used in Transylvania for the same purpose and blood mixed with the excrement of a dead person³⁶⁴ a cure for impotence. The reverse of the same idea is presented in the superstition that if one eats an egg without salt one will get a fever,³⁶⁵ significance being evidently attached to the combination. The erotic meaning of this is

³⁵² *ibid.*, p.32.

³⁵³ Rhys, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6, 27 & 28

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.17.

³⁵⁵ Paton, *Folk-Lore*, Vol. V, p.277.

³⁵⁶ Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisms* (1686), 1881 Edition, p.43.

³⁵⁷ See Brand, *op. cit.*, p.413.

³⁵⁸ Hartland, *Perseus*, *op. cit.*, p.124.

³⁵⁹ *North Indian Notes and Queries*, Vol. III, p.96.

³⁶⁰ *Sacred Books of the East*, XXIX, p.180.

³⁶¹ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S. 244.

³⁶² Hartland, *op. cit.*, p.123.

³⁶³ *ibid.*, p.124.

³⁶⁴ Von Wislocki, *op. cit.*, S. 140.

³⁶⁵ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S. 311.

indicated by association in the saying that “to kiss a man without a moustache is like eating an egg without salt”.

There is of course an extensive nativity symbolism attaching to eggs, especially in religion. In Bavaria and elsewhere an egg will guard against the evil eye.³⁶⁶ A Devonshire cure for ague was to bury an egg in earth at the dead of night.³⁶⁷ The act of partaking of the same food has constantly been used to symbolize a more intimate union, representing the solid-solid infantile hypothesis described above. It is a Scandinavian saying that if a boy and girl eat of one morsel they grow fond of each other.³⁶⁸ In many parts of the East Indies the betel-nut is employed as a love charm, is given as a love pledge, and the chewing of one quid by both parties is the essential part of the wedding ceremony.³⁶⁹ Among the Manchus a dumpling is brought into the bed-chamber, when the bride and bridegroom each partake of a piece so as to ensure numerous offspring.³⁷⁰ In Ancient Greece the bride and bridegroom used to eat of a quince together.³⁷¹

With many Hindu tribes a woman never eats together with a man throughout her whole life, with the sole exception of the wedding-day, when after the “sindur dan” ceremony described above she sits at table together with her husband. Hartland³⁷² records a very large number of instances, from all parts of the world, in which eating together, particularly from the same dish, constitutes an important or even essential part of the wedding ceremony, and there is no need for us to enumerate any more of these. The best known is the *confarreatio* ceremony of the Romans in which the man and woman ate together of the sacrificial cake, the *panis farreus*. Our own wedding-cake is a survival of these customs.³⁷³

The religious significance of the act, as illustrated by wedding ceremonies, is of considerable interest. In Christianity there has been a close association between it and the rite of the Holy Eucharist. In the old Parisian marriage ceremony the priest, after saying mass, blessed a loaf and wine; the loaf was bitten and a little of the wine drunk by each of the spouses, one after the other, and the officiating priest then taking them by the hands led them home. In a Yezidi wedding a loaf of consecrated bread is handed to the husband, and he and his wife eat it between them. The Nestorians require the pair to take the communion. Indeed, until the last revision of the Book of Common Prayer the Church of England commanded that, ‘the newly married persons the same day of their marriage must receive the Holy Communion’, a practice that continues to be recommended.³⁷⁴

The material of the Eucharist, like all other consecrated substances, has been endowed with various non-religious powers, such as ability to ward off the evil eye, to cure sterility,³⁷⁵ and so on. A curious

³⁶⁶ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, S. 330.

³⁶⁷ Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p.298.

³⁶⁸ Thorpe, *Northern Mythology*, 1851, Vol. II, p. 108.

³⁶⁹ *L'Anthropologie*, Vol. III, p. 194.

³⁷⁰ *Folk-Lore*, Vol. I, p. 488.

³⁷¹ Plutarch, *Solon*, XX.

³⁷² Hartland, *op. cit.*, pp.343-53; See also Rhys, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 649, 650.

³⁷³ Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp.101, 102; Hartland, *op. cit.*, pp.351, 352.

³⁷⁴ The preceding instances are quoted from Hartland, *op. cit.*, p.347.

³⁷⁵ Hartland, *Paternity*, *op. cit.*, p.7.

example, full of symbolism, is the Welsh tradition that "flying snakes"³⁷⁶ originated in ordinary snakes that had become transformed by drinking the milk of a woman and eating the bread of the Holy Communion.³⁷⁷ We have traced above the underlying significance of the Catholic salt and water baptism, and also that of the various customs and beliefs relating to bread. It is interesting that in Italy the combination of salt and bread is known as "lumen Christi", and is of course endowed with magical properties.³⁷⁸

Consideration of the symbolism dealt with above, particularly the equivalency of salt and wine and the alimentary connotations of bread, makes it plain that the deeper significance of the Eucharist and Holy Communion is throughout a sexual one. This sexual meaning forced itself into open expression with some of the Christian sects. Thus, according to St. Augustine, the Manichaeans prepared the sacred host by incorporating the Eucharistic bread with human semen, and their descendants, the Albigenses and Catharistes, preserved this custom.³⁷⁹ Here, as elsewhere, heresy, by unveiling the symbolism of a given aspect of religious dogma or ritual, has uncomfortably compromised the religion it caricatures, just as the perversions of a brother often disclose the meaning of his neurotic sister's symptoms which are merely disguised manifestations of the same tendencies.

It need hardly be said that demonstration of the sexual origin and meaning of the materials used in a given religious ritual is far from explaining even the unconscious basis of that ritual. To do so with the Eucharist, for example, it would be necessary to discuss a number of other matters not directly connected with the present inquiry, particularly the incestuous basis of the union implied in the ceremony, its relation to theophagy and anthropophagy, and so on.

I wish here to say something about an interesting feature of superstition in general, and of salt symbolism in particular namely, its ambivalence. It has often puzzled observers of superstitions to note that the very same custom or happening is supposed in one place to bring luck, in another ill luck, in the one place to lead to fertility, in another sterility, and so on. The explanation is to be found in the ambivalent attitude of consciousness to the content of the unconscious, the source of all superstitions. If the affect, which is always positive, that accompanies the unconscious idea finds a passage-way into consciousness, as happens, for instance, in the process known as sublimation, then the attitude towards the conscious representative of this idea (i.e., towards the symbol) will be correspondingly positive, and the symbolic idea will be considered the source of all good. If, on the contrary, it is the affect belonging to the "repressing" tendencies that gets attached to the symbolic idea, then the latter will come to be the sign of all that is unlucky or dangerous. The same ambivalence is seen in regard to all products of the unconscious, for instance in totemism whether of the race or of the individual; the same animal can be loved in infancy and unreasonably feared in later childhood. So, as was remarked earlier in this essay, it is really irrelevant whether a given superstition is met with in a positive or a negative sense, the essential point being the evidence given by both of an excessive significance derived from the unconscious. This ambivalence can be well demonstrated in salt superstitions. One finds that practically every attribute described above as being attached to

³⁷⁶ The armorial emblem of Wales is a dragon.

³⁷⁷ Owen, *Welsh Folk-Lore*, 1887, p.349.

³⁷⁸ Seligmann, *op. cit.*, S. 38.

³⁷⁹ See Bourke, *op. cit.*, p.220, where full references are given.

the idea of salt may in other places be replaced by its exact opposite. We may illustrate this feature by selecting a few examples of contrasting pairs.

1. Fruitfulness Unfruitfulness.

The remarkably close association between the ideas of salt and fecundity was dwelt on in detail in the earlier part of this essay, and a few examples were also quoted in which the former idea was related to that of barrenness. This latter seems to have been more especially common in Eastern countries, and is repeatedly referred to in the Bible (e.g., Deuteronomy xxix. 23; Job xxxix. 6; Jeremiah xvii. 6; Psalms cvii. 33, 34, etc.); it is also remarked on by Pliny, Virgil, and other classical writers.³⁸⁰ A real ground for it was no doubt the frequent sight of salty deserts and waste places where an excess of salt had prevented all growth. This real justification for the association between salt and barrenness makes still more striking the far commoner one between it and fertility, and again shows how the latter belief must have been caused by a false association of ideas, as has been maintained above.

The analogy is again evident here between the ideas of salt, of which either the absence or the excess prevents fruitfulness, and sexuality, concerning which the same is widely believed. It is thus appropriate that Lot's wife, as a punishment for regretting the (homosexual) sins of Sodom, should have been turned into a pillar (phallus) of salt.

2. Creation Destruction.

This antithesis is of course closely allied to the last one and might also be expressed as the contrast between immortality and death. It has at all ages been a common custom to add strength to a curse by strewing salt as a symbol of destruction; historical examples are: after the destruction of Sichem by Abimelech, of Carthage by the Romans, of Padua by Attila, and of Milan by Friedrich Barbarossa. The custom seems to have had especial reference to the overpowering of a town (a mother symbol), another hint of the unconscious association between creation and destruction (compare the beliefs in the fructifying and the destroying sun).

3. In the same connection may be mentioned the antithesis between the use of salt and the abstention from salt.

This has been discussed above in relation to religious observances and the question of sexual abstinence.

4. Value Worthlessness.

The extraordinarily high sense of value often attached to the idea of salt, and also the close relation between it and that of money or wealth, has been described above and we have now to note the opposite of this. Schleiden, after quoting passages from Homer and Theocritus to the same effect, says:

A grain or two of salt thus became an expression for the most worthless thing that one could name. We still say, when we want to denote anything trifling: 'With that one couldn't even earn the salt for one's bread'.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 94.

³⁸¹ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 101.

The same attitude of depreciation is shown in the joke of the traveler who after partaking of an extremely poor meal at an inn called the landlord to him and said: 'There was one thing in this meal that I have not seen surpassed in all my travels'. On the expectant landlord inquiring what it was, the traveler crushingly answered: 'The salt'.

5. Health Unhealthiness.

We have noted above the discussion whether the partaking of salt is especially a health-bringing procedure or the exact opposite.

6. Purity Impurity.

Salt has always served as an emblem of immaculateness and purity. Pythagoras says in this connection: 'It was begotten of the purest parents, of the sun and the sea' (another example, by the way, of the signification of fire and water that was pointed out above). The important part salt has played, e.g., in religion, in regard to purification need not again be insisted on. The extraordinarily close association between the ideas of salt and of the excretions, i.e., dirty processes, on the other hand, has been pointed out in detail above, and we shall presently have to note the same thing in connection with the etymological history of the word. There is thus here the sharpest contrast between two opposite conceptions.

7. Friendliness Unfriendliness.

Whereas the offering of salt is generally a sign of friendly intentions, we have also noted examples of the exact opposite.

We have already discussed the significance of this striking ambivalency. It is a characteristic of all ideas that have deep unconscious roots, and may roughly be said to correspond with the antithesis of "the repressing" and "the repressed" as well as that between love and hate. The obverse of this statement is also true, that an idea which shows pronounced ambivalency in its affective values must have important associations in the unconscious. From the fact alone, therefore, that the idea of salt shows such marked ambivalency it could have been surmised that it has been invested with extrinsic significance of unconscious origin. One also gets here a further clue as to the meaning of ambivalency: it is evidently related to the contrast between on the one hand the over-valuing of sexuality in general, and the excremental aspects of sexuality in particular, in the unconscious and in infantile life, and on the other hand the under-valuing of these in consciousness and in adult life. An individual analysis, however, of the infantile origin of all the separate attributes belonging to the salt idea, e.g., the relation of purification to fertilization, though of considerable importance, cannot be undertaken here, for it would lead us too far from the main theme of the work.

We may now pass to another aspect of the subject, the etymological one. It is becoming more and more realized by psychoanalysts that symbolisms gradually formed through "repression" during the progress of civilization leave traces of their original meaning as word-deposits. It is even probable that the correctness of the interpretation of a given symbol, such as the one attempted in this essay, could

be accurately tested by being submitted to a sufficiently exhaustive comparison with the etymological and semantic history of the words denoting the ideas in question. From this point of view it becomes desirable, therefore, to say a little about the history of the word "salt", though a lack of expert knowledge will necessarily render the present consideration of it very incomplete.

It seems to be definitely established that the names for salt in nearly all European languages find their earliest expression in an old Celtic word which meant "water" or "bog". Schleiden writes as follows:

The Celts brought with them from their original Indo-Germanic sources some form of the root 'sar', which in Sanscrit meant in the first place 'to walk', 'to go', 'to flow', etc., and then in a derived form as 'sara' also 'river', 'water', 'sea', 'pond'. No such word meaning salt is to be found in the Vedas, in the Avesta, nor in any of the cuneiform writings, but in Armenian it occurs as 'agh' (gh is a common substitute for s), thus constituting a bond between 'sara' (= water) and the Greek θαλασσινό νερό³⁸² (= sea-water and salt). . . . Many words that are either truly Celtic or else have passed through the Celtic language still recall the original meaning of this root word as 'sea', 'lake', 'pond', 'pool', 'puddle'. In Old Irish 'sal' means moor or swamp; 'salach' is Old Irish, 'halou' Old Welsh for dirty;³⁸³ the Old High German, Middle High German, and Anglo-Saxon 'sol' means a puddle or pool; the sporting words in German 'suhl' (= slough) and 'suhlen' (to wallow), which are used in regard to wild swine; the Low German 'solig', meaning dirty, the French 'sale' (= unclean, impure). . . . The word has always retained a specially close association with the idea of water.³⁸⁴ In Greek the word 'hals' with an altered gender, feminine, practically means the sea, just as 'sal' did with the Latin poets. Also the rivers which contained salt water or which passed by sources of salt are called by names that in all probability are all related to 'salt'.³⁸⁵ (Schleiden then gives a long list of such rivers and places.)

Hehn³⁸⁶ suggests that adtXos (= salum), meaning "bog", "lagoon", "brackish water", belongs to the same series. It originally signified the sea outside the harbour, and thus also the swell of the sea within the harbour; we get here perhaps another hint of the relation between "sal" and "salire" mentioned above.

It has been suggested³⁸⁷ that this root word "sar" was applied to salt to indicate the crackling or spurting of salt when thrown into fire or water, and in support of this it may be added that in the only European languages where the word for salt does not proceed from this root (Lithuanian "druska", Albanian "kripe")³⁸⁸ a word signifying "to strew" is used to denote it. This suggestion is not, however, accepted by any philologist, and it seems certain that the main reason for the use of "sar" was the connotation of the latter as "flowing", "bog", etc., and the resemblance of this to salt-water.

³⁸² The initial s has been replaced by h only in Greek and Welsh.

³⁸³ So the Old Welsh "halog" (= contaminated, impure) and "halou" (= faeces).

³⁸⁴ In New Persian also "neme" (=salt) originally meant "moist".

³⁸⁵ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 15, 16.

³⁸⁶ Hehn, op. cit., S. 25

³⁸⁷ Schleiden, op. cit., S. 17.

³⁸⁸ Hehn, op. cit., S. 29.

It is thus plain that the original signification of the word was "a dirty fluid". The facts just adduced are certainly striking, and, especially in view of the derivative words that bear the closest relation to the idea of excrement, they may be regarded as an extrinsic confirmation of our conclusion one which would hardly have been suspected without a detailed investigation that the idea of salt and water is inherently allied to that of excretion, particularly urine. What was once a conscious association has in the course of centuries become more and more concealed, but though it has disappeared from sight it has in so doing by no means disappeared from existence.

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF SALT IN FOLKLORE AND SUPERSTITION IV

After this somewhat prolonged excursion we may now return to our original starting-point, namely, the superstitious belief that to spill salt at table is unlucky. The belief is practically universal and was as prevalent in Ancient Greece and Rome as in Modern Europe.³⁸⁹ It has been applied to other precious substances besides salt: for instance, in China it is unlucky to spill the contents of an oil-jar.³⁹⁰ In Germany even to play with salt is unlucky,³⁹¹ and for every grain spilt one will have to wait a day (or a week) before heaven's gate.³⁹²

It has been thought that the superstition in question arose from the over-spilling of the salt by Judas at the Last Supper,³⁹³ a rationalistic explanation on a level with that which traces the superstitions concerning the number thirteen to the presence of thirteen at the same meal. Folk-beliefs of this order have a far wider and older range than purely Christian ones. The evidence adduced above points unequivocally to a quite different explanation, one which may be indicated by comparing the unlucky act in question with that of Onan described in Genesis (xxxviii. 9). In the light of it attention may be directed to the following features of the superstition. Although the spilling of salt is supposed to bring ill-luck in general,³⁹⁴ its specific effect is to destroy friendship³⁹⁵ and to lead to quarrelling;³⁹⁶ moreover it brings ill-luck to the person towards whom the salt falls³⁹⁷ as much as to the one who has spilt it. It acts, in other words, by disturbing the harmony of two people previously engaged in amicable intercourse. From what has been said above about the unconscious symbolism of eating in company it will be intelligible why the spilling of a vital substance at such a moment should be felt to be, somehow or other, a peculiarly unfortunate event. To the unconscious, from which the affective significance arises, it is equivalent on one plane to *ejaculatio praecox*, and on a more primitive plane to that form of infantile "accident" which psycho-analysis has shown³⁹⁸ to be genetically related to this unfortunate disorder. The original meaning of the superstition is hinted at in the Prussian belief³⁹⁹ that to spill salt at a wedding betokens an unhappy marriage, and in the opinion of the "antiques",⁴⁰⁰ who.

thought love decay'd
When the negligent maid
Let the salt-cellar tumble before them.

³⁸⁹ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.167 & 168.

³⁹⁰ Marian Cox, *An Introduction to Folk-Lore*, 1904, p.10.

³⁹¹ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S. 311.

³⁹² Wuttke, *loc. cit.*

³⁹³ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.166

³⁹⁴ Brand, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp.160 & 162.

³⁹⁵ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.169-71.

³⁹⁶ Brand, *loc. cit.*, p.161; Lawrence, *op. cit.*, pp.166 & 167.

³⁹⁷ Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.166; Brand, *op. cit.*, pp.161 & 162.

³⁹⁸ Abraham, "t)ber *Ejaculatio praecox*," *Internationale Zeitschrift fur Psycho-analyse*, 1916, Bd. IV, S. 171.

³⁹⁹ Wuttke, *op. cit.*, S. 210.

⁴⁰⁰ Brand, *op. cit.*, p.163.

It is probable that the ill-luck was formerly conceived of as rendering the salt-spiller susceptible to the malevolent influences of evil spirits,⁴⁰¹ and the throwing of salt over the left shoulder, with the idea of averting the ill-luck,⁴⁰² has been thought to have the object of hitting the invisible demon in the eye and so disabling him.⁴⁰³ This apparently wild suggestion has its proper meaning, which we need not go into here, but it is more likely that the true object of the proceeding was to make a propitiatory offering to the demon;⁴⁰⁴ it has a suspicious resemblance to the Burmese custom of throwing food over the left shoulder in order to conciliate the chief spirit of evil.⁴⁰⁵ The maleficium of evil beings is predominantly concerned with interference with sexual relations and disturbances of the sexual functions; I have elsewhere pointed out in detail that the dread of it comes from the fear of impotence.⁴⁰⁶ Counter-charms against maleficium largely consist of symbolic acts which either assert the person's potency or serve to re-establish it; instances of both kinds may be found in connection with the averting of evil due to the spilling of salt. In the latter class may be counted the procedure of throwing some of the spilt salt, over the left shoulder, into the fire,⁴⁰⁷ the symbol of virility; this custom is still practised in America.⁴⁰⁸ To the former class belong the counter-charms of throwing some of the salt out of the window,⁴⁰⁹ and of crawling under the table and coming out on the opposite side.⁴¹⁰ to throw something through an aperture, or to crawl through one, symbolizes in folk-lore, dreams, and mythology, the effecting of the sexual act, a symbolism which has given rise to a large group of beliefs and customs.⁴¹¹ The explanation of why the salt has to be thrown backwards, and why precisely over the left shoulder, would open up themes too extensive for us to enter on here; it is one of the many respects in which the analysis offered in this essay remains incomplete.

Two alternative hypotheses were set forth above concerning the origin of the excessive significance that has so widely been attached to the idea of salt, and it is maintained that the evidence detailed establishes an enormous balance of probability in favour of the second one. According to this a great part of the significance is derived, not from ideas relating to salt itself, but from ideas with which these have been unconsciously associated. Significance has been unconsciously transferred to the subject of salt from emotional sources of the greatest importance to the personality. The natural properties of salt, which in themselves can account for only a part of the feeling with which the salt-idea has been invested, are of such a kind as to render the association of it with another substance, of universal import, an easily-made, if not an inevitable one. The significance naturally appertaining to such an important and remarkable article of diet as salt has thus been strengthened by an accession of psychical significance derived from deeper sources. Freud's view that superstitions always have a hidden logical meaning, that they constitute a betrayal of unconscious mental processes, is thereby fully confirmed in this particular example, as it has been with all the other superstitions I have

⁴⁰¹ Lawrence, loc. cit.

⁴⁰² Dallyel, op. cit., p.101.

⁴⁰³ Lawrence, op. cit., p.167.

⁴⁰⁴ Dalyell, loc. cit.; Lawrence, loc. cit.

⁴⁰⁵ Lawrence, loc. cit.

⁴⁰⁶ Der Alptraum, loc. cit.

⁴⁰⁷ Brand, op. cit., p.161.

⁴⁰⁸ Johnson, What they say in New England, 1896, p.92.

⁴⁰⁹ Wuttke, op. cit., S. 312.

⁴¹⁰ Lawrence, op. cit., p.170.

⁴¹¹ Rheim, "The Significance of Stepping over," International Journal of Psycho- Analysis, 1922, Vol. III.

investigated. This hidden meaning has the characteristic attributes of the unconscious, notably in its ambivalency, its typically sexual nature, and its close relation to infantile mental processes.

The conclusion reached, therefore, is that salt is a typical symbol for semen. But semen itself is ontogenetically not a primary concept, being a replacement of an earlier one concerning urine, and we have correspondingly been able to trace the roots of salt symbolism to an older source than the seminal one. There is every reason to think that the primitive mind equates the idea of salt, not only with that of semen, but also with the essential constituent of urine. The idea of salt in folk-lore and superstition characteristically represents the male, active, fertilizing principle.

An intuitive appreciation of the truth of this last sentence is afforded by the following panegyric paragraphs taken from the daily press, where they were headed: 'Man as "Salt of the Earth", Science versus Suffragists'.

Whilst the suffragists are loudly claiming equality with man if not superiority it has been left to scientists to establish that man is literally the 'salt of the earth'. Two famous French savants have just announced the result of a long series of investigations, which convinces them beyond all question of doubt that woman is unalterably man's inferior, because of the smaller percentage of chloride of sodium in her blood. In other words, the blood of the male is more salt than that of the female, and observations of animal life show that the more salt there is in the blood the higher the intelligence and general development. The indictment does not end there, for these savants declare that their combined physiological and psychological investigations have proved that woman is inferior to man in everything intelligence, reason, and physical force. The facial angle of the female, they add, more closely resembles that of the higher animals than the male, while woman's senses are less keen than those of man and she feels pain less. The scientific explanation is that the blood of the female is poorer in red blood corpuscles, and therefore relatively poorer in brine, which has been found to be the important factor in the development of the individual.

The fact that the customs and beliefs relating to salt are exactly parallel to those relating to sexual secretions and excretions, the complex and far-reaching way in which the salt-idea is interwoven with matters of sex, particularly with potency and fertilization, the universality of the beliefs in question, the faultless illumination that every detail of the customs and beliefs relating to salt receives as soon as their symbolic signification is recognized, and the impossibility of adequately explaining them on any other basis, are considerations that render it exceedingly difficult to contest the hypothesis here sustained; in fact this can hardly be done except by ignoring the facts adduced above. The validity of the hypothesis rests on the grounds that it completely fulfils both canons of scientific reasoning: it enables one to resume disparate phenomena in a simple formula that renders them more comprehensible, and to predict the occurrence of other, previously unknown phenomena in a way that is susceptible of verification.

The only opposing position that can seriously be maintained is that, however important the association in question may have been in the past, it is no longer operative except possibly among primitive peoples, so that the only agent responsible for the persistence of the superstition in modern times is the force of meaningless tradition. This raises an extremely important general problem

namely, how far ancient symbolisms are still operative in the minds of civilized people. The tendency of the average layman would be to regard such symbolisms as merely relics from a distant past, and to look upon knowledge concerning them as having no direct bearing on matters of present-day life.

The importance they have, however, is far from being a simply antiquarian one.⁴¹² Psycho-analytic investigation has shown not only that symbolism plays a much more extensive part in mental functioning than was previously imagined, but also that there is a pronounced tendency for the same symbolisms to recur quite independently of the influence of other people. This is in entire accord with modern mythological and anthropological research,⁴¹³ since it is known that identical symbolisms occur in different parts of the world, and in different ages, in circumstances that preclude the possibility of their having been merely transmitted from one place to another. There appears to be a general tendency of the human mind to symbolize objects and interests of paramount and universal significance in forms that are psychologically the most suitable and available. That these stereotyped forms of symbolism are produced quite spontaneously is a matter capable of direct demonstration. One finds, for instance, a country farmer unconsciously exhibiting in his dreams, in his mental reactions and in his psycho-neurotic symptoms the identical symbolisms that played a part in the religions of Ancient India or Greece, and in a way so foreign to the conscious life of his environment as to exclude with certainty any course in either suggestion or tradition. In my observations of the seminal symbolism of salt, for instance, with actual patients I have come across reactions indicating unconscious attitudes of mind exactly comparable to that implied in many of the antiquated practices detailed earlier in this essay.

The most that these external influences can accomplish is to direct the unconscious process into a given form, but it cannot maintain this direction of interest unless the form of symbolism assumed becomes linked with a spontaneous interest of the individual. Thus, a person brought up in a society that took no interest in a given superstition would be less likely to develop the superstition himself than if brought up in a different society though he might easily do so, nevertheless, especially if he were of the obsessional type of mind; but and this is the important point a person brought up in however superstitious a society would not develop a given superstition unless it was of such a kind as to be capable of being associated to his personal mental complexes. This association is a purely individual one, and without it the superstitious belief fails to appeal; it need hardly be said that the process, particularly in civilized communities, is most often entirely unconscious. To put the matter more concretely: what is meant is that with every person who has made his own a superstitious practice regarding salt, who follows it from an inner motive, from a "superstitious feeling" even

⁴¹² Roughly speaking it may be said that owing to the action of "repression" the sexual meaning of such symbolisms retreats from view during the development of civilization in much the same way as it does during the development of the individual. In both cases, however, the retreating from view means only a disappearance from consciousness, not from existence.

⁴¹³ It will be gathered from the whole tone of the present essay that the author attaches especial importance to the inter-relation of psycho-analytic and anthropological research. The anthropologist's material is rendered much more intelligible by psycho-analysis, and his views can there be submitted to verifiable tests with actual individual minds, while on the other hand through this material the psycho-analytical conclusions receive extensive confirmation, correction, and amplification. The comparative study of both fields is mutually instructive, and much is to be expected in the future from the work of men such as Rheim who are equally trained in both fields.

though he might consciously maintain that he did not believe in it analysis would show that the idea of salt was symbolizing the idea of semen (or urine) in his unconscious mind, that this association was a personal one of his own.

The reason why certain superstitions are so widely prevalent is because the ideas are such as to render easily possible the forging of associations between them and personal ideas of general interest and significance. The conditions, however, have their definite limitations: the forging of the associations must not be either too easy or too difficult. From this point of view one may venture to suggest that the general decline of superstition among educated classes is not entirely due as is commonly thought to the more enlightened intelligence of such classes, but is also in part due to their greater cultural inhibition of symbolical thinking in general, and of sexual symbolism in particular.

A superstition such as that of salt-spilling is usually dismissed either as being too trivial to warrant the dignity of an explanation, or else with one that is obviously superficial and inadequate. Even in the opinions on the subject enunciated in psychological text-books the writer often gives the impression of having dispensed with an investigation sufficiently detailed to establish their validity. On the other hand, attentive consideration of any given superstition reveals how much we have to learn about the subject, and demonstrates that it is often, as in the present instance, connected with aspects of the human mind that are of fundamental importance. A psychology of religion, for example, is impossible without an understanding of superstition. Here, as elsewhere, Freud has shown that a by-way in psychology may lead to country that yields an unexpectedly rich harvest.