

But we have just seen that in the Australian circumcision ceremonies the bull-roarer signifies the presence of the superhuman Being who performs the operation. And since circumcision is equivalent to a mystical death, the novice is believed to be killed by this Superhuman Being. The structure of these masters of initiation quite clearly shows that they no longer belong to the class of the Supreme Sky Beings of southeastern Australia; they are, moreover, regarded as either sons or servants of the Supreme Beings, or as the mythical Ancestors of the tribes, sometimes appearing in animal form. We see, then, that in Australia the initiatory rite of circumcision has its place in a mythology that is more complex, more dramatic, and presumably more recent than the mythologies of the forms of initiation in which there is no circumcision. Particularly striking is the terrifying nature of these masters of initiation, who manifest their presence by the sound of the bull-roarers. A similar situation is found outside of Australia: the Divine Beings who play a part in initiation ceremonies are usually imagined in the form of beasts of prey—lions and leopards (initiatory animals par excellence) in Africa, jaguars in South America, crocodiles and marine monsters in Oceania. From the historico-cultural point of view, the connection between the animal masters of initiation and the bull-roarer would prove that this type of initiation is the creation of the archaic hunter culture.<sup>15</sup> This comes out quite clearly in African initiation ceremonies; here too circumcision is equivalent to death, and the operators are dressed in lion skins and leopard skins; they incarnate the divinities in animal form who in mythical times first performed initiatory murder. The operators wear the claws of beasts of prey and their knives are barbed. They attack the novices' genital organs, which shows that the intention is to kill them. The act of circumcision symbolizes the destruction of the genital organs by the animal master of the initiation. The operators are sometimes called lions and circumcision is expressed by the verb "to kill." But soon afterward the novices are themselves dressed in leopard or lion skins; that is, they assimilate the divine essence of the initiatory animal and hence are restored to life in it.<sup>16</sup>

From this pattern of African initiation by circumcision, certain elements emerge which we shall do well to note and remember. First, the masters of initiation are divinities in animal form, which supports the hypothesis that, structurally, the ritual belongs to an archaic hunter culture. Second, the divine beasts of prey are incar-