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THE BRITISH ACADEMY

The Origin of Terms of
Human Relationship

By

A. Lang

Fellow of the Academy

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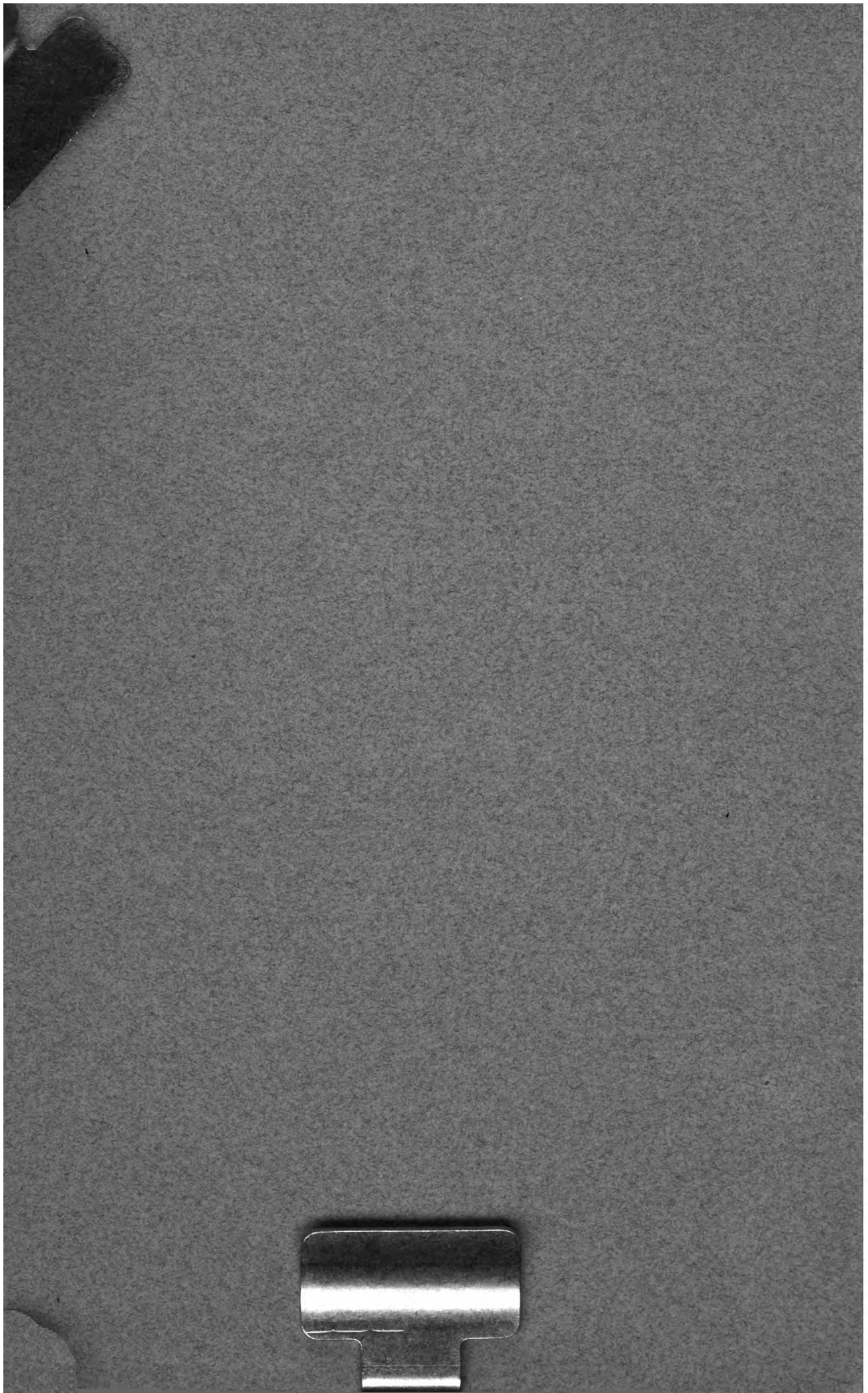
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THE ORIGIN OF TERMS OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

By A. LANG

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Read, May 27, 1908

MR. DARWIN did not accept the opinion, very prevalent amongst anthropologists, that Society began in a state of sexual promiscuity. He thought that the early males of our species were extremely jealous, and that each male would firmly keep his women to himself, in the manner attributed to the gorilla. The classificatory system of naming relations is still, perhaps, the strongest card in the hand of believers in a period of human promiscuity, and I wish to examine the question: do the names of relationships, among the black natives of Australia, for example, necessarily lend themselves to the support of the theory of primal promiscuity? I admit that, to the superficial observer, they look as if they did.

The naming system, as regards relations, is very much like that which Plato recommended for use in his theoretical republic, wherein, except for age-grades, a more or less limited promiscuity existed. All men of an age-grade were to call each other brethren, the men of the senior age-grade they called fathers, and the members in the age-grade below their own they called sons. Thus the imaginary republic had names of relationship suited to its promiscuous institutions, and when we find much the same terms in Australia, for example, it is natural to suppose that promiscuous institutions were their cause. But Plato started in possession of the ready-made terms of relationship of a monogamous society, and I hope to show that the ancestors of the Australians, before they developed the tribes of to-day, were as well equipped with terms of relationship as Plato. In my opinion, like Plato in his new State, they merely extended the pre-existing terms of kinship to serve for tribal purposes: to distinguish tribal degrees of status, and reciprocal duties and obligations.

One very obvious difficulty in the way of regarding the classificatory system as the result of promiscuity was recognized by Mr. Darwin. A child calls all the women of its mother's age-grade and its mother's status, in its own phratry, by the same name as it calls its

mother. No human being can believe in a plurality of mothers! But Dr. Rivers¹ has replied that, 'while the system of relationships was in process of development it is not probable that the special relationship between mother and child would have persisted beyond the process of weaning,' a period which he puts at three years. At three the child would not know much of terms of relationship. Perhaps not, but the child's mother would know. The male children are not separated from their mothers at three. The girls are not separated at all. Maternal instinct and affection among articulate-speaking men must always have kept alive the knowledge of the relationship between mother and children. Dr. Rivers adds that nursing may have been collective among the women of the group, so that, when weaned, the child might not have been able to discriminate between its nurses and know which of them was its mother. But the mother would be in no error; the whole set of children, probably a very small set, was not hopelessly 'changed at nurse'. The strength of the milk tie is forcibly evinced under fosterage, where the attachment of foster mother to *dalt* is nearly, or quite, as tenacious as that of mother and child. The possible ignorance of the child is not to the point. We have to reckon with the certain knowledge of the mother.

Even a superficial glance at the names of human relationships in an Australian tribe shows (1) that, while in each case they include the terms which a person applies to his own recognized father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, and so on, they also denote numbers of persons who are merely in the same 'age-grades', or 'generations', and in the same phratry and 'sub-class' (where it exists) as the man's actual father, mother, wife, son, and the rest. The 'tribal' fathers, mothers, wives, sons, and so on, are, however, distinctly and separately discriminated in terms of speech from the *actual* fathers, mothers, sons, &c., at least in several tribes. The man or woman speaking calls these actual kinsfolk, indeed, by the term which he, or she, also applies to tribal relations of the same grades. But there is evidence to show that, when there is risk of confusion, as if a European asks questions, the native speaker clearly discriminates, by a qualifying word, the 'own' from the 'tribal', or 'in law' kinsfolk. In some tribes, at least, the speaker adds to the general term for, say 'father', a word which distinguishes 'own' from 'tribal' father, and so in other cases. Speaking of the Dieri system of *pirrauru* (legalized and limited subsidiary husbands and wives), Mr. Howitt (*J.A.I.*, 1890) has told us facts (if they still hold good) bearing on the qualifying additions to the terms of relationship. 'If a man were more

¹ Rivers, in *Anthropological Essays*, pp. 317, 318 (1907).

narrowly questioned he would qualify his statement by saying that the *Noa* (specialized and duly betrothed husband of his mother, now styled by Mr. Howitt her *Tippa Malku* husband) 'is his *Apiri murla*, *Apiri matha*, or his "real father" or "very father"; and that the *pirrauru* of his mother are his *Apiri waka*, or "little fathers". His father's *pirrauru* would also be more clearly defined as his (the son's) *Andri Waka*, or "little mothers".¹

It is desirable to know whether *Apiri* (now spelt *Ngaperi*) *Waka* is not the correct term for *all* a man's tribal fathers, not for such of them alone as are the mother's *pirrauru*. If so (and it *is* so), the term results from the general *noa*, not from the limited *pirrauru* relation.

I conceive that a man's actual father was called his *Ngaperi*, before the evolution of tribal status and marriage law suggested that all men of the father's (*Ngaperi's*) status were his son's *Ngaperi Waka*. But the question may be argued conversely. 'All men of the father's status *might* be the son's *Ngaperi*. As "individual marriage" arose, these men were reduced to the rank of *Ngaperi Waka*.'

In 1890 (*J.A.I.*, vol. xx), Mr. Howitt printed statements to the effect that 'father's brother' was *Aperi Waka* (Gason and Flierl), while 'mother's *pirrauru*' was also *Aperi Waka*. (Same informants.) It is not, then, the *pirrauru* relationship, but the *noa* relationship that yields the title *Aperi Waka*; for both the *pirrauru* of the woman, and all the men *noa* to her are *Aperi Waka* to her children. Is there any reason for disbelieving Gason and Flierl? In fact this *Waka* word, as discriminating 'tribal' or 'in law' from 'own' relation, permeates the Dieri system, if we believe Gason and Flierl, and others. 'Husband's brother', says Gason, 'is *Noa Wauka*'; Flierl gives '*Noa Waka*, or *Yimari*'—the term preferred by Mr. Howitt. 'Wife's sister' is '*Noa Wauka*' (Gason), '*Noa waka* or *Yimari*' (Flierl), *Yimari* (Meyer). 'Father's brother's wife' is (Gason) '*Andri Wauka*'. '*Andri Waka*' (Flierl), '*Andri Waka*.' 'Mother's sister' is (Gason) '*Andri Wauka*', (Vogelsang) '*Ngandri Waka*', (Flierl) '*Andri Waka*'.

These *wakas*—qualifying 'own' into tribal terms—do not now appear in Mr. Howitt's list of Dieri terms of relationship. (*N.T.S.E.A.*, p. 160. 1904.)

There can be no harm in trying to reason out the modes in which old savage terms of individual relationship have perhaps now become terms of *tribal* status; how they may have first arisen, and how they may have attained their present significance among savages, implying legal degrees of status in each case.

That the terms are not, in tribal society, mere 'terms of address',

¹ *J.A.I.*, vol. xx, p. 58.

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as MacLennan argued, is certain; to each member of the tribe, bearing the *collective* or 'tribal' names of 'father', 'elder brother,' 'younger brother,' 'elder sister,' 'younger sister,' and so on, you owe certain duties, if it be but the duty of boycotting them, or of going into mourning for them.

But even in this matter there are, it seems, *individual* distinctions. Mr. Howitt tells us that among the Kurnai, 'a man provided food for his wife's father,' or 'parents', and 'the grandchildren are fed by the grandparents'. Interesting details as to the rules of partition of a man's game are presented' they are analogous to the rules recorded in the ancient Brehon laws of Ireland. (*N.T.S.E.A.*, pp. 756-60.) The husband's actual parents also receive their lot, but the wife's parents seem to have the lion's share, out of which they feed the grandchildren.

As far as I see, these laudable duties are confined to the actual, and not extended to the tribal, parents of the hunter's wife. If his wife's tribal parents had to be supplied the hunter might say, like the Scottish mother to her bairns,

'Ower mony o' you,
No enough to gie you.'

It is certain that 'blood' or 'own' relations are perfectly recognized. Messrs. Spencer and Gillen inadvertently deny this, saying 'The savage Australian, it may indeed be said with truth, has no idea of relationships as we understand them'. (*Northern Tribes*, p. 95.) That this cannot be said with truth appears in their *Central Tribes*, p. 95, where the Warramunga distinguish elder and younger brothers tribal from brothers by blood, and also in their *Central Tribes*, p. 97, where *actual* fathers, brothers, and sons are not allowed to share the 'common property' in the women during an orgie of licence. Among the Arunta, 'a man secures a wife for his son,' for his *own* son, obviously, and a man inherits Alatunjaship from his own father; not from any casual tribal father. (*Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11.)

By inquiry, moreover, you can ascertain whether any man whom another man calls his *Okilia* (elder brother) is his actual, or only his tribal, elder brother. (*Ibid.*, p. 57.) In the same way the Dieri, we seem to gather, make, when necessary, a verbal distinction (*waka*), between their tribal and actual fathers, and other relations. It is needless to give more examples; the savage Australian does discriminate between his actual and his tribal relations.

It was necessary to make this fact clear and certain, as it has been denied.

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We next ask ourselves how the classificatory terms of relationship arose, and how they acquired their present connotation of degrees of legal status. On any theory of the early social condition of articulate-speaking man, the terms 'of relationship' cannot have connoted all the present duties and privileges which they now connote. These could only arise from the well-defined rules that were made after the evolution of a *tribe*, with its vast body of customary law; its marriage rules as regulated by phratries, sub-classes, totems, and age-grades; its food rules; its betrothal rules; and so on. This point is so obvious that it needs no argumentative demonstration.

I cannot pretend to feel certain as to how believers in a state of primal promiscuity explain the origin and the existing uses of savage terms of relationship. Why, *on their theory*, do I, a savage, call dozens of men 'my fathers', dozens of women 'my mothers', while, all the time, I discriminate my own father, and my own mother, from the crowds to whom I extend the terms of relationship which I apply to my actual parents?

Messrs. Spencer and Gillen, by way of answering this question, say they are forced to the conclusion 'that the terms do actually indicate various degrees of relationship based primarily upon the existence of intermarrying groups'.¹ But what does this mean? What, here is 'a group'? What are 'intermarrying groups'? The Macnabs were a local 'group', the MacIans were a local 'group'. Suppose that these two clans intermarry. How would this fact lead each MacIan and Macnab to speak of dozens of men as his 'fathers', of dozens of women as his 'mothers'? One is quite puzzled; and our authors merely go on repeating that the names which a man applies to his wife and to all women whom he might lawfully have married, to his father, and all men who might have lawfully married his mother, to his mother, and all women whom his father might legally have married, are 'terms of relationship'.

Of what kind of relationship? Of kinship by blood? They assuredly are not *that* in many cases. Of reciprocal duties, privileges, and restrictions? These the terms do connote. Mr. Thomas understands Mr. Spencer and Mr. Howitt to mean (and perhaps they do mean), 'that all these terms may be interpreted on the hypothesis that the European relationships to which they most nearly correspond actually existed in former times, not between individuals, but between groups.'²

Thus a 'group' of men (group here seems to mean a number of men) are legally intermarriageable with a number of women. The

¹ *Central Tribes*, p. 56.

² *Kinship in Australia*, p. 122.

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Arunta call this condition *unawa*. A man styles his wife *unawa*, and he styles all women legally marriageable to him *unawa*. We seem to be expected to believe that the two sets of *unawa* persons, now lawfully intermarriageable, were, in a past age, legally married, 'all through other,' as the Scots say. The children would be all brothers and sisters to each other, and all sons and daughters to all men and women of the two *unawa* sets.

If this be the view of our leading authorities I can perceive no reason in favour of it, except that they can in no other way account, first, for the present extensive use of the terms of relationship; and next, for certain customs and usages which they regard as survivals of a previous pell-mell way of living (with these we are not here concerned).

But other inquirers can see other ways of accounting for both the extensive use of terms of relationship, and also for the customs and usages. Mr. Spencer says 'if these' (the terms in question) 'be not terms of relationship, then the language of these tribes is absolutely devoid of any such'.¹ Does he also argue that the Greek word *γυνή*, meaning 'woman', and the French word *femme*, meaning 'woman', both terms also indicating 'wife', prove that French and Greeks are 'absolutely destitute' of names for the relationship of a wife to her husband? A Frenchman calls his wife his 'woman' (*femme*), and he calls every adult member of the fair sex 'a woman'. An Arunta calls his wife *unawa*, and all other women of her tribal status he styles *unawa*. *Ma fille* is 'my daughter'; *fille* is any girl in the world. Judging by language the lively Gaul has been more promiscuous than the Arunta. The Frenchman and the Greek, like the Arunta, have, in general use, no word for 'wife' that does not include much more than the term 'wife' (*weib* = 'woman') now means in English. Will Mr. Spencer say of the Greek and French facts, as he does of the Australian, that he 'does not see how' (in this case) 'they can receive any satisfactory explanation, except on the theory of the former existence of group marriage' in France and Greece?² We are coming presently to Greek terms of relationship, but, meanwhile, Mr. Spencer's argument convicts Greeks and French, no less than savages, of pell-mell 'group marriage' in the past.

His theory appears to be that primaeval savages knew (in one sense) the meanings of words corresponding to our 'fathers', 'mothers', 'children', 'brothers', 'wives', 'sisters,' but, not knowing 'who was who', they applied the words to whole batches of adult men and women, and to their joint offspring.

¹ *Central Tribes*, p. 58.

² *Central Tribes*, p. 59

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It is not easy to find a clearly reasoned and coherent statement of the theory of promiscuity, and of its gradual subjection to law. The difficulties begin at what is commonly, though perhaps erroneously, regarded by our authorities as the first step towards regulation of marriage, the division of a promiscuous community into two exogamous and intermarrying hereditary sets or phratries. There is no harmony among the supporters of this opinion. We are, if I understand their case, to assume the existence of a local set of people, speaking the same language, and so far united that they are capable of holding legislative assemblies, and of accepting or rejecting legislative proposals made by the older and more experienced men. They live in, at least theoretical, promiscuity. There is no law, public or domestic, restraining unions of the nearest kin. All men and women have recognized 'common rights' in each other's affections, but, at least in many districts, the scarcity of supplies forces the people to wander in small groups, where the human passions of love and jealousy may (I think *must*) assert themselves. The result must be (one thinks) that each man recognizes his special women, and the children whom he regards as his own in a special sense. If there were, originally, 'common rights' between the sexes, these rights, Mr. Howitt suggests, would 'remain in abeyance', in each wandering group, till the groups met at the harvesting of wild fruits, or on occasions of ceremony. On such occasions the supposed original promiscuity would reassert itself, as sexual licence does arise in many savage festivals.

This is what I understand to be the theory of Mr. Howitt.¹ If not a theory, it is a sketch of a working hypothesis. It assumes that the wandering small groups were friendly to each other, not hostile; and it hints that we may 'admit' the existence of 'common rights between the members of the Commune', that is, the group as it was before the scarcity of supplies caused it to break up. Why that original group should have been more promiscuous than each later emigrant group, I do not know. It could not be larger than each of these (assuming scarcity of supplies), and why are its members to be more destitute of 'individual likes and dislikes' than the members of the emigrant groups? These things are not explained.

Granting the position, so far, it is plain enough to me that, in everyday life, male parents, from jealousy (if paternal incest existed), and, in any case, for the natural purpose of preserving the peace of the fire circle from jealous broils, would put down amours between the young males and females, children of the woman whom each grown-up male might regard as especially his own. In the small roaming groups

¹ *N.T.S.E.A.*, pp. 173, 174.

for which the men and women provided food, these relationships could not but be distinguished, I think, and, if distinguished, they must have had distinguishing names, such as 'my man or men', 'my women,' 'my little ones.'

So far, I think, a domestic rule of exogamy must have been in existence in everyday life. But, admitting the revival of the supposed promiscuity at the hypothetical great meetings, the seniors might find that their fire-circle rule was broken by their young people on these festive occasions. They would not like this; and at the meetings the seniors would 'growl' together. Supposing the seniors to have deliberative and legislative functions, I suggest their *domestic* rule as an intelligible and human motive for desiring to pass a *tribal* rule enforcing the *domestic* rule. Young people, not allowed by their seniors to make love to each other in daily life, must lie under the same prohibition universally, even at 'desirable General Meetings'.

This is merely my own way of envisaging the circumstances precedent to the supposed legislative bisection of the community into two exogamous intermarrying phratries. But the supporters of the theory of this deliberative partition do not agree as to its motive. They have five different theories of the motive. We need not linger over their differences of opinion.

Mr. Howitt gives briefly Mr. Frazer's suggestions.¹ 'The effect of dividing the community into two exogamous intermarrying sections was to prevent the marriages of brothers with sisters . . .,' and, we must add, of many persons who were not brothers and sisters. This rule, thus understood, must at once have created a kind of *tribal* brotherhood and sisterhood between all males and females in each phratry. I being a male in phratry Eagle Hawk, the purpose of the rule, as understood by Mr. Frazer, is to prevent me from marrying any of my sisters on the mother's side. But the rule also cuts me off from scores of women in my phratry who are not my sisters by blood. *All* the women in my phratry are to be, to me, as sacred as my own sisters. They are all thus my *tribal* sisters, till later rules based on degrees of age are evolved. Now, if there then existed a term denoting 'sister', the word might come to be extended so as to include all the women who, in my phratry, are now as sacred as my sisters to me. Dr. Rivers writes, 'people in a low state of culture do extend the meaning of their kinship terms,' but he believes that the connotation even of the word 'mother' may have been extended (*op. cit.*, p. 317). Such extension would not prove that, from promiscuity and ignorance of blood relationships, all the women in my phratry had been in-

¹ *N.T.S.E.A.*, pp. 284 *et seqq.*

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discriminately lumped together as persons in sisterly relations with me. The reverse, it is admitted, would be the fact ; and this argument applies to all extensive classificatory terms of relationship. Thus, all women in the phratry not mine, Crow, would be, by the theory, open to me in marriage. They might be indiscriminately styled my 'women' (say *noa*, as in Dieri), my potential spouses. But it would not follow that they were all my actual spouses, they need no more be *that* than all the women of my status in my phratry would actually be my 'sisters'.

To return, 'the undivided commune', recognizing fraternal and maternal relationships by blood, was wiser on this theory than Mr. Spencer's Australian savage, and *did* already, before a tribe existed, discriminate blood relationships, *had* 'an idea of relationships as we understand them'. I believe that this was indeed the case. It follows that 'own' relations, maternal and fraternal at least, were recognized *before* the evolution of the family groups into the tribe introduced 'tribal' mothers, brothers, and sisters. If recognized, could they fail to have distinguishing names? Such names could not be 'classificatory', because as yet there were no 'classes' by the hypothesis; there could be none till the making of the phratric division.

We thus find a community with one set of mothers and their children in division A, and another set of mothers and their children in division B. The adult men, partners of women in division A, would have to be placed in division B, and the male partners of women in division B would have to be placed in division A, I suppose. All A's marry only B's, and vice versa. (This is not Mr. Spencer's scheme; in his opinion all bearers of 'totem names' were placed, some totems in one, others in the other division. This is the actual arrangement to-day except in the Arunta 'nation'.)

One of the results of Mr. Frazer's scheme would be that no man could marry his sister uterine, for she is in his division. As to the reason for this supposed division no two authorities seem to be agreed.¹ In this community, thus envisaged, the relations of mothers to children, of brothers to sisters, are said by Mr. Frazer to be already recognized, while, I suppose, there was some sort of recognition of fathers. Their part in procreation need not have been recognized, could not have been recognized if it was held that the animating spirit of each child,

¹ Cf. Mr. Howitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 284, 285; Mr. Frazer, *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1905; Mr. Spencer, *Report of Australian Association*, 1905, p. 421; Dr. Roth, *Ethnological Studies*, p. 69; Mr. Hartland, Presidential Address to the Folk-Lore Society. Five men, five opinions.

and even its bodily vehicle, were provided by some supernormal being. (For this belief cf. Dr. Roth's Bulletin 5, on the North Queensland Aborigines.) But the paternal relations of protecting and nourishing certain children, and of continuous association with the mothers of the children, could scarcely, I think, evade observation.

If I am right, then the community understood the distinct relationships of male and female sexual associates, and had a law to govern them. It understood the relations of mothers and children, of brothers and sisters, and had a law forbidding sexual unions between them. These essential sets of relationships would have names, would they not? And it is, given the nature of linguistic evolution, most probable that these names or terms of relationship were carried on from the previous lawless state of the community.

But the tribe, as it advanced, evolved a vast body of customary laws, regulating every detail of life, always with an eye on distinctions of age. Each age-grade, or, roughly speaking, each generation, had its duties, privileges, and restrictions. These made it necessary to have names, as we have not, for elder and younger brothers and sisters (their duties and restrictions being different). The latitude of choice in marriage, by the theory, was more and more restricted, and the next restriction aimed at was to limit marriage within the generation of the lovers. For intermarriageable persons on the same generation-level, and in opposite phratries, therefore, names would now be needed. The simplest way of forming them would be to group the men as all, from the point of view of the children, 'fathers' of the coming generation. Thus, in Dieri, *Ngaperi*, 'father,' *Ngaperi waka*, 'little fathers,' otherwise 'father's brothers'.¹ For the women, *Ngandri*, = 'mother,' 'mother's sisters.' These, according to Messrs. Gason, Flierl, and Vogelsung, are *Ngandri* or *Andri waka*, 'little mothers' sisters.' Mr. Howitt, in 1904, dropped the distinguishing *waka*.² In relation to each other the two intermarriageable generations are termed, in Dieri, *Noa*. According to Mr. Curr's information, *Noa* merely means 'woman'. In Kurnai, the married men and their brothers are, to the women, simply 'man' (*Bra*). We have, I think, no other original senses of Australian names of relationship given to us.

My theory, then, is that, as tribal law developed, regulating all things by grade of age, the old names for the nearest relationships were simply extended (sometimes with qualifications, such as 'elder', 'younger,' 'little') to all persons of the same age-grade, in the same phratry, with the same duties, privileges, and restrictions. This kind

¹ Howitt, p. 160.

² *J.A.I.*, vol. xx, p. 54. *N.T.S.E.A.*, p. 160 (1904).

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of extension is familiar in modern custom. In the sixteenth century 'brother' included 'brother-in-law'; 'nephew' and 'cousin' were scarcely distinguished; 'cousin' was equivalent to 'kinsman', however remote; and 'brother', as in Greek, was apt to be extended to near male relations, while 'father' and 'mother' and 'child', as terms of address, were, and are, widely applied.

Now, if we examine the terms of relationship in Greek, for example, we find that they also, with one or two exceptions, are of the widest generality. Father (πατήρ) is taken to be allied with the Sanskrit *pá*, 'to nourish': mother, μήτηρ, μαῖα ('nurse') with the Sanskrit *mā*, 'to make.' But we can have no certainty; *ma* and *pa*, as Dr. Westermarck observes, occur among many savage terms for father and mother, and are formed from 'the easiest sounds a child can produce', the ease varying among different peoples. Many examples are given from savage, barbaric, and civilized languages, and many more have been collected by Professor Buschmann. Dr. Westermarck says 'the origin of such terms is obvious. They are formed from the easiest sounds a child can produce'; different races 'varying very considerably with regard to the ease with which they produce certain sounds'.¹ He goes on, and here he may be in error, 'it is evident that the terms borrowed from the children's lips have no intrinsic meaning whatever.' But, probably everywhere, and certainly among ourselves, the terms *pa* and *ma* are deliberately *taught* to very young children, who are urged to associate *pa* with 'father', *ma* with 'mother'. The words have thus a meaning. The little innocent naturally, at first, applies *pa* to any man, *ma* to any woman, but it is not allowed to continue in the use of this promiscuous terminology.

What seems to be the course of evolution is that the elders, in archaic times, selected the easiest syllables, taught the babies to pronounce them, and taught them also to associate the terms with 'father' and 'mother'. If, then, the terms, *pa*, *ta*, *ap*, *at*, *ab*, &c., for 'father', with *ma*, *na*, *am*, *an*, for mother, were *taught* to children, by savages, as the easy syllables for them to utter, such terms for 'father' and 'mother' were not borrowed from the natural babble of infancy, but were placed in the lips of infants as the easiest designations of 'father' and 'mother', by people who well knew their meaning. Naturally, as among ourselves, these easy syllables may be left to childish use by many peoples, and much more difficult terms for 'father' and 'mother'—terms whose original meaning is unknown to us—may be, and commonly are, used by mature savages, just as 'father', not *pa*, is used by us.

¹ Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, pp. 85-9.

In the Australian terms the easy syllables are not usually found. In the Umbaia tribe, however, with several of its neighbours, we do find *pappa*, not for 'father', but for 'elder brothers', Warramunga, *papati* ('elder brother'), Tjingilli, *pappa* (or *pauerli*). Among the Tjingilli *pappa* also does duty for the people who have status-duties to 'elder brothers', children and grandchildren. The Australian terms have a way of embracing those who receive, and those who perform the duties, those who are potential recipients, and those who are potential payers of the dues. Thus *nupa*, *noa*, and *unawa* denote not only a man's wife, but all who, legally, might have been his wife.

The Gnanji term for 'elder brothers' is *pappai*; elder sisters are *pappani*; no term for 'children' is given. In Anula elder brother is *Tjapapa*, 'elder sister' is *Natjapapa*.¹

We have now shown plenty of 'pappa' among the Northern tribes, but the term is not applied to fathers. For *ma* we have Greek $\mu\acute{\alpha}$ (mother, nurse, grandmother); Arunta *mia*, 'mother'; Kurnai *Maian* (wife, wife's kin), corresponding to *Bra*, 'man,' 'husband'; so that *Maia* may = woman; we have Tupi (Brazilian) *maia* for 'mother', *paia* for 'father', and so forth. All these terms show their origin in easy syllables, probably taught as denoting 'father' and 'mother' to young children.

The Greek language, with $\pi\acute{\alpha}$, and $\pi\acute{\alpha}\pi\pi\alpha\varsigma$, and $\pi\acute{\alpha}\pi\pi\omicron\varsigma$ (grandfather), is merely an example of the early practice.

Turning next to Greek for 'husband' Greek has ἀνὴρ , which merely means 'male', and may be applied to a woman's paramour, as opposed to $\pi\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$, a legal husband. $\pi\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$, again (originally $\pi\acute{o}\tau\iota\varsigma$), means (Sanskrit *pat-is*) 'man' or 'lord', or 'master'. Ἀνὴρ , a woman speaking, is 'my man'; nothing can be more general; $\pi\acute{o}\tau\iota\varsigma$ may have meant 'man', or (a woman speaking) 'my master'. Mrs. Thrale always called Mr. Thrale 'my master',² and we speak of a lady's husband sometimes as her 'lord'. Ἀνὴρ is entirely general—any man; $\pi\acute{o}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ denotes, first, 'man', next, 'master,' an individual proprietary relationship.

'Wife,' $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta\acute{\eta}$, is as wide a term as possible, meaning simply 'woman'. From its forms in various Aryan tongues, and from other unmentionable words in these, it clearly denotes *sex* and reproduction. Now sex and bringing to birth could not escape the notice of the assumed promiscuous horde.

Son and daughter are both $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$, 'child,' 'youngling,' terms of age

¹ Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes*, pp. 78-89.

² Quite common in some parts of England still. The gaffer, my old man, &c., are also used.

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absolutely general; the term is stretched, like *garçon* and the colonial 'boy', to include male servants of any age.

'Brother,' 'sister,' ἀδελφός, ἀδελφή, mean 'from the same womb', and show a recognition of maternity, which is, perhaps, not a step in advance of the promiscuous horde, if, in that horde, maternal affection had been developed.¹

People of the same 'clan', or γένος, came to be called ὁμογάλακτες, 'of the same milk'. But this must be an extended use of the word, which implies merely persons with the same mother (or foster-mother, if fosterage prevailed).

'First cousin,' 'nephew,' ἀνεψιός, mean 'of the same kin'. As kinship is here recognized, this does go beyond the terminology of the primitive promiscuous horde. We have a Greek term of status in ἐέδνωταί (*Iliad*, xiii. 382), 'they who arrange the terms of the bride-price.'

Bride, nubile girl, married woman (νύμφη), has the *nu* root of Latin *nurus*, 'daughter-in-law,' *nuptiae*, *nobilis*. Any one who pleases may compare Urabunna *Nupa* !

From the examination of these terms of relationship in Greek it is plain that most of them are within the scope of invention of the assumed promiscuous horde, as they merely denote sex (husband, wife), or age (child, son, daughter). Others, as 'brother', 'sister,' denote, in Greek, a recognized common mother; others, 'nephew, first cousin,' show that kinship is recognized, but scarcely that degrees of distance in kinship are recognized.

In our own colloquial speech, a woman for 'my husband' says 'my man'; a man, in some classes, calls his wife 'my old woman'. We talk of our 'bairns' and 'children', and 'our boys' and 'girls', all of them terms of youth, as general as the promiscuous horde could have applied to the younger generation. 'Wife' is only 'woman' (*weib*).

It is plain and certain, not a guess, that the relationship terms of the most civilized peoples are of a latitude which might go back to the palmy days of the promiscuous horde, as they denote only sex and age, or are derived (*pa*, *ma*) from easy syllables taught to infants. Among the Greeks and ourselves 'man' and 'woman' ('husband' and 'wife') are general terms appropriated to the terminology of a society with individual marriage. In Greek the words for 'brother', 'sister,' and 'kin' imply acquaintance with such facts of maternity as even the promiscuous tropical horde could scarcely help recognizing, if women shared with other mammals the maternal instinct. Sons

¹ Nothing is known of the original sense of φράτηρ, brother.

and daughters are alike known by a term for youth, a condition obvious to the most promiscuous horde. Does it follow that the Greeks and we ourselves retain, scarcely altered, relationship terms which a promiscuous horde, in a tropical region, might have evolved (*though not yet as terms of relationship*)?

I am not of that opinion (though I make a present of it to believers in such a horde), because I conceive that early man (not living in a horde, but like Mr. Darwin's early man with his harem, or as in Mr. Howitt's suggested early Australian nomadic groups, small, and conditioned by 'individual likes and dislikes') (*N.T.S.E.A.*, pp. 173-4) might have evolved the terms just as easily. The male and female mates could talk of '*our* little ones', '*our* young ones'; each male could call his female mate or mates '*my* woman', or '*my* women'; the females could each speak of '*my* man', or—if their man were singularly free from jealousy—'*my* men'; and a child could recognize such other children as were 'from the same womb', or 'nourished by the same milk' as himself; while his father (or, if *he* was not recognizable, the adult males of the little group), would be to the child 'the food bringer', 'the governor' (as among our youth), or the 'master', or what not. Thus the terms now denoting relationships might arise as easily among half-starved nomads, with 'individual likes and dislikes', as among a full-fed, promiscuous, tropical horde.

Civilized peoples have thus appropriated general terms of sex and age to the individual marriages and descents, and parentage of each man, woman, and child. The members of the earliest small wandering groups of Australia, with proprietorship of some men in some women (proprietorship caused by the animal passions of love and jealousy), could do the same.

Each such group would thus have its individual terms of relationship. But when many such wandering groups, after an age of hostility, and, probably, of wife-raiding from each other, combined into a local tribe, with its phratries and totem kins, a large body of customary law was gradually evolved; chiefly regulating *legal* sexual unions, and duties to be paid to the old, by the adult; and to both, in different degrees, by the young, also by sons-in-law to the parents of their wives. In the course of time many grades of tribal status, privileges, duties, and avoidances have been developed. These ranks in status needed names, and names for them could be obtained by extending the old general terms of relationship to all persons of the same tribal and phratriac, and totemic, and 'sub-class' status. The old term for 'father', whatever its original meaning, was extended,

I suppose, to all men of the father's phratry, age-grade, and marriage-ability, and so on, when possible, with all the rest.

Economy of effort rules linguistic evolution. When the little groups are blended in the tribe, and while the tribe evolves customary laws instituting status, duties, privileges, and avoidances, the old words are merely extended so as to designate the fresh sets of status. We know the undeniable accommodation of the Kurnai *Bra*, 'man,' to the marriage rules and resulting relationships. *Bra*, in its legal sense, is applied by a woman to her husband and husband's brother (own or tribal) (*N.T.S.E.A.*, p. 169). The Dieri *noa* ('woman') is another example, unless Curr erroneously gives *noa* as the word for 'woman'. *Noa*, in the legal sense, means 'intermarriageable'. We can go no further here without enlightenment from philology. 'The point selected for emphasis', says Mr. Thomas (as regards the term *noa*, but his words are true for all the terms), 'is the legality of such marital relations, whether existent or not.'¹

The tribe, not the family, is now dominant, its rules override everything in the native mind, and the terms of status, with all that they connote, impress themselves even on the youngest members of the community; they are a legal education.

Mr. Thomas (speaking only of 'mother' and 'son' terms) does not admit my theory of the expansion of old names of relationships into terms of status (relationship, in our sense, being included). 'There is no evidence that such a thing has taken place,' he says, and, of course, without philological interpretation of the terms, proof cannot be given. Perhaps it never can be produced, but we need not say so till the investigation is made.

Mr. Thomas is no believer in primal promiscuity, or in 'group marriage'. It must be plain to him that men and women, *not* living in either of these conditions, and having the power of speech, must have used terms denoting their relationships with each other, with their elders, and with their offspring. What became of these terms? Did they die out when the groups became a tribe, with a body of law, and needed words to express degrees of status? I think not, and will give my reasons later.

Mr. Thomas says that, while there is no proof that original terms of relationship (he instances 'mother' and 'son') were later extended to her nephews (tribal?) and stepsons, 'we can see no reason why such a thing should take place.'

The reason would be human indolence; economy in linguistic evolution; a law which meets us everywhere. His third observation

¹ *Kinship and Marriage in Australia*, pp. 125-6.

is only a thrust at 'the philological argument' (from existing terms of relationship) for a past of 'group marriage'.

His own opinion is that the terms (say that which the mother uses of her son) 'may have been expressive of tribal or group status, and may have had nothing to do with descent'.¹ Terms for son, in the case of our 'child', or 'boy', or the Greek *παῖς*, have 'nothing to do with descent', they indicate 'the young ones'. But such terms must have existed before the tribal rules of status existed, and it was human and natural not to coin new words, but to carry on the old words in an extended significance. Mr. Thomas says, 'if . . . we regard the terms of relationship, as *originally indicative of tribal status*, 'and suppose they have been transformed in the course of ages into 'descriptive' terms such as we use in everyday life, the difficulties vanish.'²

But there were human beings living in a non-promiscuous state (I think we are in harmony on this point), long before there was that late 'conquest of culture', the tribe, with its rules of status. These human beings must have had 'terms of relationship' (in origin merely terms of age and sex), and my opinion, based on the familiar working of evolution, is that these terms were merely extended to include the later relations of tribal status. That was the cheapest and easiest way of doing the business. Again *we* do not always use 'descriptive' terms in ordinary life. We use vast general terms of age and sex, now appropriated to our *own* peculiar 'woman', 'man,' and 'little ones', our 'governor', 'provider,' and so forth; that is, such are the original senses of our terms of relationship.

It is true that, in Lifu, the term for 'sister' is a legal term of status, meaning 'not to be touched', while the names for 'elder and younger brother' are of the same kind, meaning 'ruler' and 'ruled'.³ It would be most interesting to know whether or not existing Australian words for 'sister' and 'elder and younger brother' also arose as words of status, age, and sex.

Here a curious question arises. If, in the condition of the Australian tribes, the original meanings of the existing terms of relationship indicate legal status, and if the ancestors of the Greeks and of ourselves have passed through the same legal conditions (through the estate of the savage tribe), how is it that our words for relationships, Greek and English, never (save where *πόσις* denotes 'master'; and 'governor' and 'master' are used in slang) denote legal status, as, in Lifu, 'sister' = 'not to be touched'; 'elder

¹ *Kinship*, pp. 119, 120.

² *Kinship*, p. 125.

³ Westermarck, p. 89.

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brother' = 'ruler'; 'younger brother' = 'ruled'? How did the Greeks, like ourselves, shake off all their legal terminology of relationships, if they once had it?

Mr. Thomas's hypothesis appears to be that the Australians, as they evolved degrees of legal status, with all their duties and privileges, also coined words to express them, or specialized for their expression old words, such as 'not to be touched', 'rulers,' and 'ruled'. This may have happened in some cases; but older terms of relationship, indicating age and sex, would also be extended to cover the new degrees of status where it was possible.

This is probable, because when the ancestors of the Greeks and ourselves passed out of the state of the savage tribe, they did not abandon the archaic general terms for husband, wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, for anything more scientific and really descriptive. For husband and wife they could have used our 'bedfellows', and their poets *did* use the Greek equivalents *ἀλοχος* and *ἀκοίτης*. But these words remained 'poetical'. Our ancestors might have used 'bedfellow', 'begetter,' 'begotten,' and so forth; but they, in fact, remained constant to their old general words, 'husband' implying something more advanced than 'man', though 'man' for 'husband' is in common use. In Greece even *pappas* and *pa*, for father, and *ma*, for mother, did not disappear.

Thus it is clear that people cling to the oldest words that will serve their turn, and, when degrees of tribal status arose, the Australians would do as others do in full civilization.

It thus appears that, when the ancestors of Greeks and English passed out of the savage tribal state (if ever they were in it), the words for now obsolete degrees of status (as of 'elder' and 'younger' brothers and sisters) expired; while the ancient terms of near relationships, after serving their turn as status terms, reverted to their original significance. Strange fortunes of words!

My theory, or guess, is not intended as an argument against promiscuity and group marriage. Granted the promiscuous horde, it would have terms for 'man', 'woman,' 'old,' 'young,' and probably for 'mother' and 'child', male or female. Let the horde, nobody knows why (there are five separate guesses), bisect itself into two exogamous and intermarrying phratries. Let it redistribute its totem kins, so that no persons may marry within a whole set of different totem names, (why they did *this* the theory of reformation of morals does not explain). Let them introduce the customary laws based on age-grades, and then there will arise many degrees of tribal status, each with its duties, privileges, and avoidances. These degrees of status

will need names, and the pre-existing terms denoting merely diversities of sex, age, and the fact of maternity (if it were recognized) will help to provide the materials for the terminology of tribal status.

On my theory, just as wide general words for sex and age have been appropriated by the Greeks and ourselves, to denote relationships, while they continue to keep their wide inclusive sense, signifying age and sex; so, among the Australians, terms equally general were appropriated, first, to individual relationships ('*my man*', '*my woman*,' &c.), and next, under tribal law, were extended to serve as terms of status and age-grade, while they still include the individual relationships of father, son, husband, wife, brother, sister, and so forth. The tribal relationships are distinguished by qualifying adjectives, as *waka* from the 'own' relationships. All this might occur, I think, whether society began in a promiscuous horde, or in groups so small that individual relationships were recognized and acknowledged.

Necessarily the theory can only be established, for Australia, by philological examination of many Australian languages. The theory rests on the analogy of Aryan languages, and on the usual processes of linguistic evolution, and has, for the special case of Australia, only the instance of the process exemplified by the Kurnai *bra* (what does *maian* mean?), and the possible case of the Dieri *noa*.

It is hazardous, indeed, to deal with tribal etymologies, but, among several northern tribes, *nia* or *ina* is clearly a suffix denoting the feminine. Thus (Umbaia), 'father,' *ita*; 'father's sister,' *itinnia*.

Tjingilli, 'father,' *kita*; 'mother,' *thinkatini*. This is only useful if *kat* and *kit* are equivalent; but *ini* or *ni* seems feminine, as in *kalini*, 'wife'; *wankilli*, 'mother's brother's son'; *wankillini*, 'mother's brother's daughter.' Again, 'husband,' *nambia*; 'husband's sister,' *nambini*.

We have Gnanji, 'father,' *itipati*; 'father's sister,' *itina*; where we might expect *itipatina*, 'younger brother'; *kakula*, 'younger sister.' *Kakallina*; 'husband,' *kari*; 'wife,' *karinia*. The odd thing is that the word for 'wife' is so seldom the obvious feminine form of the word for 'husband'. We do find *nga* in Dieri, *nga peri*, 'father,' and *ngandri*, 'mother,' also in *ngatandi*, 'child.'

What is *ng* or *nga*? If we might be permitted to cite Mr. Howitt's earlier works, he used to give *apiri*, 'father'; *andri*, 'mother.'¹ Now he gives *ngaperi*, *ngandri*, and other *ngs*, including *ngatata*, 'm' (male) and 'f' (female) 'speaking'. Is the new *ng* or *nga* the

¹ *J.A.I.*, vol. xx, p. 58.

possessive pronoun 'my'? Or is it merely phonetic, rendering *andri* more correctly as *ngandri*? Probably this is the correct view.

When I have expressed curiosity as to 'the original sense' of relationship terms I have been told that the names 'have the original sense', in so far as they exactly define the conditions to which they are applied. Persons who can reason thus are ill to reason with! The original sense of the word 'queen' is 'woman'. By this time 'queen' 'exactly denotes the' (royal and feminine) 'condition to which it is applied', but I am not asking for that sense when I ask for 'the original sense of the word queen'.

Nothing can be thoroughly known about the Australian terms till philology examines them.

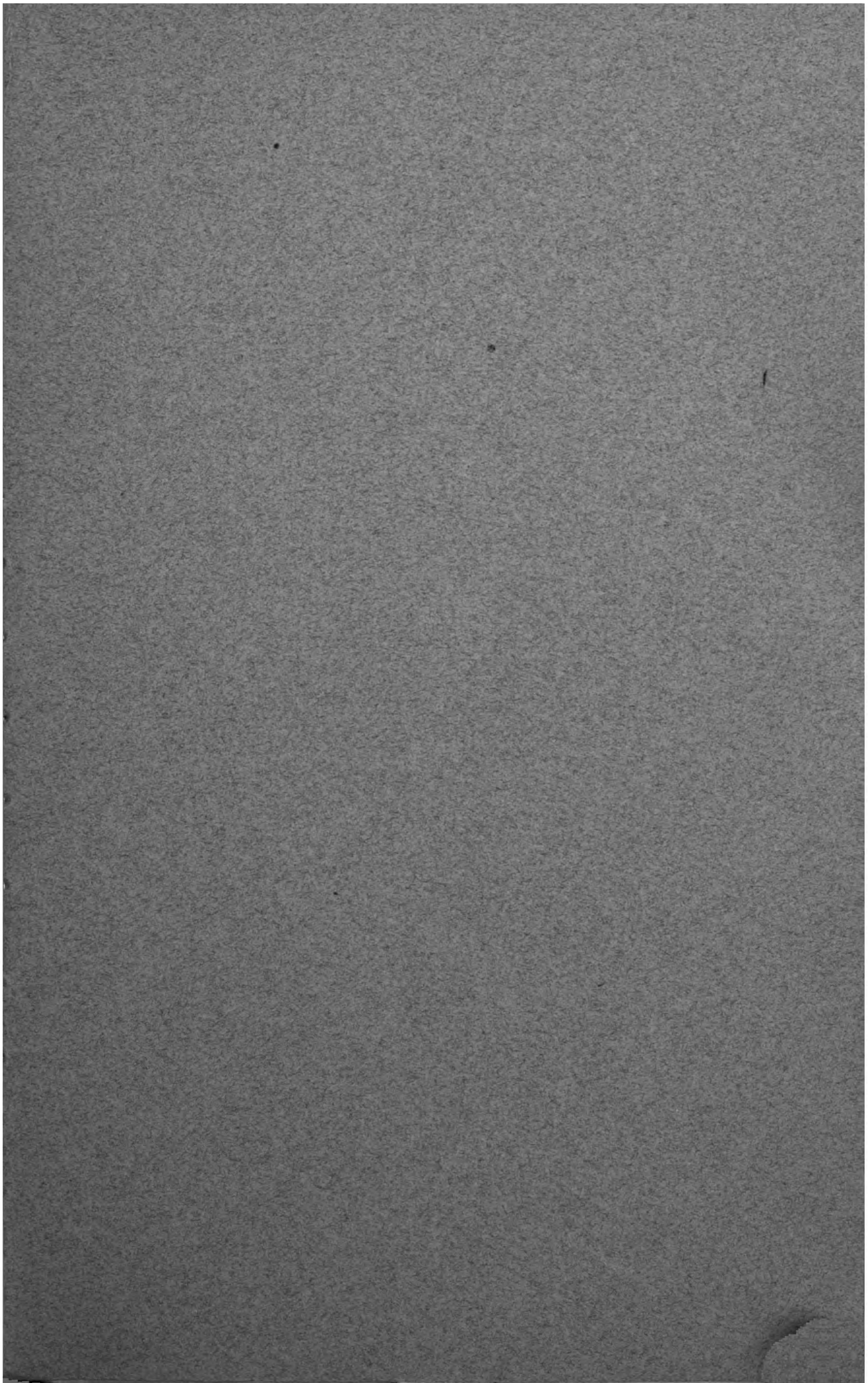
My provisional conclusion is that the classificatory widely inclusive terms of relationship prove nothing, either for or against the theory of primal promiscuity. Judging from languages which can be criticized by philology, Greek, French, Latin, English, German, the names for relationships are in origin of the widest significance, denoting age, sex, and perhaps, in the case of the father, lordship and protection. In Greek brother and sister point no further forward than the obvious circumstance that the persons called brother and sister have a common source, come from the same womb. The terms for relationships are circumscribed in their vast generality by the use of the possessive pronouns, as in Toda and Fijian.

The wide terms would be used either by a people living in promiscuity, and not discriminating by any mark of property, any *meum* or *tuum*; or they could be used by persons living in the Darwinian Cyclopean family, who would add, in words, the mark of property, 'my woman,' 'my man,' 'my young one.' Let such Cyclopean families combine into a tribe. The domestic rules of life become wider tribal rules, and are more and more elaborated, while the old linguistic terms are extended to meet the new conditions of society. Yet, all the while, the actual kinsfolk, even among the Dieri, are linguistically distinguished from the tribal relations.

Exactly the same things would happen, when once the tribe was evolved, if the people in it were originally promiscuous, and later came to make moral and legal distinctions.

Every one who has been 'man', 'young one,' 'woman,' would fall into grades, 'old man,' 'contemporary man,' 'marriageable to a man' (a woman speaking), and then 'my man', as the tribe advances to individual marriage. Though words indicating procreation and unions of man and wife, bedfellows, were evolved, they were not in regular and legal use, they are not yet in familiar use in Europe. I do

not, in a Will, leave this to my 'male progenitor', that to my 'female progenitor', my second best bed to 'my bedfellow', even if I do leave my estate to my 'issue'. People do not call their children, as a rule, their male and female issue. We still adhere to a primal generality of terms, modified by the possessive pronoun, but, as this does not prove that we were once promiscuous, the classificatory terms do not prove that the people who employ them were recently promiscuous.



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