CHAPTER VI

The Pure and The Impure!

In his study on the ideas of the pure and the impure in Greek thought, Louis Moulinier was anxious not to impose any predetermined system on them, taking care not to interpret them in the light of our own concepts or of those attested among other peoples. According to him, if we restrict ourselves to the Greek data alone, we cannot help but acknowledge the presence of such diversity as to discourage the formulation of any overall theory. In his study he seeks not so much to unify and explain the facts as to trace the hesitant development of a complex, diverse, and even sometimes apparently contradictory thought through the texts, rituals, and terminology of Greek thought, and even through the philosophy of Plato.

Moulinier's is a historical study ranging from the origins of Greek thought down to the end of the fourth century. He tells us that, so far as the origins are concerned, the testimony of Homer and Hesiod is all we have to go on. Neither archaeology nor linguistics can throw any light on the place of defilement and purification in the most ancient forms of religion among the Cretans and the Indo-European groups that settled in Greece during the second millennium. In particular, there is nothing to be learnt from the etymology of the word ἄγας; and according to him there was in fact no real doublet ἄγας-ἅγας that, underlining the link between the pure and the sacred, might have seemed to suggest a strictly religious origin for the concept of defilement. So we
must limit ourselves to an examination of the texts and interpret them without any preconceived ideas on the possible nature of primitive Greek religion. Now, in Homer, he suggests, defilement has a purely material character. It is something dirty, a concrete stain of blood, mud, filth, or sweat. It is washed away with water. Man is pure when he is clean. Dirt is the only form of defilement. But physical cleanliness affects more than simply the body. The stain that makes it dirty blemishes the individual and makes him ugly; it affects his inner being, his social and moral personality. It also debars him from any contact with the gods; before taking part in any religious ritual, a man must wash himself. However, Moulinier appears to see this religious obligation as no more than a mark of courtesy shown to the divine powers. At the same time he notes that Homer makes a distinction between two kinds of washing, one of which is ritual, performed with lustral water, chernips, and has the purpose - according to one scholium – of "making a man resemble the god as much as possible." Could it not be that physical cleanliness is, from the outset, seen as a religious value? The author does not appear to think so. In his view, all efforts directed toward cleanliness essentially reflect a desire for hygiene. As he sees it, Hesiod's testimony supports that of Homer. He believes that the same positivist spirit imbues the long list, in the Works of the many ritual prohibitions so close, in their quaintness, to popular religion. Before approaching the divine, man must shed any physical dirt by washing and cleansing himself. The only difference is that, in Hesiod, this religious cleanliness takes on a more explicitly moral quality as it is the sign of man's obedience to the will of the gods.

Having considered the origins, Moulinier examines the state of ideas in the archaic period. He poses the problem in a familiar way: Does a new conception of defilement develop during the seventh and sixth centuries? This is, in fact, the period in which we find testimony for the ideas of the defilement of the murderer and the impurity of death, both apparently absent in Homer's day. Moulinier draws up a list of the innovations of this period. First,
there are the cathartic rituals: the purificatory sacrifices - especially for murderers, the ritual of the *pharmakos*, the expulsion hom sanctuaries of corpses and of perpetrators of sacrilege; then, figures such as Epimenides who were purifiers; new words such as *euageōs*, *agēs*, *enagēs*, *amiantos* and, finally, the extension of old terms to cover a more moral meaning and apply to more abstract subjects, for example a city can now be described as "defiled." Should we conclude from this body of new practices and ideas that, as Glotz believed, the religious concept of defilement only appeared at this stage, in response to a desire for justice that was not satisfied in this period of crisis? In all honesty Moulinier finds that he cannot accept such a thesis, though it supports his original position. He points out that in the fifth century the Greeks traced the idea of all types of defilement, including that of the murderer, back to the earliest times. He emphasizes, quite correctly, that in the classical period, just as in the time of Homer, defilement continued to be thought of in a very concrete way. It is always a stain that is washed away by the purificatory sacrifice. It is simply that the matter in question has now become more subtle and can henceforth extend to more beings - to corpses, for instance. Besides, the fact that it is not mentioned by Homer cannot be considered as conclusive, for the defilement of the murderer may have taken a long time to be reflected in literature.

From the fifth century onward our information regarding ritual becomes more precise. Moulinier examines the various circumstances in which religious purifications were considered necessary: when a child was born, after a woman had given birth, before a sacrifice to the gods, at a death, and even, in certain cases, when the anniversary of the death came round, and, finally and above all, when murder had been committed. Defilement could affect men, families, cities, holy places, and even the gods themselves. The many types of defilement are matched by many different forms of ritual. There is not just one form of sacrifice but many different cathartic sacrifices. Lustrations employ water but also fire, sulphur, and plants such as the squill bulb or the fig, as
well as incantations, the blood of the victim, and so on. Games and dances may have a purificatory value. Does this multiplicity of ritual forms indicate that the religious sensibility of the Greeks was obsessed with the idea of defilement? Some have thought so but Moulinier disagrees. In the official religion the quest for purity plays only a minor role: It is a means of preparation but never an end in itself. Apart from certain superstitious practices, religion was bent rather on obtaining release from defilement. It did so by imposing none too severe conditions, in some cases a time limit and in others statutory rituals and acts of reparation. Furthermore, defilement does not affect all spheres of life. Woman is never seen as an impure being, not even - according to Moulinier, who is perhaps over-emphatic here - when she is pregnant or at the time of her period. When legitimate, the sexual act is never impure. In sum, it could be said that the multiplicity of rituals reflects a general spirit of reserve and moderation. It is in the case of death, especially violent death and in particular homicide, that the community feels threatened by defilement and manifests a deep fear of contagion. By continuing to have contact with the murderer and by not refusing him access to the sanctuaries, public places, and city territory, each member of the community assumes the defilement of the murder and so the whole country eventually becomes affected and corrupted. In this instance defilement is indeed a miasma, a power of contagion that demands that the city should remain anxiously on its guard.

As well as the rituals, a study of the words used and intentions expressed in them should enable us to define the nature of this dangerous miasma more closely. But here again Moulinier alerts us to the existence of a disconcerting diversity. Defilement connected with murder remains, as in the past, associated with the image of the blood that spurts forth from the wound, staining the arms of the murderer and making him "the man with impure hands." This is not the only relevant image, however. The stain reaches the mind, tas phrenas, as well as the hands and body, and can even be indistinguishable from the personality of the mur-
Orestes declares, not that he has wiped out the stains of defilement in the course of his voyages, but that he has worn himself away in his contact with so many houses and paths. The *miasma*, can always be purified by washing, but it can be "consumed" as well, it can be "lulled" and "dispersed." It is described as a stain but also as a "thing that flies," a "weight," a "sickness," a "trouble," a "wound," a "suffering." Nor is this all. Hitherto, all the many forms taken by the symbolism have related to the state of the murderer. Now, we know that in the fifth century his defilement left him at the frontier of his homeland. As soon as he ceased to tread the soil of his own city, the murderer could consider himself pure once more, as if he were leaving his defilement behind him in the place haunted by his victim. So the defilement no longer appears to be a part of the personality of the murderer, but is associated rather with the dead man and his anger and dangerous thirst for vengeance. It would seem that in order to purify the impurity it was necessary, not to wash away the stain from the guilty party, but rather to appease the rancor of the deceased. And indeed, when the victim, before dying, pardons the murderer, forsaking vengeance, the murderer is "undefiled" by the murder.

There is yet another problem. Whether the defilement is associated with the blood on the hands of the murderer or with the desire for vengeance on the part of the dead man, there is nothing to indicate that it had anything to do with the criminal intention. And yet it has. Quite apart from the distinction made between "voluntary" and "involuntary" murder, in some cases murder does not appear to have involved any impurity at all. Demosthenes tells us that the man who kills in certain conditions remains pure, *katharos* - if he kills by accident in the course of the games, at war when he has mistaken a friend for an enemy, when a man strikes down a traitor, a would-be tyrant or a man who had violated his wife, his mother, his sister, and so on. How is it that, despite the violent death and the bloodshed, there is no defilement in such cases? Demosthenes tells us that it is because the
intention, *dianoia*, was not an evil one and the action conformed with the law. Moulinier even thinks that murders which were committed by pure chance, those that were *atuchemata*, must also have been considered exempt from any stain of defilement. The only murders that had to be purified were those which appeared to imply wrongful intention. Thus pure "bad luck" in a case of homicide could be invoked in favor of the accused to free him from the stain of defilement from the bloodshed. Antiphon's chorus leader says that the important thing is to have one's own conscience clear, to have committed no fault and, if misfortune befalls, for it to be the result of chance, *tuche*, not of injustice, *adikia*.7

But here we are faced with a new paradox. This same bad luck will at other times be interpreted as a proof of defilement; it will be taken to indicate criminal impurity in the individual afflicted with bad luck. Indeed defilement, bad luck, and misfortune can all be seen as aspects of the same thing. The impurity of the murderer becomes confused with the misfortune that it calls down upon him and everything around him. Thus, to prove his innocence, an accused may argue that nothing untoward has ever happened to the ship on which he has been voyaging.8 From this point of view, fatality now condemns him (whereas in the previous instances it had exonerated the murderer from responsibility and from the stain of defilement); it is interpreted as the stain of defilement itself, pursuing the guilty man and dogging his steps.

Thus, a simple and unequivocal concept of defilement is no more conveyed by the terms used than by the rites. It appears as a material stain but also as something invisible. It is both objective and subjective, both external and internal to man. It is also both a cause and consequence; it unleashes a scourge and at the same time is the very scourge that it provokes. It is a part of the murderer, indeed is the murderer; yet it is just as much a part of the victim, it is his vengeful spirit. How is such contradictory thought to be understood? Moulinier does not believe that we should assume that the structures of Greek thought differed from our own. The human mind is always the same. The answer is sim-
ply that one must beware of seeking a logical unity in these representations, which are first and foremost expressions of an obsessive anxiety: Defilement is seen as anything that arouses this anxiety. Nevertheless, Moulinier does go on to make a remark that seems to us to touch on the essential point, although he lays no emphasis on it and does not seize upon its implications. He notes that while defilement is invariably connected with material objects it nevertheless has a "supernatural existence." But if it thus relates to two different levels, representing in the visible world the presence of a "power of the Beyond," should we not recognize in it the character of a religious force? However, not only has Moulinier from the start been anxious to reduce it to the - in our view, narrow - idea of physical dirtiness, but his book as a whole is aimed against any theories that attempt to restore the concept of the defiled, with all its contradictory aspects, within the context of religious thought.

This trend can be clearly seen in his chapter devoted to the relation of defilement to the gods and to what is holy. First, Moulinier criticizes the idea (often repeated since Rohde) that the Greeks regarded all types of defilement as religious powers of the nature of daïmônes, harmful spirits that, through motives of revenge, give rise to impurity and propagate it. Purifying defilement would, if this were the case, be a matter of appeasing their anger or of enlisting the help of the gods to combat them. Moulinier declares that, although one comes across belief in figures of this kind in tragedy, in the shape of the alastopes or aliteroi mentioned by Antiphon in the Tetralogies, this idea is strictly limited to drama. There is no evidence for it in the historians, the comic writers, or the orators. It does not reflect the thought of the people but is rather the view of poets or theorists promoting a new doctrine. On the contrary, the Greeks regarded defilement as inseparable from real material objects such as blood and dirt, or from concrete beings such as the murderer and the corpse. Similarly, purification is effected through physical operations involving washing or burning, not through action directed against spirits.
Moulinier then considers the theory according to which whatever is defiled is, in certain aspects, close to the sacred. And here again his thesis is altogether negative. In his view, the concepts of the sacred and the defiled are quite separate. Against the view of Eugen Fehrle, Moulinier suggests that there is no connection between the two roots \( ag- \) and \( hag- \). Thus, he distinguishes two quite distinct groups of terms; on the one hand, the terms \( enages \) and \( enagizein \) are connected with \( agos \) and the idea of defilement, on the other, the terms \( hagizein \), \( kathagizein \), and \( exagizein \) are connected with \( hagnos \) and \( hagios \) and the concept of the divine, seen as something pure, clean, and holy. He claims that no contact, shift in meaning, or interference exists between the two series of terms any more than there is any semantic connection between \( agos \), meaning "defilement," and \( hagnos-hagios \), denoting the quality of what is divine or what can enter into contact with the divine. He concludes that we are faced with "no ambiguity, not even a primitive one, between the sacred and the impure but, on the contrary, a profound connection linking the sacred, the pure and the moral" 10

But this raises a problem. During the classical period defilement appears to be connected, \textit{par excellence}, with death, and death manifestly has a sacred character. The dead man is both impure and at the same time consecrated. So, as well as the essentially pure sacred there exists a sacred that is "radically impure." Moulinier reveals himself to be aware of the fact which nevertheless, given the standpoint he has adopted, remains impossible to explain. It is not the case that there are two kinds of gods, one devoted to the sacred that is pure, the other to the sacred that is impure that is to say, on the one hand the Olympians, the object of prayers and sacrifices, and on the other, the chthonic powers, the gods of punishment and misfortune, the objects of apotropaic rites. Depending on the time, the circumstances, and the place, the very same gods either preside over defilement or else delight in purity alone. What can all this mean? Moulinier sees it simply as evidence of a contradiction between the ideal and reality where
things sacred and the gods are concerned. The Greek ideal - as revealed by any study of the terms used to denote purity - is that purity is inseparable from justice and from what is sacred. The reality, however, is that the gods, who are related to what is pure but who are "all too human," are themselves fallible. They too may err, hate, and defile themselves, as men do. It does not seem a very pertinent solution, for it is not the case that the gods simply defile themselves as men do; they control defilement, it is they who send it to men. One and the same god, Apollo, is both a healer and cause of sickness, he can both purity and taint. Admittedly, at certain times this double aspect may be seen as a contradiction between the ideal and reality, as for instance when the author of the *Sacred Disease* takes issue with the idea that defilement is sent by the gods; at other times or in other milieux, however, it indicates the presence in the divine of two opposed qualities that are felt to be complementary. At the conclusion of Moulinier's study the problem of the relation between defilement and the gods and the "relatedness" of the impure and the sacred seems to us as unresolved as ever.

Moulinier is certainly to be congratulated on having tried to analyze the pure and the impure respecting the complexity of the data and without yielding to the temptation of theoretical oversimplification. Perhaps, however, he himself has oversimplified in a different way. First, let us consider the question of origins. It would have been interesting to show how a physical state such as cleanliness can assume a religious significance. Furthermore, some indication should have been given of the different levels on which the concepts of dirt and cleanliness, which for us are essentially positivist come into play, and their religious implications should have been underlined. Even in Homer the "dirtiness" of blood is not simply a matter of a material stain; even when it has been washed away with water it is still necessary to purify the taint, *kaka*, with sulphur.12 Equally, if it is no more than dirt besmirching the hands of the murderer, why does it call down
misfortune upon him and upon those around him? Why does it strike
the inhabitants of any house whose threshold he crosses with
stupefaction, *thambos* 13 And, if the term *apolumainesthai* in line 314
of Book I of the *Iliad* simply means the washing of a physical stain of
dirt, and carries no overtones of religious defilement, why did the
Greeks, having completed their ablutions, have to throw the *lumata*,
that is, the polluted water, into the sea? It makes no sense if there is no
more to it than dirty water. It makes more sense, however, if we
remember that, after Agamemnon has sworn an oath calling down
divine vengeance if perjury is committed, the body of the sacrificed
boar, which is charged with a fearful religious power, is likewise cast
into the sea.14 Admittedly, in general Homer demonstrates a very
positivist attitude toward defilement. We must even recognize that
here, as in other domains, there is evidence that he adopts a
deliberately positivist attitude determined to ignore certain aspects of
religious thought. This means that the examples that do convey the
religious implications of defilement acquire even greater significance.
Equally, the rules listed in Hesiod's *Works* appear to us
incomprehensible if we restrict ourselves to a narrow interpretation of
the meaning of dirt. Material defilement is not there a function of a
desire for hygiene but is to be seen in relation to a religious vision of
the world. He tells us that at a feast of the gods one should not detach
with black metal what is dry from what is green on the stem with five
branches: In other words, one should not cut one's nails. But why
should the nails be any dirtier than other parts of the body? Can they
too not be washed? Hesiod also says that near the hearth one should
not reveal parts of the body spattered with semen. This seems to
indicate that semen is dirty. But Moulinier does not think that
women's periods are considered to be dirty. 15 And elsewhere he
refers, quite correctly, to Empedocles and Aristotle, according to
whom this same semen, *gonê*, is composed of whatever is most pure,
in man and in the world. 16 So the problem is not such a simple matter
after all. According to Hesiod, it is also forbidden to wash in water in
which a woman has bathed. Because it is
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dirty? Moulinier's explanation does not even satisfactorily account for the examples that seem most in his favor. For instance, it is forbidden to urinate at the source of rivers and where they meet the sea because, according to Moulinier, urine is dirty. But then it is equally forbidden to bathe there.

Dirt, as understood by Moulinier, does not explain to us what the Greeks called defilement. This is not a simple concept, sufficient unto itself and self-explanatory. Moulinier argues as if dirtiness were a property of certain things, as if it were an absolute quality, evident no matter what the circumstances. He suggests that blood is dirty and dust is dirty. But this is not always so. The blood that circulates in a man's body is not dirty. It is the very life in him. Yet when shed upon the ground or on the hands of the murderer or the corpse of the victim, it dirties and defiles them. Why is this? Is it because, from an entirely positivist point of view, it makes a mark there, covering up the surface? But then a cosmetic, a cream, or even a garment may also cover up the body yet they do not dirty it. And again, when shed on the altar, the blood of a sacrificed animal does not defile but, on the contrary, consecrates it. When blood is seen as something dirty and as a defilement it is because, when shed in certain conditions (especially if it is mingled with dust, to luthron), it represents murder, death, and thus belongs to a domain of reality that is the opposite of life and a threat to the living. Dust and mud on the human body are indeed considered as lumata that must be washed off before addressing the gods, for earth is made to cover up the dead, and when a relative of the dead spreads dust on his head it is a mark of his making contact with the world of death. In contrast to this, the Selli, the priests of Dodona, whose official duties demand that they be in constant contact with the powers of the earth, are ritually forbidden to wash their feet. 17

Thus "physical" dirt, in the sense understood by Homer and Hesiod, can itself only be understood within the framework of religious thought. A "besmirchment" seems to indicate some contact that is contrary to a certain order of the world in that it estab-
lishes communication between things that ought to remain quite distinct from each other. Such a contact is the more dangerous the more powerful the objects concerned. Seen from this angle, Hesiod's text acquires its full significance. Nails should not be cut at the feast of the gods because the nail, detached from the body where the green and the dry meet, is a dead part of the man and, as such, it defiles the divine. The "dirtiness" of the nail consists in its impurity in relation to the gods. semen is not dirty in itself; however, it defiles the fire of the hearth because Hestia, the virginal goddess, must - like Artemis or Athena - keep away from all contact with sex. woman, as such, is not unclean, but for a man it can be dangerous to bathe in the same water as her. Finally, the source and mouth of a river, the points where it emerges from the earth and enters the sea, are particularly dangerous, so man should avoid contact with them. He should treat them with respect, taking care not to urinate in them just as he does not urinate during the night, which is the time of the gods. He does not bathe in them either. in all these examples the physical disgust for whatever is felt to be unclean also reflects the religious fear of any contact that is forbidden.

Moulinier's position also seems to us open to objection from another point of view. in the course of his criticism of Rohde he declares that stains of defilement are not invisible daimones but, on the contrary, very concrete things, just as purifications are entirely material operations. But is the matter really so simple? even if defilement seems generally - although not invariably - to be inseparable from visible objects, it transcends the concrete beings through which it is manifested. There is a supernatural side to it. And the purification aims, through the material operation, to bring about some result on a plane beyond that of its observable effects. When an individual pours lustral water over his hands before taking part in an act of worship he does indeed desire to cleanse himself, but in a wider sense than simply washing his body. in short, these are objects and operations with symbolic significance. Moulinier gives them a narrow interpretation that only con
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siders the concrete beings who embody them as signs, and ignores the meaning they derive, on other levels of thought, from their relation to religious forces as a whole.

Moulinier’s argument against the daemonic concept of defilement is, in our opinion, falsified by his failure to recognize its symbolic character. Taking certain remarks of Rohde quite literally, he imagines the daimôn as a kind of individualized genius quite distinct from the concrete objects that confront man in his experience of the impure. Now, in religious thought, the salient characteristic of this type of supernatural power referred to by the term daimon (with the indefinite plural daimones and the neuter form daimonion) is that, in contrast to the divine figures that are conceived as being external to our world, the daimones are not very clearly delineated; they operate in a diffuse and faceless manner on the lives of men. When portrayed stylistically in tragedy the daimôn can, as we have seen, acquire a more independent form and life of its own, and in other contexts it is more directly connected with the great personal gods and seen as the agent of divine chastisement. However, in general, as Louis Gernet points out, the daimôn is no more than "a situation in human experience in which religious thought finds a numen at work." So it is indeed quite true that defilements are visibly embodied in concrete objects such as a particular blood-stain, criminal, or corpse; but what the concept of a daimôn conveys is the presence of a dangerous supernatural power in all these things insofar as they defile. Besides, we should note that even the personal gods who are conceived as external to the world have to manifest themselves through concrete objects and, in order to enter into contact with men, they too often make use of material things and operations. But even though the Greeks may parade, wash, and clothe a statue and may, when performing rituals, handle objects considered sacred, and even though they may call the thunder Zeus and fire Hephaistos, does this mean that, in these instances, the god is no longer distinguished from material things? Whether concentrated or diffuse, transcendent or immanent, the divine is only ever appre-
hended through its manifestations. Nor, to be sure, is it ever totally identified with whatever manifests its presence. The divine is in it yet always remains some distance beyond it. It is simply that the distance may be greater or less.

We are anxious to stress the symbolic nature of defilement because this makes it easier to understand how, despite the diversity of forms it assumes, it nevertheless retains a unity, never being fully identified with anyone of them. Also, when seen as a religious force, it becomes more closely comparable to other forces of the same type which reflect a similar pattern of thought. To cite Louis Gernet, hubris and atē are at the same time powers of misfortune both external to man and within him, and the misfortune itself, the crime, the origin of crime, its consequences, and its retribution.21 To say that all these aspects of syncretism can be explained in terms of a logic of participation would perhaps be too general a remark to be useful. However, we should like to point out that, in the religious thought of the Greeks, the category of action seems to be defined differently from in our own. Certain actions that run counter to the religious order of the world contain an unpropitious power that quite overwhelms the human agent. The man who commits such deeds is himself caught up in the force that he has unleashed. The action does not so much emanate from the agent as if he were its origin; rather, it overwhelms and envelops him, engulfing him in a power that affects not only him but a whole sequence of actions of greater or less duration that are influenced by him. The effects of the defilement thus cover a field of action in which the constituent parts and moments are all connected. In the case of murder, for example, the miasma is embodied in all the beings or objects that are involved in the crime: the murderer, the weapon, the blood, and the victim. If the crime is of a directly sacrilegious nature, the uncleanness, in the form of a loimos, may even embrace an entire territory, causing the land to be infertile, the herds to be barren, and the children to be born deformed. The objects on which the power of the daimōn works comprise a whole more or less exten-
sive system of human, social, and cosmic relations the order of which has been upset by the sacrilegious disruption. Basically, it is this disorder that the defilement makes manifest through all the various concrete forms it adopts. There is one last point on which we feel obliged to take issue with Moulinier's thesis. He is quite right to point out that there is no such thing as "the sacred" in general, but rather many different forms of the sacred, whether they be pure or impure, which vary according to whether they are linked with the gods, with the city or with the dead. But is he not oversimplifying here too when he denies that there was any ambiguity for the Greeks between what is sacred and what is defiled?

Since the publication of Moulinier's book, an article by Pierre Chantraine and Olivier Masson has examined the problem from a philological point of view and has come to conclusions quite different from those of Moulinier. Against Moulinier, who does not believe in the existence of an ancient hagos, the doublet of agos, these scholars show that the compound words in -agēs cannot be related to agos, meaning defilement. Semantically they must be related to hagios: They express a relation to the awesome domain of the divine. This is evident in the case of euagēs, which clearly has nothing to do with defilement and means that one is in a good state as regards the agos. The same goes for enagēs which has the opposite meaning. The term does not refer to the state of those who are defiled, but to those who are caught up in the agos, who are in the power of the agos. The construction of enagēs plus the genitive of deity does not mean defilement of the deity, but rather, in the power of the deity. In Oedipus Rex (656-7), it is clear that enagēs is the equivalent of enorkos, and to be enorkos is to find oneself in the grip of the power that is immanent in the object by which the oath has been sworn. Similarly, through the curse that he pronounces against himself, Creon gives himself over to a fearful power: From that time on he belongs to it but, by the same token, he is protected against all profane attacks. Finally, in the Suppliers (122), the adjective is given its favorable meaning and
signifies the offerings consecrated to the god. The verb *enagizein* does not mean, as Moulinier supposes, to behave as an *enagēs*, that is to say as a man defiled by the death of a close relative. The word does, it is true, refer to the chthonic sacrifice for the dead and the heroes, but with the meaning indicated by Stengel of *tabu facere*. It is a matter of liquid libations or blood directly offered to the gods of the under world, "poured out into the sacred world." Finally *agos* itself cannot be fully understood unless its meaning of defilement is connected with the wider concept of the sacred that is forbidden, a domain that is dangerous for man. In the words of the oath sworn by the Greeks before Plataea: "Let there be an *agos* for those who perjure themselves." The word denotes the dangerous power that the perjuror must fear. As well as its meaning of sacrilege, the term retains a reflection of its connection with *hagios*: In the *Choephoroi* (155) and in *Antigone* (775), it refers not to a sacrilegious defilement nor, as Moulinier would have it, to the impurity inseparable from the victim of an expiatory sacrifice, but to an action performed in accord with the world of the gods. Hesychius explains the term as follows: *agos, hagnisma, thusia*. More generally, the ambivalence of *agos*, which was appreciated by the ancient Greeks, is attested in the article *agos* of the *Sunagōgē* and in Photius' lexicon, and most notably in *Et. Magnum* (12, 26) and Eustathius, *ad Iliad* (13, 56, 55-60).

If we may now pass on to the terms in the second group, we again find that some of them, in particular *hagizein*, support the argument in favor of the existence of an ancient *hagos* and that, overall, they cannot be isolated from the terms in the first group. The connection between *kathagizein* and *enagizein* is evident: Both denote total consecration, through fire in the case of the former, through libations in the case of the latter. *Exagizein* does not mean to exclude from the sacred, but to deliver up entirely to the sacred, *ek* (ex) indicating that the action is completed. Thus Eustathius can connect *exagistos* with *enagēs* meaning defiled, accursed, wholly in the power of the *agos*. However, the same term can also take on the opposite meaning of very holy, very sacred, as in the case
of the exagista mentioned in Oedipus at Colonus (1526). Here again we find an ambivalence. Finally, the meanings of hagnos and hagios are not fundamentally different from that of agos. They refer to what is forbidden, prohibited in the sacred. This is the same idea as that conveyed by agos but there is one difference: Hagnos and hagios suggest a distance, the barrier that must not be crossed, the mystery that must be respected; agos refers to the same religious power when it takes hold of men and delivers them up to the deity. The first two terms are related rather to that which makes the divine, as such, untouchable; the latter to the power that possesses man when he is in contact with the sacred. So it would appear that there are not two independent series of terms after all, but rather one semantic group embracing polar notions that in general can be expressed in the opposition agos-hagnos, but each of which can also be detected to a greater or lesser degree in each series; and the etymology of this semantic whole is connected with hazonai: the respectful fear that the sacred inspires.

According to this interpretation, the concept of defilement is connected with one of the aspects of the sacred, namely its awful nature. It now becomes easier to understand how it is that some supernatural beings are seen both as defilements and as forms of the sacred. From one point of view in religious thought the "purity" of a divine power is in effect gauged by the number and strictness of the interdictions that protect it. Even as these reinforce the purity they multiply the possibilities of sacrilegious defilement in the god's relations with men. But if this progression is carried to its ultimate conclusion the two opposed poles of the pure and the defiled meet and become one. Ultimately, what is pure is that which is totally forbidden, that is to say, whatever living men must never come into contact with. Thus the sacred that is perfectly pure may be altogether abominable to men, since any contact with it becomes a defilement that delivers him up to the power of its agos. The powers of death are certainly of this type. For man, they represent the defilement par excellence; in themselves they are the "χθόνιοι δαίμονες αγνοί" mentioned by
Aeschylus,25 or the "ἀγνή" Persephone. To enter into direct contact with death is to be so completely overtaken by defilement that, by this very token, one is at the same time liberated - one is still a source of defilement for other living men but, because definitively excluded from the profane life, one is, in fact, "consecrated." The living are defiled by the dead but consecrated by Death. When the defilement is so total that it takes over one's whole being, nothing escaping it, it is no longer defilement but sacredness. In certain cases the logic behind sacrilege is not very different. When Tiresias sees what men are forbidden to see, that is, Pallas naked in her bath, death overtakes his eyes; but this defilement on his face is none other than the religious power that qualifies him to be a diviner: Because he is blind to the light he can see what is invisible. Thus sometimes defilement can be seen as the reverse side to a positive religious quality, the effect of a supernatural power on one whose religious standing is inadequate to receive it. We can now see how it is that defilement may carry a religious force, that the very blood and dust that defile may also consecrate, the cloths stained with menstrual blood and the garments of women who have died in child-birth may be consecrated to the ἥγνη Artemis, and the bones of the dead or of a criminal, of a sacrilegious being, an abominable creature such as Oedipus or the pharmakos, may also be the source of blessings for a whole country. What must be done is to find ways to channel the religious power in the direction of what is good.26

This idea of making use of the sacred by means of a system of rites and rules that govern its intervention in the human world reflects another need in religious thought. If these extreme cases in which man loses himself in the divine represented the only means of entering into contact with it, the religious organization of earthly life would be impossible. This other concept of the sacred as something usable and used appears to be what the term hieros denotes, just as agos refers to the idea of the sacred possessing a man, and hagnos (originally at least) referred to the concept of the sacred that is doubly forbidden, being, on the
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one hand, dangerous to man and, on the other, itself pure from every profane contact.

Moulinier would no doubt counter this interpretation with the objection that he has already made to Williger's thesis: If *agos* refers to the religious fear inspired by the divine, how can it also mean exactly the opposite, namely that with which man can come into contact without danger - in other words, no longer that which is forbidden but that which is permitted? We should note that the word *hosios* undergoes the same semantic evolution: When applied to the mysteries it retains its stronger meaning, but it can also come to mean the profane interests of the city as opposed to those things that are *hiera*. The fact is that, in the Olympian religion, where emphasis is laid essentially upon the regular organization of relations between man and the divine, the concept of what is sacred comes to be, as it were, "extenuated and intellectualized" (*exténuée et intellectualisée*). However, the very way that religious thought operates, and the ambiguity of ideas that it exploits, suggest a number of internal reasons for the way it has evolved. A comparison of the same episode as it appears on the one hand in the *Supplices* and, on the other, in *Oedipus at Colonus* shows how the Greek mind inclines in opposite directions depending upon whether it conceives the *hagneia* in relation to that which is divine and consecrated or in relation to that which is not. At the beginning of the former tragedy the Danaids, having sought sanctuary on a holy hill in front of the communal altar of Argos, consecrate themselves as suppliants to the gods of the city. Seated here, *έν άγνωώ*, they are separated and protected from the world more effectively than if they were surrounded by a wall. But when Oedipus and Antigone take a rest, sitting in the grove consecrated to the Eumenides, overlooking Athens, the holy place (which they are, incidentally, urged to leave) is called *χώρος ουχ άγνος πατείν*. The *hagneia* gave protection to the consecrated suppliants but it repulses Oedipus and threatens him with defilement. Thus the same holy place may be *hagnos* in relation to itself or to consecrated beings, and *ouch hagnos* in relation to the actions of one
who is profane. If we now turn to consider the matter from the standpoint of the other term in the relationship, namely the hagneia in man, the same interplay of relative ideas shows us how it comes to take on a significance that is the opposite of its original meaning of forbidden. For the suppliants, the hagneia is a positive quality conferred upon them by the holiness of the place, and it makes them "untouchable" too. But, for Oedipus, the hagneia seems, on the contrary, to refer to a quite negative quality of abstention: respect shown for a prohibition. Because he oversteps the bounds his sacrilegious defilement sets him apart from other men, just as the purity of the Danaids does: So he too becomes "untouchable." The Coryphaeos refuses to approach him until he has purified his defilement. Consecration and sacrilege are two positive qualities which produce similar effects although their significances are opposite. In contrast, "purity," for Oedipus, would not confer any kind of consecration upon him but would simply make it permissible for him to have dealings with other men: He would be hagnos in relation to them in the sense that there would be no danger of him defiling them. Here the word takes on the meaning of a permitted contact. It is this purely negative quality of hagnos that is dominant in the use of the verb hagneuein, which does not generally have the meaning of "to purify" or "to consecrate," but merely "to hold oneself at a distance from defilement." Characteristically, the expression can be used equally well to convey two opposite emphases, to refer to the sacred that holds itself apart from the defiled and also to the defiled that holds itself apart from the sacred; so that, provided that they respect the ritual prohibitions connected with their particular form of defilement, it can be said of both the murderer and the woman giving birth that each hagneuei.

Moulinier's objection, then, appears not to be decisive. From the point of view we have indicated it does perhaps become possible to understand how it is that, depending upon the context and level of meaning, the relation between the defiled and the sacred may assume very different aspects. Moulinier's study is
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valuable as a historical analysis of the many different concrete forms the pure and the impure may take. We believe, nevertheless, that it was necessary to relocate such a historical perspective within the framework of religious thought. Moulinier does not appear to us to have fully understood that a body of religious thought constitutes a system in which the various concepts are defined and are modified in relation to each other. It is a system of symbols the logic of which may not take exactly the same form as our own.