

Totemism - a Phase of Development

Introduction: The Logogenetic Rule

The phases that a present-day child in this country passes through in his or her psychological development were once gone through by humanity as a whole. The parallel between the individual and his collective is based on the *logogenetic rule*, according to which an individual in his socialization reproduces the cultural evolution of the collective in a condensed form.

The word "logogenetic" is composed of two Greek words, *logos* and the root word *gen-* (*logos* means "word, speech, mind, culture", and *gen-* means "create, produce"). The logogenetic rule gives the culture of the collective to his individuals. It is a special case of the *biogenetic principle* that Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) discovered at the end of the 19th century. According to this, each single living thing repeats in its ontogeny a condensed version of the entire phylogeny, the origin, of its kind.

For example, frog larvae (tadpoles) breathe with gills, like fish, their phylogenetic ancestors. Adult frogs breathe through their lungs. Thus every frog in its ontogeny repeats the evolution of its kind: the step from fish to amphibian.

Humans too, who still live in water as embryos, and begin to breathe through their lungs only at birth, repeat in their biological ontogeny their whole phylogeny.

That said, humans develop not only biologically, but also culturally. Since cultural evolution proceeds seamlessly from the biological, human socialisation follows the the same law as for biological development. It repeats the cultural development of the collective wearing seven-league boots. Despite the seven-league boots, this development takes time, because the path from the Paleolithic to the 21st century is long. A child cannot attain cultural achievements instantly, and therefore often hears the sentence: "You can't yet; you're too small!" More sophisticated software needs more efficient hardware: intellectual development requires new neural connections in the brain, and their creation takes time, not only the mental act of learning.

In contrast to the biological, cultural heritage is not present from birth. Culture is not stored in the genome, but is imparted by society, the parental home, school, teaching, etc. - also by ISAP...

The logogenetic rule is supported by two powerful instincts, from the thirst for knowledge of youngsters and from the nurturing instinct of the elders. It works because of a desire to learn among the former, and a desire to show off their skills among the latter. Both complement each other; thus the survival of the human species is secured.

The rudiments of this rule already functioned in our phylogenetic ancestors, the higher mammals; there too the young learn from the old. They often better teachers than we are. But let's leave that aside; our subject is totemism.

1. Totemism in the Past

The first phase of psychological development is *totemic* or *animistic* (the word "animistic" comes from the Latin *anima*: breeze, draught, breath, mind, soul, life). In this phase, everything is ensouled (animated). In the Stone Age, particular animals, plants, rocks, trees, springs, streams, caves, mountains, stars and ancestors were worshipped as *sacred*. The impression of sacredness was created by projection: people projected unconscious psychic powers (archetypes, the Self) into conspicuous things around them. These were in this way charged with *mana*. Chiefs and shamans were *mana-personalities*; their clothes too were charged with power, even their chamber pot (touching it was dangerous so that it was taken away on sticks).

Mana-charged garments bring the following scene from my childhood to mind: in kindergarten I once accompanied a friend home. His father was a policeman. His hat and coat were hanging in the closet - a fearsome sight for me! I made a bow to the mana-charged garments.

I experienced something similar in military service when visiting a corps commander. In the end we went with the great man into the restaurant, where no one dared to hang his hat next to the corps commander's, because his was mana-charged.

Stone Age people lived countless millennia in a mysterious living world. A contemporary child flies through these thousands of years in just a few years. In the top layer of the psyche, the intellect, the child overcomes totemism; but under the rational layer, totemism continues to haunt. The basic feeling of totemism is *participation mystique* (L. Lévy-Bruhl): the relationship to all things. This impression is obtained through projection: in the psyche, everything is connected to everything else. If the psyche is experienced in the projection, it creates the impression that all things are related to each other: "As within, so outside." The word "*totem*" comes from the Ojibwa, a Algonquin language, which is spoken by First Nations north of the Great Lakes region. "O-totem-an" means "He belongs to the totem." The totem, the quintessence of the tribe, is taboo. Whoever harms it harms the community, the *mystical body* of the totem. This idea lives on in Christianity. In the New Testament, the Church is the mystical body of Christ: "If *one* part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it. Now you together are *Christ's body*" (1 Cor. 12_{26,27}). In Christianity, however, the divine totem is no more an animal, but a God that has become *Man*.

Because all things are related to each other in totemism, people can turn into animals and vice versa. Many stories tell of this. So in a Siberian, the wife of an Eskimo hunter turns now and then into a wolf. In his helplessness, her husband asks his father for advice. The father reassures him: "Son, your mother was just like that when I brought her here. Have patience; it will pass."

The outsider wife of the Eskimo hunter had trouble settling into her new tribe. From time to time she freaked out; the new customs brought her out from the little house. Stone Age people are neophobes: "What the farmer does not know, he does not eat."

But over time, the stranger coped with the conversion and was no longer hysterical; she did not act "like a fury" any more. This behaviour was very scary for the husband, because he thought that the wolf spirit had gone into her and possessed her. We would say today that the "half crazy" is behaving *like* a wolf. However, Stone Age people believed - in an archaic concrete way - that she *was* a wolf, one possessed by a wolf spirit.

This created the problem of *exorcism*: How was the evil spirit to be expelled? What psychotherapists try to do today was then accomplished by the shaman with sacred rituals. The Catholic priest during his training also becomes an *exorcist*.

In addition to this Siberian fairy tale, there are countless stories where people transform into animals and vice versa.

In the Stone Age the dragon was more common than the wolf. The motif of the transformation of the wife into a "dragon" has survived until this day in popular expression. One such dragon seems to have been *Xanthippe*, wife of Socrates, and Shakespeare's play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, dealt with this issue too.

"Possessed" women were in times past often accused of being witches and burned. The fire was supposed to smoke out the evil spirit.

Gerardus van der Leeuw wrote in his "Phänomenologie der Religion" (1933):

"Whoever is affected by the stories of the Indians of South and North America, gets the impression that there is no fundamental difference between humans and animals in their thinking: marriage and birth, war and treaty connect animals and humans. A transformation is hardly necessary to make people become animals or vice versa. The notion of people going around in wolf form, or so called lycanthropy (Greek *lykos*: wolf, and *anthropos*: human), is especially widespread.

In Indonesia, however, werewolves are replaced by the crocodile, the dog, the cat, and especially the tiger. In the old Germanic world, we find the Berserker, the bear skinner, who slips into the skin of an angry bear. And the frenzied women in the cult of Dionysus are looking for the Divine in the animal, to get away from their dull everyday lives.“

The ancient civilizations were pervaded with totemism. At cult celebrations, many priests converted into animals; they wore animal masks and furs. Here too are the roots of the ceremonial clothing of the clergy of the Catholic Church.

In addition, many gods of antiquity had animal attributes. The Egyptian Pharaoh too, a demi-god, bore the title "Bull of his mother". As „heaven’s bull“ he begat the next Pharaoh. The biblical verse in Numbers 23₂₂: "God has brought his people out of Egypt, he fought for them with his horns like a wild ox" also has totemic roots.

We now leave the past and turn to the totemism of today.

2. Totemism Today

A Dream

We now consider a totemic dream of Uschi ("Owl Woman", picture 25).

She will tell you the dream and interpret it, then she will hand out the image of the dream painted by Elisabeth Fux. On the back of that paper you can find the dream and the interpretation. You will then have a quiet time to let this material affect you. Then we will talk with each other about it, and then we will take a short break.

→ *Dream, Discussion, Pause*

I will summarise the last hour:

The deeper layers of our psyche are still totemistic. In the state of *abaissement du niveau mental* (in sleep, while meditating and when overwhelmed by feelings), the caveman in us celebrates his comeback.

Uschi experienced an example of this in the S-Bahn.

Meeting in the S-Bahn

An older man sat alone in a group of four seats in an S-Bahn train. Uschi asked if a seat was free. Judging by the accent of his "Yes", she presumed he was English. For a while they sat in facing each other in silence. Uschi got the impression that he was staring steadfastly at her and asked, "What's wrong with me?" He said, "A tiger is looking out of your eyes!" "That's what I am!" she replied, laughing, and snarled and showed him her claws. He said, "What a life! How is that possible?" She asked, "Is your tiger locked up?" Then he told her how it came to be that he lived without his tiger nowadays: decent, highly adapted, often tired and lacking passion. His tiger was starved, had nothing to say.

A child's dream was also concerned with a tiger.

A Child's Dream

Children bring to life dolls and stuffed animals with projections; the people of the Stone Age did the same with their totems.

My second son, who was very sensitive and obedient, sometimes had massive tantrums in preschool, during which he was barely recognisable.

His totem was a cuddly toy tiger, with whom he felt connected, and which protected him from burglars and other baddies. After one of his tantrums he dreamt that a tiger would eat him. By chance I happened to be near his bed and saw that he was sleeping fitfully. He

woke up and said that his head was thrust into the jaws of a tiger, and with his legs hanging out of the tiger's mouth, he had floundered wildly.

He looked at me anxiously and wanted to know what the dream meant (at that time I was doing my training at the Jung Institute; we often talked about dreams). I said, "Today your tiger has almost devoured you, dear lad. However, the tiger did not want to eat you, but to be your friend. Then you would have a 'tiger in your tank'. Imagine how strong you would be!" The words calmed him, and he went straight back to sleep. After that we often discussed the dream. The delicate boy learned to deal better with his aggression. As a result, his tantrums slowly subsided, and he got somewhat more courage. He learned to integrate his totem into his life.

Finally, a word about totemistic relics in our daily lives.

Totemistic Relics

Among the remnants of totemism we have, for example, mascots in the car or garden gnomes. Their owners talk with them more often than one might expect. The difference between the Stone Age and today is that we keep such conversations to ourselves in the enlightened 21st century; nobody wants to appear archaic.

Totem animals such as the bear, lion, eagle, falcon, etc. are still living as heraldic animals; whoever projects their animal soul into it is proud of "their" eagle or lion. Even youth groups and military units sometimes have their totem animal.

We find such totems also in the animal masks of folk art and at the Fasnacht carnival.

I will close with a quote from Aniela Jaffé in *Man and His Symbols* (S. 239):

"The instinct- and animal soul intrudes into the imagination in ever new forms, as if it wants to make itself noticeable in all circumstances and to impress itself upon consciousness, and indeed that is what it really is: a *basic fact of life* to be carefully (*religiously*) observed."

To summarise my lecture:

„The totemic phase should not be overcome, but integrated.“

This is the depth-psychological contribution to the understanding of totemism.

I thank you for your attention.

Rolf Kaufmann

→ *Closing discussion...*

Dream

„I find myself in the middle of a large meadow with many colourful flowers. A few metres in front of me is a woman, somewhat bigger and broader built than me. She turns her back to me. Her hair fascinates me. It falls down to her hips and is like the plumage of an owl. Slowly she turns around. Her face is owl-like; her eyes, like those of an owl in colour and form, are on me. Something animal goes out of her and puts me under its spell. She says, ‚I am human and owl at the same time.‘

Then she lays down on the grass. Her hair is flowing like a carpet on the floor. She is wearing a low-cut summer dress, and above her breast I see little owl feathers. I have to look at her intently. Now I step closer and run my hands through her hair.

Then she gets up again. Suddenly she becomes a real owl. I immerse myself in her transformation. ‚See,‘ she says, ‚it's that easy to switch back and forth between human and animal.‘

I ask her if I may caress her plumage. ,Yes, of course,' she says. Now I touch her face, look into her slanting, yellow-brown eyes, and then look at the claws on her feet. I admire her dual nature.”

Interpretation:

The transformation of the human woman into the owl woman and back again - going back and forth between human and animal - depicts a lively exchange between the rational and the irrational.

Archaic humans of the past suffered from a lack of rational knowledge; modern humans, however, suffer from a lack of instinct. The owl woman, with her free movement back and forth between human and animal, embodies a comprehensive, holistic attitude, the union of nature and culture. My 'hands-on' contact with the owl woman in the dream means that my ego, my consciousness, and the animalistic area of my psyche, the unconscious, are engaged in an intensive exchange. My admiration for the dual nature of the owl woman means that it is desirable for me to switch back and forth between the rational and the irrational domains as naturally as she does.

The owl sees at night and day; it recognizes the world in both sunlight and moonlight; it symbolizes both rational and irrational knowledge. This comprehensive knowledge is wisdom. In it, intellectual and the instinctive knowledge flow naturally into each other like the colours in the picture of this dream.



The owl woman.