

**Professor Juliet Mitchell**

Professor Juliet Mitchell, Fellow of the British Academy, is currently an Emeritus Leverhulme Fellow. She is also a Professor in the Ph.D. program in Theoretical Psychoanalysis, which she established at University College London; Emeritus Professor at the University of Cambridge; Founder-Director of the Centre for Gender Studies, Cambridge; and Fellow of the British Psychoanalytical Society and the International Psychoanalytic Association.

Among her many books and articles are "Women: "The Longest Revolution" (1966), *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974/2000), *Mad Men and Medusas* (2000), *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (2003), and "The Law of the Mother: Sibling Trauma and the Brotherhood of War" (2013).

**Siblings and the Psycho-social.**

In *Totem and Taboo* (1913) Freud gives brothers a distinct and key role in his story of humankind's pre-history. Using the proposition of a 'sibling trauma' (Mitchell 2000) and the 'Law of the Mother'(Mitchell 2003) the paper explores the possibility of understanding something of the psychosocial by analysing the horizontal axis which starts with siblings as interactive with, but is also autonomous in relation to the vertical axis of descent.

Siblings have been important for group analysis both as practice and theory. I shall use siblings to challenge their absence in the theory of individual practice to suggest that this absence is partly responsible for the failure of individual work to develop a social dimension. Reciprocally, the failure of individual work to develop a social dimension, in part, accounts for the absence of siblings in the theory and metapsychology of its practice.

The story Freud constructed, goes: having ganged up to kill the tyrannical 'Ur' father the brothers realized that they must make a *contract* among themselves: not to kill each other and, through a taboo on incest with mothers and sisters, to share out the women equably among themselves. This fraternal alliance is considered to be the first social relationship.

The near-exclusive model for the social adopted by psychoanalysis is not a contract but the family with a movement from the small biological unit of parents and children out to the large social unit. Doubtless this movement of the family becoming society is crucial, but it is not all there is. When the toddler is traumatised by having its identity as the 'baby' stolen by the new sibling baby (the sibling trauma and Winnicott's 'trauma of separation' are the same event) it loves the baby 'as itself' and hates it as someone different. Focussing here on the hatred, the mother's law prohibits sibling murder. Her threatened punishment as the withdrawal of love is a major act of 'separation': the toddler must become a child interacting with other children outside the family.

The mother's law thus institutes a move out beyond herself, beyond the family directly into the formation of society. This is a construction of the psychosocial which is extrinsic to the family.