

PREFACE TO BOURKE'S SCATALOGIC RITES OF ALL NATIONS - (1913)

While I was living in Paris in 1885 as a pupil of Charcot, what chiefly attracted me, apart from the great man's own lectures, were the demonstrations and addresses given by Brouardel. He used to show us from post-mortem material at the morgue how much there was which deserved to be known by doctors but of which science preferred to take no notice. On one occasion he was discussing the indications which enabled one to judge the social rank, character and origin of an unidentified body, and I heard him say: 'Les genoux sales sont le signe d'une fille honnête.' He was using a girl's dirty knees as evidence of her virtue!

The lesson that bodily cleanliness is far more readily associated with vice than with virtue often occurred to me later on, when psycho-analytic work made me acquainted with the way in which civilized men to-day deal with the problem of their physical nature. They are clearly embarrassed by anything that reminds them too much of their animal origin. They are trying to emulate the 'more perfected angels' in the last scene of Faust, who complain:

Uns bleibt ein Erdenrest
zu tragen peinlich,
und wär' er von Asbest,
er ist nicht reinlich.¹

Since, however, they must necessarily remain far removed from such perfection, men have chosen to evade the predicament by so far as possible denying the very existence of this inconvenient 'trace of the Earth', by concealing it from one another, and by withholding from it the attention and care which it might claim as an integrating component of their essential being. The wiser course would undoubtedly have been to admit its existence and to dignify it as much as its nature will allow.

¹ [Literally: 'We still have a trace of the Earth, which is distressing to bear; and though it were of asbestos it is not cleanly.']0

It is far from being a simple matter to survey or describe the consequences involved in this way of treating the 'distressing trace of the Earth', of which the sexual and excretory functions may be considered the nucleus. It will be enough to mention a single one of these consequences, the one with which we are most concerned here: the fact that science is prohibited from dealing with these proscribed aspects of human life, so that anyone who studies such things is regarded as scarcely less 'improper' than someone who actually does improper things.

Nevertheless, psycho-analysis and folklore have not allowed themselves to be deterred from transgressing these prohibitions and have been able as a result to teach us all kinds of things that are indispensable for an understanding of human nature. If we limit ourselves here to what has been learnt about the excretory

functions, it may be said that the chief finding from psycho-analytic research has been the fact that the human infant is obliged to recapitulate during the early part of his development the changes in the attitude of the human race towards excremental matters which probably had their start when homo sapiens first raised himself off Mother Earth. In the earliest years of infancy there is as yet no trace of shame about the excretory functions or of disgust at excreta. Small children show great interest in these, just as they do in others of their bodily secretions; they like occupying themselves with them and can derive many kinds of pleasure from doing so. Excreta, regarded as parts of a child's own body and as products of his own organism, have a share in the esteem - the narcissistic esteem, as we should call it - with which he regards everything relating to his self. Children are, indeed, proud of their own excretions and make use of them to help in asserting themselves against adults. Under the influence of its upbringing, the child's coprophilic instincts and inclinations gradually succumb to repression; it learns to keep them secret, to be ashamed of them and to feel disgust at their objects. Strictly speaking, however, the disgust never goes so far as to apply to a child's own excretions, but is content with repudiating them when they are the products of other people. The interest which has hitherto been attached to excrement is carried over on to other objects - for instance, from faeces on to money, which is, of course, late in acquiring significance for children. Important constituents in the formation of character are developed, or strengthened, from the repression of coprophilic inclinations.

Psycho-analysis further shows that, to begin with, excremental and sexual instincts are not distinct from each other in children. The divorce between them only occurs later and it remains incomplete. Their original affinity, which is established by the anatomy of the human body, still makes itself felt in many ways in normal adults. Finally, it should not be forgotten that these developments can no more be expected to yield a perfect result than any others. Some portion of the old preferences persist, some part of the coprophilic inclinations continue to operate in later life and are expressed in the neuroses, perversions and bad habits of adults.

Folklore has adopted a quite different method of research, and yet it has reached the same results as psycho-analysis. It shows us how incompletely the repression of coprophilic inclinations has been carried out among various peoples at various times and how closely at other cultural levels the treatment of excretory substances approximates to that practised by children. It also demonstrates the persistent and indeed ineradicable nature of coprophilic interests, by displaying to our astonished gaze the multiplicity of applications - in magical ritual, in tribal customs, in observances of religious cults and in the art of healing - by which the old esteem for human excretions has found new expression. The connection, too, with sexual life seems to be fully preserved.

This expansion of our knowledge clearly involves no risk to our morality. The major part of what is known of the role played by excretions in human life has been brought together in J. G. Bourke's *Scatalogic Rites of All Nations*. To make it accessible to German readers is therefore not only a courageous but also a meritorious undertaking.²