maintained an almost gleeful conviction of the gulf between his political-theological prescriptions and 'any actualization in life'. 'Abstention from movement' is both the precondition and the consequence of insight:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.

All Men are Intellectuals: A Disagreement between Friends

by Adrian Edwards, C.S.Sp.

My friend, Father Marcel Boivin, W.F., sent me a copy of his article 'A Positive Approach to Taboo' and asked for my comments. I wrote a somewhat sharp reply, which he received with his usual good nature, standing his ground, however, on the essential point of there being an essential difference between the scientific mentality and the taboo mentality. For me, this theory is, if not a taboo, at least a myth which is perhaps open to critical analysis; however, I feel I ought to sketch out my own way of seeing human thought in action. As Fr Boivin knows, I am neither a psychologist nor a philosopher nor a theologian, but a priest capable of, at any rate, preaching to peasants, children and seminarists, traditionally the three most taboo-ridden categories of mankind; I am also a social anthropologist, a profession whose initiates aspire to explain taboos scientifically, a claim which, if taboos and science are really of such utterly different orders, should mark us as sacred monsters of the quality of the pangolin of the Lele.[1]

To understand human thought one needs to reflect on language. Dolphins, honey-bees and apes all transmit information to each other;[2] human language abstracts and generalizes, and can refer to what is absent, or past, or purely imaginary. It can therefore transmit far more than is transmitted through animal communication systems, and, for this purpose, language is structured by grammar and syntax. One can speak a language correctly without being able to explain the rules of grammar, but whenever a language is analysed

[1]See Mary Douglas *Purity and Danger* Pelican Books, 1970, p. 202-5.
[2]For contemporary linguistics see Noel Minnis *Linguistics at Large*, Gollancz, 1971, particularly the essay 'Language and Animal Signals', by Claire and W. M. S. Russell.

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it is found to have a set of rules which have a reasonable amount of consistency with each other. This consistency is not such as to make the language completely inflexible; indeed, perhaps the major cause of change in a language is the trend towards greater consistency, either by eliminating anomalies or by generalizing them. Not surprisingly, this leads to further inconsistencies, and yet further changes. Grammarians may speak as if these changes were the result of conscious choice on the part of speakers of the language, or else as if the language itself was in some way an autonomous personality. In reality, the people who speak the language have a tacit unarticulated awareness of the structure of their language, and this tacit awareness becomes social in the ordinary course of conversation. What begins as a mistake made by a few people in using some ill-defined rule of grammar may become a common mistake and finally an obligatory rule.

To put this a little differently, if language were only the arbitrary association of given sounds and given objects, it would be of the same order as animal communication systems. It is the framework of grammar and syntax that gives language its capacity to express human meaning; yet for this grammar and syntax must be clothed in sound. Man's mind learns and expresses itself through his body. Any language is a collection of arbitrary signs which cohere together systematically, and are effectively operated by people who cannot describe (usually) what they are doing.

All this, of course, is old hat for tyros in linguistics. I want, though, to lay the stress on the competence possessed by those who know no grammar in speaking their language. It is a considerable skill; but it is not capable of being explained. We are in Polanyi's[1] tacit dimension.

Some time ago, Meyer Fortes, describing the reaction of British social anthropologists to Levi-Strauss, said that whereas for Levi-Strauss custom was enacted speech, for them speech was spoken custom. It is not therefore surprising to find anthropologists striving to build up grammars of ritual and symbolism, which show how apparent conglomerations of arbitrary acts have their inner structures of grammar and syntax, and how they are operated by people who use them 'correctly' but with very varied degrees of understanding. However, it would seem that those who operate such languages of symbolism are perhaps more likely to understand something of the grammar than are the speakers of an unanalysed language to be able to describe its essential rules.[2]

Taboo is negative symbolism. It teaches the good by forbidding the bad. The consequences of driving even a very short distance through contrary traffic lights may serve to emphasise in our minds

[1]Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
[2]See Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa*, Oxford Univesity Press for International African Institute, 1957, pp. 6-7.

many thousands of miles driven in perfect legality; the fining of companies for causing atmospheric pollution stresses the perfect legitimacy *in se* of capitalism, despite the disapproval of most of the contributors to, and possibly some of the readers of, *New Blackfriars*. Taboo is to symbolic language what rhetoric is to spoken language; it elaborates, it distorts, it over-stresses, so that some at least of the message will get through. Taboo draws a sharp dividing line where otherwise ambiguity might exist; social anomalies are either suppressed (as happens to twins in some places) or glorified (as the Lele do to the pangolin). Taboos can be expected to form some kind of intelligible pattern; the mapping of this pattern can reveal something of the wider values of the society. This is exactly what Mary Douglas did in *Purity and Danger*.[1]

If taboo marks the danger points in the world of some particular society, symbolism provides the over-all map. It is normal practice for an anthropologist to use the rituals of the society he studies as a coded but decipherable account of its institutions. And just as the formal rituals are an unavowed but authentic self-portrait of the formal institutions, the analogies and metaphors of current speech and understanding provide interpretations of social relations and values. These are related to everyday experiences; tent-dwellers may well resent oppression and threaten to go into the wilderness, but they are unlikely to claim that if they are not allowed a safety-valve, the explosion of their anger will trigger off a chain reaction.[2] If we include in this stock of analogies and metaphors the images of social roles prevalent in the society,[3] whether or not people live up to them at all closely, it would seem fair to compare the ideas current in any society, whether traditional or modernized, to a conversation, in which one drifts from topic to topic, each topic in turn loosely connected to the last, but with the same themes and the same clichés turning up time after time. This does not mean at all that the conversation is disordered or fragmentary or illogical, but rather that its coherence is derived from it being in the common language of a group of people and its images being their common possession. The logic of it all is in an ordered pattern, a gestalt,[4] rather than in the findings of rigorous analysis, even though the principles of the syllogism are to be found in oral cultures.[5]

I think this metaphor of the conversation does express the way

[1]Other examples of ritual and taboo used as boundary markers may be found in T. O. Beidelman, 'Some Nuer notions of Nakedness, Nudity, and Sexuality', *Africa* (London), 1968, pp. 113-31; and Kirk Michael Endicott, *An Analysis of Malay Magic*, Oxford University Press.

[2]I owe this point about the influence of technology on metaphor to Dr David O. Edge of the Department of Science Studies, Edinburgh University.

[3]For the way in which a society may be understood by the study of particular roles, see Julian Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1954.

[4]German word meaning 'pattern'; associated with theory that we perceive objects as wholes, not as conglomerations of units.

[5]See John Gay and Michael Cole, *The New Mathematics and an Old Culture*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967, p. 82.

people think, that is most people in all societies, whether it be the tribal village or the global village or something in between. I am not for the moment talking about scientists or theologians or philosophers in the practice of their speciality, although as the title of this article suggests, I do not think they are all that different from the common mental activity of mankind. 'All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say', wrote Antonio Gramsci, 'but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.'[1] To gloss this, one could say that the function of intellectuals in society is to speak what would otherwise be left unspoken; but that this can only be done by drawing out what is already in some way present in the minds and perceptions of those who are not professionally intellectuals. Gramsci's phrase would still be true if turned round to say, 'Those who have the functions of intellectuals in society still think according to the pattern of the other members of their society'. I am not simply saying that social and economic factors influence intellectual activity even when it is of a very abstract, non-practical nature, but rather that specialized intellectual activity will be characterized by the marks of ordinary human thinking, albeit in a more stressed and organized form. If, then, taboo can be related to thought, it is not simply a manifestation of the non- and anti-rational in man, but may have surprising links with the world of early scientific theories.

Let me support this claim by drawing on the views of a distinguished scientist and philosopher of science, Michael Polanyi. He emphasizes science's dependence on the existence of the scientific community.[2] Yet science is also a profoundly personal activity, involving the moral commitment of its practitioners.[3] This means that the subject-object dichotomy cannot explain scientific knowledge, which depends on a personal discovery of the objective truth. This personal discovery involves not only moral commitment but also an aesthetic perception.[4] What is really significant in science is not the collection of items of information but the discernment of patterns. Therefore, taxonomy, the perception of the basic forms in a given subject, is the beginning of every scientific discipline, and in several sciences continues to be of significance as it develops.[5] Science survives and justifies itself not by its technical successes but by the aesthetic and ethical values built into it. Empiricism cannot therefore provide a satisfactory philosophy of science.[6] For Polanyi, then, science is metaphysical and social, concerned to perceive the patterns present in the world rather than to control nature. It is not empirical (in the sense of depending on visible results) nor empiricist (in the philosophical sense). It overcomes the opposition of fact and

[1] A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, quoted by R. G. Willis, 'Paradigms and Pollution', *Man*, September 1972, pp. 369-378.
[2] See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, pp. 203ff.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 299ff.
[4] *Op. cit.*, pp. 145ff.
[5] *Op. cit.*, pp. 348ff.
[6] *Op. cit.*, pp. 167-170.

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value, of subject and object.

If, now, we look at what anthropologists have to say about taboo and symbolic systems generally, the resemblance to what Polanyi claims to be the specific characteristics of science as against technology or empiricism is striking. Symbolic systems depend on the acceptance of society; they demand moral commitment, while having an aesthetic appeal.[1] When analysed by anthropologists, they can be shown to form gestalts related to, though not necessarily mirror-images, of the society. For most members of the particular society the gestalts of ritual and belief are known only tacitly, for the most part; but there do exist, at least in some societies, individuals who without discarding belief have come close to the anthropologist's skill in analysing the inner relation of rite and symbol.[2] Nor do such systems provide simply socially acceptable untruths, but rather help to provide tribal man with insights into human nature and also, to some degree, to understand man's relation to non-human nature.[3] Systems of taboo, in particular call into being social and natural taxonomies which help to make the world understandable to man.[4] While symbolic systems relate to experience and interact with it, making it meaningful to those who share it, they do not depend on empirical verification, nor are they intended simply as means to gain material advantages (though these may be hoped for).[5]

There seems to be a case for resemblances between scientific and symbolic systems of belief, arising from both being examples of organized thinking by men committed to thought in a special way, and hence making more evident characteristics found in a more diluted way in all human thinking. Such resemblances have been discussed recently by a number of authors, stimulated particularly by T. S. Kuhn's concept of scientific paradigms.[6] Kuhn has described a scientific paradigm as a 'disciplinary matrix'[7] and as including 'law, theory, application and instrumentation together'.[8] He has also stated, 'A paradigm is what the members of a scientific community share, *and*, conversely, a scientific community consists of men who share a paradigm'.[9] The existence of a paradigm pro-

[1]See V. W. Turner, *Chihamba*, Manchester University Press, 1964.

[2]See V. W. Turner's essay on his friend and informant, Muchona, in *The Forest of Symbols*, Cornell University Press, 1969.

[3]V. W. Turner argued that white, red, and black are universal symbols because based on bodily experience. In *Chihamba* he argues, if I take his meaning correctly, that an association between whiteness and death will push a ritual or the associated myth, which uses this association, into a certain recognizable shape, even if the moral values may vary from the joyful to the sinister via the comic. Whiteness would then seem to be something existing in the human drama, not simply projected on to it.

[4]For the relevance of totemism to the identification of a given area among the Australian aborigines, see Nicholas Peterson, 'Totenism yesterday', in *Man*, March 1972, 12-32.

[5]See Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 279-288.

[6]Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago University Press (2nd edition), 1970.

[7]*Op. cit.*, p. 182.

[8]*Op. cit.*, p. 10.

[9]*Op. cit.*, p. 176.

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vides, for Kuhn, the transition from pre-science to science, since science is characteristically a puzzle-solving activity, and a paradigm both points out the puzzles to be solved and the ways to solve them. A paradigm is thus definite enough for use as a tool of research, and yet flexible enough to permit of some development. Kuhn's schema has attracted attempts to examine its relevance to social anthropology.

S. B. Barnes,[1] approaching the question as a sociologist of science, has argued that anthropologists who have denied the existence of conceptual thought use too stringent a definition of conceptual thought. Science can advance through adopting analogies and metaphors from everyday life, indeed 'The ability to handle metaphor and analogy seems vital not only for paradigm change but for articulation and extension of given paradigms and the problem solving involved in doing this. This implies that in terms of degree of abstraction the difference between our science and "the science of the concrete" is a good deal less than Levi-Strauss implies, and also that the absence of awareness of alternatives is a dubious explanation of the stability of primitive beliefs—for it seems unlikely that the primitive should be less adept at extending ideas by analogy and metaphor than we.'[2] For Barnes, scientific thought does not seem to be essentially different from the thought current in tribal society. Both scientist and tribesman think within the paradigms with which their society provides them, though both can use analogy and metaphor to extend their usefulness. The growth of modern science is a result, not of a new style of thought, but of the increasing differentiation of society, which produced such factors as 'the increasingly large number of leisured élites—the unique technological resources, the refined quantitative concepts based on a complex economy, and the greatly increased efficiency of information storage that follows the adoption of a written language.'[3] Indeed, Barnes notes, not unwittily, the existence of a taboo mentality even within the field of scientific discussion, quoting the resistance of chemists to methods of chemical analysis involving the use of enzymes. Moreover, paradigms are the means by which scientists are given their recognition, so that 'attacks upon paradigms may draw sanctions upon themselves in the automatic fashion characteristic of tabooed actions.'[4] If the paradigms of a tribal society are more resistant to change than those of a scientific community, it is, Barnes suggests, not because of a different kind of thought, but because of the much smaller degree of social relevance possessed by the scientist's paradigms. Academic theory may contradict, but will not disturb social life—as Barnes shows by quoting the case of the philosopher, who put up a notice saying that his

[1] S. B. Barnes, 'Paradigms—scientific and social', *Man*, March 1969, pp. 94-102.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 99.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 102.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

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lecture 'On the unreality of time' had been put back from 2 o'clock to 5.[1]

Barnes has influenced two anthropologists, who have written recently on this topic, R. G. Willis[2] and M. G. Marwick.[3] Willis has compared the ideas about illness held by, on the one hand, the general public, and on the other, by the practitioners of indigenous medicine among the Fipa of southern Tanzania. The ideas of the semi-professional practitioners are more elaborate and specific, but both paradigms are based on general Fipa ideas about man and nature, the human body being seen as a microcosm of the world, and human illness being seen as the result of some reversal or interruption of healthy social relations.[4]

Professor Marwick has examined Sir Karl Popper's contrast between 'closed' and 'open' societies with special reference to the way of thinking characteristic of each. For Popper, tribal thought is characterized by an inability to distinguish between nature and convention and a total acceptance of inherited values, while the 'open society' is characterized by a critical and truth-seeking freedom. Evidently, we are back with much the same sort of distinction that Fr Boivin has made between taboo and science. Marwick, using data from his own experience with the Cewa, concludes that tribesmen do possess rational technical knowledge which they can distinguish from magic, whereas the 'openness' of contemporary society is at best an ideal norm, at worst a cover-up for appalling untruthfulness accepted with still more appalling cynicism.[5]

What remains, then, of Fr Boivin's argument? Very little, if it is thought of as just another of the arguments, associated though they be with illustrious names, which strive to mark off the thought of 'western man' from that characteristic of peasants, children, and seminarists. But his article was well worth while if we read it as a recall to those metaphysical and social presuppositions, which, I have tried to argue, are, and should be, built in to the worlds of both tribesman and scientists, as against the technique-oriented, result-seeking, paradigms of 'one-dimensional man'.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 101.
[2] R. G. Willis, *op. cit.*
[3] M. G. Marwick, 'How real is the charmed circle in African and Western thought?', *Africa*, 1973, pp. 59-71.
[4] R. G. Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 371.
[5] M. G. Marwick, *op. cit.*, p. 70. 'We find nothing surprising in the fact that the statements of government departments and of public or private corporations should be more concerned with what people will think of them than with the truth of the message they are trying to convey.'