But if the human sense of guilt goes back to the killing of the primal father, that was

after all a case of ‘remorse’. Are we to assume that a conscience and a sense of guilt were

not, as we have presupposed, in existence before the deed? If not, where, in this case, did

the remorse come from? There is no doubt that this case should explain the secret of the

sense of guilt to us and put an end to our difficulties. And I believe it does. This remorse

was the result of the primordial ambivalence of feeling towards the father. His sons hated

him, but they loved him, too. After their hatred had been satisfied by their act of

aggression, their love came to the fore in their remorse for the deed. It set up the superego

by identification with the father; it gave that agency the father’s power, as though as

a punishment for the deed of aggression they had carried out against him, and it created

the restrictions which were intended to prevent a repetition of the deed. And since the

inclination to aggressiveness against the father was repeated in the following generations,

the sense of guilt, too, persisted, and it was reinforced once more by every piece of

aggressiveness that was suppressed and carried over to the super-ego. Now, I think, we

can at last grasp two things perfectly clearly: the part played by love in the origin of

conscience and the fatal inevitability of the sense of guilt. Whether one has killed one’s

father or has abstained from doing so is not really the decisive thing. One is bound to feel

guilty in either case, for the sense of guilt is an expression of the conflict due to

ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death.

This conflict is set going as soon as men are faced with the task of living together. So

long as the community assumes no other form than that of the family, the conflict is

bound to express itself in the Oedipus complex, to establish the conscience and to create

the first sense of guilt. When an attempt is made to widen the community, the same

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conflict is continued in forms which are dependent on the past; and it is strengthened and

results in a further intensification of the sense of guilt. Since civilization obeys an internal

erotic impulsion which causes human beings to unite in a closely-knit group, it can only

achieve this aim through an ever-increasing reinforcement of the sense of guilt. What

began in relation to the father is completed in relation to the group. If civilization is a

necessary course of development from the family to humanity as a whole, then - as a

result of the inborn conflict arising from ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between the

trends of love and death - there is inextricably bound up with it an increase of the sense of

guilt, which will perhaps reach heights that the individual finds hard to tolerate. One is

reminded of the great poet’s moving arraignment of the ‘Heavenly Powers’:-