The logic of retribution is a perceivable configuration of human action and reflection. It becomes a discoverable object of investigation when we ask of others why they 'pay back' their fellow human beings by acting antipathetically, and why, conversely and at other times, they behave with concession, generosity and forbearance. The questions we put to others might just as well be put for our own introspection. Almost invariably, it soon becomes obvious, reasons are given by which we ourselves or other agents explain why expressions of animosity or friendliness have been enacted and uttered. Perhaps we will wonder whether these reasons are ill-founded, or 'properly' stated, or plainly ex post facto 'rationalizations'; perhaps we will doubt whether the reasons would be present in someone's consciousness if we had not pressed them with the question 'why did you do it?' That reasons are given at all, though, and so ubiquitously, is the rationale itself for analyzing a logic or logics of paying back other people, whether negatively or positively. The discourse of requital or retribution itself is almost inevitably ostensive in character; we can usually only listen to communicated reasons for acting (or for that matter to the thoughts which arise in consciousness when we account for our own behaviour). The real reasons for our deeds one way or the other may not be known to us, lying imbedded in the unconscious. But the remarkable phenomenology of retributive logic - the constant attempts to explain, justify and rationalize requital - take up a sizable part of human language and communication. We wage war and make peace, destroy and build, avenge and play host, punish and reward, condemn and commend, vilify and edify, take and give, accuse or apologize, prohibit or permit, and all the while telling or being able to tell why. A vast field of mental constructions seems laid out around us, awaiting the careful traversing of scholars.

The realm of relevant notions looms so much vaster when one considers that it is not only our own or others' personal reasons for requiting which belong to it. A host of events occur around us in daily life which draw responses from us in terms of praise and blame. How prevalent is the human recognition that, after ill-chosen, unwelcome courses of action, some people 'get what they deserve'? The whole world, it seems - extraordinarily enough - holds that significant outcomes in human affairs imply a 'because'. How characteristic is it of human societies that there are reasons why some group runs into trouble, or an individual falls ill and dies, or per contra some great 'blessing' is felt.

Now what we take as explaining our own and others' actions of revenge and concession will often but not always coincide with the reasons we ascribe to the working out of a wider range of events. A typical coinciding arises if one senses that others' misfortunes have resulted from some enemy's efforts to get back at them, efforts we recognize as possibilities for ourselves. But we might not want to ascribe all outcomes of events to human intention; in some of them we might perceive the finger of the divine, or the workings of luck, or the forces of nature. A relatively more reflective and distanced assessment of what is going on may result, yet still the logic of retribution pertains, indeed more decidedly so, because a wider-than-usual repertory of causal possibilities is now brought to bear on the 'appearances' of events. Any repertoire and the assumptions behind it could be criticized as inadequate; a David Hume might object that causes of any kind have been evoked, or a neo-Positivist complain that the best principles of verification are being shelved. Such charges, however, do not have the power to wish away the realities of that great arena of ideas untouched by the strictures of philosophers, a field in which logics of retribution are pandemic because groups and individuals interpret events with aetiologies that are mediated much more through tradition than independent ratiocination.

Retributive Logic as Culturo-Religious Product in Traditional Societies

Upon reflection, and despite both personal temperament and the particular aspects of each context and pretext, reasons attendant upon acts of requital can be viewed as the prod-
ucts of culture. Not only the language used, but also the characteristics of the reaction, the relative measures to which emotion can join with justificatory appeals, and especially the ways given reasons for acting are related to group expectations about how to respond to types of actions, are all heavily affected by cultural preconditioning. Around the globe, socialization and education in the broadest sense define the relative behavioural limits and foster the recognizable outlooks of peoples, and with these the student may begin differentiating one profile or eidos of retributive logic from another. In most traditional small-scale or tribal societies, for instance, revenge raiding and warfare will be highly typical, and with group pitted against group praise will fall on those who (sometimes even indiscriminately) kill one or a few of the enemy on opportune occasions; as it will on those who show hospitality and give lavishly to friends and allies. The logic involved is characteristically connected with prestige; in small-scale survivalist and warrior societies prestige accrues to those who give their all both in bravery and in economic activity on behalf of their group. The pursuit of revenge is usually rooted in the need to assuage the loss of blood, while reciprocity is grounded in a complex of obligations that a 'security circle' is committed to uphold.

A typical possession of such band, tribal or village societies is a range of prohibitions instilled for group security's sake through the direst threats, with 'tabu-breakages' often bringing into play a regimen of severe physical punishments. This is the subject of legal anthropology. Accompanying the logic and calculation behind acts of requital and jural sanctions is also that surprisingly universal if neglected manifestation of reflective thought in the so-called 'primitive world': a body of consensus explanations or explanatory principles by which significant events - especially trouble, sickness and death, and the blessings which are their opposites - are placed in the spirit-influenced scheme of things. A death by disease which a secular-minded Westerner might otherwise put down to germs is ascribed to the manipulations and nocturnal mysteries of sorcery; or to the potency of a father's, perhaps a mother-in-law's curse; or to some 'place deity' in whose domain the victim has unfortunately trespassed; or to ghosts or gods who have punished an evil deed that human arbitrators have not been able to uncover; or to pollution through coming into contact with women's blood or a corpse; and so on. In the operational modes of this Volkslogik, the desperation and flourishing of the whole community, and sharp environmental shifts - with the devastations of droughts and earthquakes or the surprising bounty of earth's best yields - can be attributed to appropriate agencies and spiritual forces in the webbing of cosmic give-and-take. Honouring the traditions will be seen to bring benison, while defects, ritual errors, vulnerability or incaution make for disaster; and the wise and good are those who see the difference and discern what goes on in the changing circumstances of life.

There are many complexities to address in the cross-cultural study of retributive logic in 'primal' societies - far too many to enumerate here. In that majority of cultures that prize warriorhood, the ability of young braves to face ordeals will mark their manhood, and it should not come as a surprise that the custodial group at their initiations will appear to punish them through the severest of tests - by scarification, circumcision, dehydration and the like. The expectations of one's security circle (lineage, clan, tribe) will heavily determine one's sense of acting well and being worthy. So-called 'shame culture' predominates in the very basic sense that kin- and peer-group pressures inevitably befall those failing to fulfill their obligations in small-scale political economies. "Bad feeling" is what is brought into social relationships by one's wrongdoing or mistakes; it is not so obviously an inward sense of wrongdoing, although one ought not to eschew talk of 'guilt' being felt by tabu-breakers in the anthropological analysis of any society. 'Life-codes' instilled into the members of these traditional societies condition both the logic of behaviour and explanation. The social phenomena resulting may be far from uniform - the gentle Semai will quickly cover wrongs with material compensations and without violence; the Amerindian Ute brave will commit gruesome suicide for what seems to others a minor point of honour - yet the calculations of appropriate recompense constantly proceed. They loom as a symbiosis of "stone age economics", the "binary opposites" of la pensee sauvage and the human "need for meaning". The tribal language of war, barter and belief run together to indicate both why one should act and what are the factors behind change.

In tribal and small-scale societies, it will now be obvious, retributive logic is an expression of religion, insofar as the term 'religion' denotes 'total ways of life' which are also in effect 'lived cultures'. Put more precisely, the logic of retribution, as a structuring principle