Totem and Taboo: Freud was Right!
Lecture One: The Universal Oedipus complex
Part 4
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Part 4:
Oedipus Rediscovered in Anthropology
and Effaced in Contemporary Psychoanalysis

Introduction
We’ve seen so far that for much of the 20th century Bronislaw Malinowski’s anthropological critique, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927) remained the most influential argument against the universal Oedipus complex. Its impact was felt profoundly within psychoanalysis and across the social sciences. On the basis of his field study in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski claimed to have discovered a distinct ‘matrilineal complex’ and to have proved that the Oedipus complex was only one type of *nuclear family complex*. He further argued that Freud’s theory was an example of ethnocentrism and that oedipal conflicts reflected a pathology of Western patriarchy. So far from being universal the Oedipus complex was a symptom of paternal authority out of harmony with human biology. By contrast the ‘matrilineal complex’ was far closer to an ideal state of human nature according to Malinowski.

In this final part of Lecture One on the Universal Oedipus complex we’ll look more closely at how Malinowski’s critique of oedipal theory (and those that have followed his argument) eventually failed to hold up under much delayed scrutiny within its own discipline, only to be revived in ever new forms within psychoanalysis right up to the present. This odd twist in the history of the controversy is only one of the many ironies that have characterized it, as I have
tried to show. Still another example was the fact that Malinowski himself – to the credit of his brilliance as a pioneering ethnographer - provided sufficiently descriptive ethnographic detail to enable others like Jones (1924) and Roheim (1950) to refute his own thesis. Perhaps the greatest testimony to the authority of Malinowski’s critique was the thirty years that would have to pass before another anthropologist would attempt a follow-up study in the Trobriands to test Malinowski’s data and his interpretations of them.

The 1957 Powell ethnography

Unsurprisingly, the follow-up ethnography conducted by H.A. Powell in 1957 confirmed much of Malinowski’s basic ethnographic data. *What it did not confirm were Malinowski’s interpretations of his data and the critique of oedipal theory that he based on them.* The realities of Trobriand kinship simply did not refute Freud’s universal claim for the Oedipus complex as Malinowski had asserted. It was an empirical fact, confirmed by Malinowski himself, that the Trobriand child’s early caregiving relationships were

…essentially no different to those of upbringing in any elementary family, whether under a patrilineal or a matrilineal kinship system. The overt pattern of interpersonal relationship in the Trobriand elementary family presents much the same picture as that found in many other societies. A man and woman united by the marriage contract are responsible for one or more dependent children whom they bring up as members of a single household. (Powell, 1957 pp. 137-138)

Anthropologist Marvin Harris (1968) would later underscore the problem entailed in Malinowski’s thesis of a matrilineal nuclear family complex, in which the core “system of sentiments” flowed not from the familiar nuclear triangle of mother-child-father, but instead from the triad of sister-brother-maternal uncle. Harris reemphasized that Malinowski himself admitted that “the Trobriand child is brought up largely under the influence of the usual nuclear pairs. Mother’s brother enters the picture only when the child is seven or eight years old, an age by which the Oedipal constellation is firmly entrenched...” (p. 428) The Powell reanalysis in
1957 also confirmed the Trobriand father’s role as an early authority figure and disciplinarian, which Malinowski had denied in spite of his own evidence to the contrary. Once again, it was an empirical fact that “during the critical years of personality development, until the age of about six or seven, it is the father, not the mother's brother, who personally represents authority, instils such discipline and obedience as is required, and generally trains the boys during their time of residence with him.” (Powell, 1957, pp. 140-41)

Powell’s correction regarding the father’s role correlated also with a more accurate interpretation of the maternal uncle’s influence over his nephew.

The mother's brother is prevented by the respect relationships between himself and his sister from interacting personally with her children until after they reach an age by which the bases of the personality are already laid. To this extent therefore there is little reason to suppose that he rather than the father should become the "authority figure" in relation to the child; rather it seems that the psychological relation between father and child is essentially the same under the Trobriand matrilineal as under a patrilineal system of formal kinship…. (pp. 140-44)

**Converging Reconsiderations**

These observations exposed the logical problem at the heart of Malinowski’s critique and affirmed the positions taken by Jones and Roheim in the early debates. Remarkably, however, the extraordinarily significant follow-up study by Powell, conducted four decades after Malinowski’s own fieldwork, would go largely unnoticed or ignored within anthropology for another twenty-five years! (Spiro, 1982, p. 2) In spite of this baffling fact, however, individual voices within anthropology were converging toward similar conclusions; and by the late 1970’s, advances in object-relations theory and new information on the role of parents in socialization, led British anthropologist, Meyer Fortes (1977) to anticipate some kind of ‘reconciliation’ of the views taken in the Malinowski-Jones/Roheim debate. Fortes rendered his own verdict in favor of the Freudian position, calling attention to matrilineal societies that, against
Malinowski’s thesis, “argue plausibly for a 'normal' (if well disguised) Oedipus complex, centered on the parents, in early infancy…” (p. 131) He concluded that “[Anthropological findings] for the past 30 years or so of the social and personal relations of parental and filial generations in matrilineal family systems in many parts of the world tend to support a Jonesian rather than a Malinowskian interpretation of the situation.” (ibid; italics added)

**Fortes and Kluckhohn**

Fortes’ endorsement of the Freudian position carried a great deal of weight within anthropology. Not only had he been trained as an anthropologist under both Malinowski and the latter’s own teacher and mentor, CG Seligman, but Fortes had also earned a Ph.D. in research psychology before turning to anthropology. His ethnographic studies on African kinship, kingship, ancestor worship and divination – the very stuff of Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* – had become a standard in studies on African social organization and comparative ethnology. (EB)

Coming from someone of his standing within British social anthropology, the testimonial was analogous to the famous so-called ‘confession’ in 1951 from Clyde Kluckhohn, one of the most reputable theorists in American culture and personality studies. Kluckhohn’s confession is always worth repeating at length:

… the facts uncovered in my own field work and that of my collaborators have forced me to the conclusion that Freud and other psychoanalysts have depicted with astonishing correctness many central themes in motivational life which are universal. … the underlying psychologic drama transcends cultural difference. This should not be too surprising except to an anthropologist over-indoctrinated with the theory of cultural relativism for many of the inescapable givens of human life are also universal. Human anatomy and human physiology are, in the large, about the same the world over. There are two sexes with palpably visible differences in external genitalia and secondary sexual characteristics. All human infants, regardless of culture, know the psychological experience of helplessness and dependency. Situations making for competition for the affection of one or both parents, for sibling rivalry, can be to some extent channeled this
way or that way by a culture but they cannot be eliminated, given the universality of family life. The trouble has been because of a series of accidents of intellectual and political history that the anthropologist for two generations has been obsessed with the differences between peoples, neglecting the equally real similarities upon which the "universal culture pattern" as well as the psychological uniformities are clearly built. (quoted in Singer, 1961, pp. 19-20)

Concepts like human nature and the Oedipus complex, so closely tied to evolutionary theory, were casualties of the more extreme versions of cultural relativism that Kluckhohn was referring to. Malinowski’s original critique had been reinforced by others’, like Mead’s Coming of Age in Samoa (1928) and Benedict’s Patterns in Culture (1934), far and away the two most popular implementations of Boas’ charter for cultural determinism in American anthropology. Mead had characterized the mandate from her mentor as “merely the documentation over and over of the fact that human nature is not rigid and unyielding.” (quoted in Singer, 1961, p. 16) Singer summed up the ever-more relativist versions of this charge in a phrase, "It's not human nature, but only our culture." (ibid)

By mid-century, however, a role for cross-cultural universals and biological determinants in theories of human adaptation was becoming more acceptable again within anthropology. Singer (1961, p. 20) pointed out that Kluckhohn only grew more insistent in the last decade of his life that the Oedipus complex was among the many identifiable cross-cultural universals. Lest the significance of this shift be underestimated, we can recall Mead’s (1947) more extreme cultural relativist statement on the supposed ‘incommensurability’ between different societies; this was made only four years before Kluckhohn’s confession in 1951: “It will be necessary for psychology to assimilated and reduce to useful form the more recent findings of ethnologists which stress that a fully acculturated member of a living culture differs in every respect and systematically from members of any other culture.” (quoted in Roheim, 1950, p. 447; italics added)
This idea that culture renders its members different “in every respect and systematically from members of any other culture” is precisely what Kluckhohn had in mind regarding anthropologists’ obsession with differences. Kluckhohn ascribed the more radicalized expressions of Boasian cultural determinism to “a series of accidents of intellectual and political history”, underscoring their ideological bases. Roheim (1950), speaking from within both anthropology and psychoanalysis, pointed out that even on purely logical grounds Mead’s incommensurability argument against human nature and the universal Oedipus complex made no sense:

Mead’s statement is absolutely incorrect on a priori grounds. For if a Samoan differs in every respect from an American, how can Mead’s findings about the Samoan be valid? No empathy is possible under such circumstances. Indeed, we might then give up writing about anthropology altogether – except about our own group. (p. 447)

Arguably, Roheim was seeing in Mead’s claim the same logical performative contradiction (see Havens, 1997; Whitebook, 1993) that I have said undercut Malinowski’s thesis. Again, Malinowski had rejected, on theoretical grounds, the universal Oedipus complex because of cross-cultural differences, while also arguing for a common matrilineal complex across widely differing matrilineal societies. But the theoretical tide was changing and only four years after Kluckhohn’s confession Mead would emphasize just how commensurable all human experience really is:

In the study of personality and culture we start with the recognition of the biologically given, of what all human beings have in common… Because of these recurrent biological similarities of growth, of parent-child relationships, of needs and fears, and reassurances it is possible to compare childhood in one society with childhood in another. (Mead and Wolfenstein, 1955, pp. 6-7)
**Oedipus in the Trobriands**

Mead’s affirmation of the concept of human nature came just before Powell’s support for a Trobriand Oedipus complex, an indication of the changing theoretical landscape in anthropology by mid-century. Nevertheless, it took another two decades before Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* would itself be revived for scholarly attention in American anthropology by Paul’s (1976) reanalysis, “Did the Primal Crime Take Place?” The conclusion there was that “something like the primal crime must have occurred.” (p.341) Two years later, one of anthropology’s leading kinship theorist, Robin Fox, wrote *The Red Lamp of Incest* (1980), contributing to the rehabilitation of *Totem and Taboo* and Freud’s primal horde theory. Although not intended to be an explicit polemic against Malinowski, nonetheless the *Red Lamp* has been described by some within evolutionary anthropology as a “point-by-point refutation” of Malinowski’s critique of Freud. (quote in Fox,1994, pp. 5-6)

But it wasn’t until Spiro’s *Oedipus In the Trobriands* (1982) - more than half a century after Malinowski’s *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* - that an authoritative and explicitly polemical refutation of Malinowski’s thesis would emerge from within mainstream anthropology. (As we’ll see, Roheim was a unique exception, but he was in no way accepted as “mainstream” within anthropology.) Spiro’s formidable analysis spelled out the theoretical and empirical problems inherent in Malinowski’s matrilineal thesis along with their full cross-cultural implications. It affirmed the Powell reassessment in far greater detail, demonstrating that neither “the Trobriand household nor the social relationships that obtain within the nuclear family display the characteristics that might expectancy produce [a ‘matrilineal’] variant of the classical Oedipus triangle.” (Spiro, 1982, p. 163) Malinowski’s argument was assessed to be “seriously flawed” on several accounts. Spiro’s analysis and rigorous documentation extended to the larger cross-cultural problem as well, concluding that for “exactly the same reason neither this nor any other structural variant of the classical Oedipus triangle has been reported at the total societal level for any other society…” (ibid)
Jordan and Swartz (2010) from within contemporary American psychological anthropology, analyzed the blow to Malinowski’s argument in the following manner:

The fact that the mother is the first love object of the male child, the inference that a boy’s sexual rivalry with the father seems indicated on a repressed, unconscious level, and the fact that the authority of the mother’s brother becomes salient only after the normal Oedipal period is passed – all conspire to demolish Malinowski’s thesis…Trobriand specialists and others may dispute evidential details, their use, and inferences made from them, but such critics will have a difficult time dismissing Spiro’s intricately constructed case. Only new or previously uncited primary data directly bearing on the issues raised would be sufficient to invalidate Spiro’s conclusions. (pp. 162-3)

It’s arguable that in the thirty years since *Oedipus in the Trobriands*, no “new or previously uncited primary data” have yet to emerge to convincingly refute Spiro’s conclusions. It remains one of the most fascinating anomalies of 20th century social science that Malinowski’s matrilineal thesis could have been accepted within anthropology “with almost no skepticism or critical inquiry for fifty years.” (Spiro, 1982, p. 175)

**Brief Recap**

What we’ve just considered can be summarized in the following way. By mid-century the most powerful 20th century argument against the universal Oedipus complex - Malinowski’s *matrilineal complex* - was beginning to crack under much-delayed scrutiny within its own discipline. By the final quarter of the century it was crumbling. Spiro’s analysis alone presented devastating evidence that the Oedipus complex was not only universal but was *even more intense and unresolved* in the very society that was supposed to have refuted the Freudian case. To this day it is still likely that no decisive refutation of Spiro’s defense of the Freudian Oedipus complex has been offered in the very discipline from which the preeminent critique of Freud had been constructed. *At the very least,* then, it clearly is not legitimate to assume that the Freudian Oedipus complex has been disproved, despite many claims to the contrary. Moreover,
it appears highly likely that the preponderance of findings from anthropology *alone* support the existence of a cross-culturally universal Oedipus complex.

**Oedipus Waning and Effacing in Psychoanalysis**

What was happening in psychoanalysis as anthropology was finding its way back to Freud’s anthropological theory? This question brings us to a second striking irony in the history of this controversy. For just as anthropology was rediscovering the value of *Totem and Taboo* and oedipal theory, the theoretical momentum in psychoanalysis was building in precisely the opposite direction. By the mid-sixties, Nagera (1966) described the increasing “lack of precision”, “displacement”, “overshadowing”, “obsuring” and “disappearance” of the Oedipus complex (in relation to its corollary, the infantile neurosis) in psychoanalysis. A decade later, Loewald (1979) published his observations on “The Waning of the Oedipus complex” among psychoanalysts, an indication of the continuing trend.

This momentum away from oedipal theory in psychoanalysis has continued apace into the present. As recently as 2005, Nagera repeated his concern from forty years earlier, writing that oedipal theory continues to be “ignored, overlooked or more specifically actively denied” (2005 p. 2) What Loewald called a “waning” has become a complete “effacing” in psychoanalytic *intersubjectivity* theory, according to a recent appraisal made by Adler (2010) at a conference for contemporary perspectives on the Oedipus complex. In his paper “The Effacing of the Oedipus Complex”, Adler described his surprise at realizing that his own inter-subjectivist text from 1998, *Working in Depth: Framework and Flexibility in the Analytic Relationship*, had failed to include a single indexed reference to the Oedipus complex.

**Oedipus uncoupled from infantile sexuality**

Adler emphasized one particular aspect of this effacing, namely the elimination of the role of infantile sexuality in child development:
That these [inter-subjectivist] perspectives marginalize, ignore, or outright reject the role of infantile sexuality in development, further tends to dilute and obscure the place of the Oedipus complex in our contemporary discourse. The Oedipal romance may still be widely acknowledged, yet it is frequently uncoupled from the psychosexual dynamism that gives it its crucial significance as a developmental event that organizes gender identity and superego structure. (2010, p. 545)

Other authors (e.g., Green, 1995) also have drawn attention to this shift away from childhood sexuality and this decoupling of psychosexual dynamism from oedipal theory. In truth, however, this trend is one with a long history in psychoanalysis. It began with the original opposition to Freud’s views on infantile sexuality. It was the object of Freud’s objections in 1914 to the “view of life reflected in the Adlerian system [which] is founded exclusively on the aggressive instinct” (1914, p. 58) and to Jung’s “pushing into the background of the sexual factor in psychoanalytic theory.” (ibid)

This earlier resistance to infantile sexuality was only reinforced by Malinowski’s critique. The neo-Freudians Fromm, Horney and Kardiner were swayed by the claim that the Trobriand oedipal child had no oedipal attachment to the mother, repressed or otherwise, to rival the father (or anyone) about. Kroeber (1939) redoubled this argument with his call for a redefined oedipal “kernel” without the superego, which he viewed as one of Freud’s “gratuitous and really irrelevant assumptions”. (pp. 545-47) Fromm (1944) answered the call and argued that it was not sexuality but the child’s “defeat in the fight against authority which constitutes the kernel of the neurosis”. (quoted in Kluckhohn and Murray, 1959, p. 519) It was quickly becoming difficult to recognize anything oedipal in this redefined kernel.

It is this old fractional adoption and redefinition of oedipal concepts that continues to recur within psychoanalysis and contemporary inter-subjectivity theory. As in the earlier debates, it also goes hand-in-hand with a rejection of Freud’s cultural evolutionary theory in Totem and Taboo. Here is a contemporary example: “[Freud’s] mythological reconstructions of the origins
of the Oedipus complex (in a quaint piece called “Totem and Taboo” [1913]) are interesting in that they show us how far away 19th century biology is from the historical present. *Concepts like the Oedipus complex have disappeared completely.* (Strenger, 2006, p. 420; italics added)

The second half of this rejection should be repeated. The author claims that “Concepts like the Oedipus complex have disappeared completely.” This claim is flatly refuted by many contemporary psychoanalytic publications, such as Greenberg’s (1991) *Oedipus and Beyond*, and those already mentioned. (see also Hartke 2016) We’ve seen also that this is refuted by the last fifty years of developments within anthropology that have been steadily undoing the most powerful 20\textsuperscript{th} century critique of oedipal theory.

The incompatibility of such claims with the actual research literature is no small problem for the field of psychoanalysis. Yet this kind of unsupportable dismissal, so sweeping in nature, is remarkably common. Here’s another typical example: “Examination of the nature and origins of the Oedipus complex presented by psychoanalysts and critics suggests that there is little evidence to support its existence. (Kupfersmid, 1995, pp. 535-47)

Here the critique is not limited to the narrower debate over *universal*ity, but extends to the very *existence* of the Oedipus complex altogether. We are asked to believe that a fair examination of the “nature and the origins” of the Oedipus complex would suggest that no one anywhere has *ever* had an oedipus complex! Even Malinowski’s thesis - the most important and ethnographically-grounded critique of the Twentieth century - never went this far. On closer scrutiny broad dismissals like this frequently rely on the omission of essential sources of evidence. The last critique failed to mention any of Spiro’s writings, including *Oedipus in the Trobriands*, arguably the most important defense in the last few decades of oedipal theory from an interdisciplinary perspective. The author also seems unaware of the significant Powell reassessment from 1957 and makes no reference to Fox’s *Red Lamp of Incest* or to any of Paul’s analyses from within both anthropology and psychoanalysis. In other words, the examination simply excluded some of the most important sources in the scientific literature.
Misrepresentations
Apart from the exclusion of evidence, contemporary rejections of oedipal theory often rely on parodies of Freud’s basic concepts. Nowhere is this problem more likely to occur than in critiques of Freud’s concept of infantile sexuality. The last critique portrays Freud as believing that infants are born with knowledge of both sexes’ genitals and that oedipal-aged children have sexual fantasies of adult intercourse, as if they can understand what this entails. Since the author provides no context for this claim, other than a general reference to Freud’s entire Introductory Lectures, it remains difficult to understand on what basis he arrives at it. He simply writes, without any clarification, that Freud “contended that anatomical knowledge of the opposite sex, as well as a desire for sexual intercourse with the opposite sex parent, is genetically inherited.” (Kupfersmid, 1995, p. 536) Many of Freud’s observations on childhood sexuality would suffice to demonstrate how misleading this kind of characterization is. With regard to anatomical knowledge Freud was clear on his view that young girls and boys originally make the ego-centric assumption that all genitals are like their own; that boys, for example, “attribute the same male genital to both sexes.” (1917, p. 317) In The Ego and the Id (1923) Freud refers to a boy’s pre-oedipal identifications with the father and then clarifies that perhaps “it would be safer to say [identification] ‘with the parent’; for before a child has arrived at a definite knowledge of the difference between the sexes, the lack of a penis, it does not distinguish in value between its father and its mother.” (p. 31)

Freud’s formulations on the castration complex, castration anxiety, and penis envy presuppose the potential anxieties children can have when first confronted with anatomical facts so at odds with their original misconceptions based on concrete thinking and ego-centrism. The following passage from Freud’s (1910) Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis demonstrates the complexity of Freud’s actual views on infantile sexual knowledge and experience:

…during the time when the child is dominated by the still unpressed nuclear complex, an important part of his intellectual activity is brought into the service of his sexual
interests… Under the influence of the component instincts that are active in himself, he arrives at a number of ‘infantile sexual theories’ – such as attributing a male genital organ to both sexes alike, or supposing that babies are conceived by eating and born through the end of the bowel, or regarding sexual intercourse as a hostile act, a kind of violent subjugation. But as a result precisely of the incompleteness of his sexual constitution, and of the gap in his knowledge due to the hidden nature of the female sexual channel, the young investigator is obliged to abandon his work as a failure.” (pp. 47-48)

Condensed into this passage are a number of essential concepts and empirical observations that remain as useful today as they were when Freud formulated them over century ago. Childhood sexuality and infantile sexual theories are all understood in relation to stage-typical aggressive trends and Freud’s concept of the libidinal component instincts. The latter concept pertains to the building blocks of psychosexual development and is not limited to the leading oral, anal, and genital zones. It comprises all the bodily sources of sensory excitation, all of which are associated with functions basic to human survival.

The gain achieved with this synthesis was that it operationalized the question of how libidinal components emerge, compete for dominance, and eventually become more or less successfully coordinated in the service of mature object-relations, conscience formation, and reproductive genital primacy. The advantage of the libido concept was that it applied to the entire sensory field, and did so in the context of a model that accounted for the vicissitudes of the drive components over the entire life course. Critics of Freud often overlook the fact that oedipal sexuality must not be “reduced to the genital, precisely because of the importance [Freud] accords to infantile sexuality and the partial drives.” (Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger, 1986, p. 136) Freud’s epigenetic view of the gradual differentiation and integration of drive components in the course of development is a reminder that the concept of infantile genital makes no sense apart from the systematic interrelation of all the component drive contributions, including the preoedipal ones. Otherwise, the Oedipus complex is misunderstood and reduced to intensifying genital sensations and fantasies. But this over-simplifies Freud’s view of the
Oedipus complex, as demonstrated in the extraordinary passage just quoted. The typical sexual theories of the oedipal child are no less oedipal because of their conspicuous oral and anal components. Rather, these components, along with the child’s maturing ego functions, are now enlisted on behalf of emerging oedipal trends; in Freud’s words they are “brought into the service” of the child’s infantile genital aims.

Conversely, the meanings associated with oedipal or infantile genital concepts are easily confounded with those of adult genital primacy. But there is a world of difference between the genital experiences at these different levels of maturation and development. It must be held in mind that oedipal sexuality remains fully infantile in every Freudian sense of this term:

- consolidation of masculine and feminine identifications remains incomplete
- representations of sexual anatomy are not yet integrated into a mature self-concept that is consistent with genital primacy and sexual reproductive capacity
- the full implications of sexual intercourse and reproduction are not yet comprehensible to the oedipal child, nor do their real consequences yet apply
- pre-oedipal oral and anal trends still vie for dominance over genital ones
- boundaries defining self/object representations are still fluid and easily fragmented
- thinking is still largely ego-centric, concrete, and dominated by impulse, magical thinking and fantasy rather than the reality principle;
- full physical maturation, along with emotional independence from caregivers, could still be as much as two decades away

For all these reasons, vaguely defined critiques of Freud’s views on infantile sexuality using phrases with highly-charged adult connotations, like “the desire for sexual intercourse with the opposite sex parent”, will always be misleading unless they specify the meaning of these concepts in their proper theoretical contexts.
The explanatory power of Freud’s actual theory becomes even clearer when we expand our considerations beyond individual ontogeny to the larger anthropological and evolutionary questions that Freud took up in Totem and Taboo. To do so is to bring the concept of the component drives into the service of our comprehension of how individual psychology (and psychopathology) manifests in specifically collective forms. After all, Totem and Taboo was Freud’s “first attempt” to explain the causal relations between these two levels. Holding in mind the climactic ‘deed’ in Totem and Taboo (i.e., the murder of the primal father) Freud’s synthesis accounts for how collective actions that would appear to be an expression of drive activity in its most regressed or primitive state - oral and anal-sadistic cannibalism - can be more comprehensively understood in terms of these pre-oedipal components being mobilized in the service of infantile genital and adult genital aims. And, indeed, this is how we are to understand the “primal deed” and the evolutionary transformation from proto-human to human society according to Freud’s schematic reconstruction in Totem and Taboo. The primal father is killed and ingested in the service possessing his phallic power over the horde and his genital monopoly over the females. This represents an oral incorporative form of identification brought into the service of phallic-oedipal aims at the shared level of the group. This deed (real or imagined) is quintessentially oedipal precisely to the extent that it stands without resolution and is driven by fantasies of omnipotence and idealized sexual satisfaction; such hopes remain as futile as the oedipal child’s wish to replace the parent. No sooner is the primal deed accomplished than its victor becomes the next victim. In Freud’s account, the collective solution to this dilemma over the course of human evolution was a compromise in the form of culturally defined exogamous boundaries and the ritualized regulation of aggression (i.e., the structures of totemic society). The psychological corollary of this is the resolution of the Oedipus complex - the relinquishing of oedipal objects by means of an introjection into one’s own ego of the oedipal rivals’ social values. This identification results in conscience formation (i.e., the superego) and it represents a triumph of the reality principle. Conversely, just as with the murder of the primal father, no sooner are oedipal victories experienced by the child – which can occur for many reasons (ex., death of a parent, divorce) – then difficulties arise for the child’s ability to resolve the oedipal conflicts and move beyond them.