PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

OF

MYTH & FOLK-LORE

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Psychological Aspects of Myth and Folk-Lore.

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C O N T E N T S

Foreword.

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"All of us are born into a set of traditional
institutions and social conventions that are accepted not only
as natural but as the only conceivable response to social needs.
Departures from our standards in foreigners bear in our biased
view the stamp of inferiority. Against this purblind provincialism
there is no better antidote than the systematic study of alien
civilizations."

R. H. Lowie: "Primitive Society".

PART I.

Introductory and Historical.

I

The most superficial survey of the literature on mythology
and folk-lore shows that there is no monotony in the multitude of
opinions. In all times and in all places men have tried to discover
why the lore of their country, both classic and popular, is interwoven
with so many references to ancient gods and goddesses; to strange events,
deeds, and beings; or to natural happenings influenced by unnatural
agencies.

Stories that treat of divinities once worshipped by Greek,
Roman, Norse, or German forefathers are classic myths. Tales told by
contemporary savages are living myths. Fragments, or survivals of old
beliefs or customs, found among uneducated people in civilized countries,
are called folk-lore.

There is well-marked distinction between myth and folk-lore
which is not always kept clearly in mind.

Myth belongs to the most primitive stage of human thought and
action. It may be concerned with the deeds of a god or supernatural
being, it may tell about some event of lasting influence, or it may be
a story about natural phenomena. In relating such occurrences myth
may offer a solution of some problem, but myth is not necessarily
etiological. It may codify belief or scientific interest, but it is not
intellectual explanation.

Folk-lore is myth as it has been modified by succeeding generations. It becomes part of the life of the people independently of its primary form and object, and perhaps in a different sense. This does not mean that folk-lore contains nothing but the remnants of a once prevalent system of mythology; it may embody elements of historical truth. When folk-lore stands for the oral tradition of the unlettered peasantry it means the lore of the folk, not about them, and is a form of primitive culture.

In other words, mythology is the study of a primitive or early form of belief while it was a living faith. Folk-lore is the study of the survival of early belief, custom, narrative, and art, still practised.

A great many facts of comparative mythology are found in folk-lore in solution, and a great many facts of folk-lore are found in mythology crystallized. The facts are essentially the same in both cases, but each study deals with them at different stages.

Many writers believe that folk-lore is a survival of myth, that there is no line of demarcation between the two. A story or custom long shrouded in the mists of superstition may throw a light upon ancient myth, but certainly not all folk-tales are merely broken-down myths. The two should not be regarded as synonymous although each touches the other at many points.

The word "folk-lore" has been used to indicate more than the peasant culture of any one country. Sir James Frazer held that in its broadest sense the term may be said to embrace the whole body of a peoples' traditionary beliefs and customs, so far as these appear to be due to the

collected action of the multitude, and cannot be traced to the individual influence of great men.

Since the word also stands for the science which deals with the study of survivals, it involves the investigation of the similar beliefs and customs of races on lower planes of culture. When folk-lore concerns itself more with contemporary savage or primitive races than with the popular superstitions of white men, it is dealing with a living faith rather than a custom still practiced, and it is once more worthy to be called myth.

The word "primitive" is unfortunate since it has been used so loosely, and in so many connections. It is synonymous with early, ancient, simple, rude, original, primary; and in a biological connection it means, "appearing in the earliest, or very early stage of growth".

In one sense contemporary savages are not primitive. They are not original, ancient, or primary. They have a long past behind them, how long cannot be said. But, according to another shade of meaning, that the word possesses, they are "primitive" in comparison with "civilized" standards, because they are rude and simple. In that sense they are discussed here.

The different theories of myth and folk-lore, as set forth in the following pages, have for convenience been labelled: "Philological", "Anthropological", and "Psychological". The justification for such an arrangement is that all interpretations of myth, from the earliest to the latest, have been formed in accordance with the ideas prevalent at the time of the interpreters. Writers' ideas on the subject have always been biased by the general nature of their opinions. The first three parts of this outline deal with the theories of those writers who did not

approach the problem of mythology in a strictly psychological attitude.
Their contributions are valuable chiefly because of the enormous amount
of data collected, unreliable as this often may be. The philologists
studied classic myths only. The folk-lore of contemporary savages
could lend no support to their particular theory. The early anthro-
pologists obtained their illustrations of myth and folk-lore principally
from the stories written down by missionaries or brought back by traders.

Information from such sources was often inaccurate. Lack of
scientific training was the cause of much distortion of detail. Personal
opinions and "civilized" ideas were often read into savage tales and
customs.

The psychological aspect represents the most recent view of the
subject. Such men as Dr. Rivers who worked in Australia among the
Torres Strait Islanders; and Franz Boas who has done research in the
culture of North American Indians; have obtained their information by
careful observation. They have drawn their conclusions very thoughtfully,
and, for the most part, show no particular eagerness to support one theory
to the exclusion of all others.

It is of the utmost importance to remember that many different
factors contribute to mythological thinking and that it is absurd to push
any one explanation to extremes in an attempt to make it account for all
kinds of myths.

Theories which actually contain many elements of truth have lost
much of their efficacy when they have been exploited to such an extent
that they have offered explanations for all phenomena of mythology and
folk-lore.

II

The first critic of myth was Xenophanes of Colophon, a Greek exile who lived in Italy about 500 B.C. As a theologian he protested against polytheism, saying that gods did not possess human appearances or attributes. He refused to accept the idea of man-like deities as they appeared in the Greek pantheon.

Later writers advocated an allegorical rather than a literal reading of myth. Among the ancients, Theagenes of Rhegium suggested this method, saying that the savage had taken his myths for granted, but that later, when the myths were handed down, his more cultured descendants were repelled, and changed them according to their own ideas. As civilization developed, many once barbarous tales passed through various stages of refinement, as priests and poets attempted to explain away savage notions. When the Egyptians grew ashamed of the fact that so many of their gods were animal in form, they invented an explanation of this by saying that the gods had assumed these shapes when in danger. The battle of the gods was considered unbecoming, and was interpreted as a battle of the elements.

The heathen apologists were thus driven in the early ages of Christianity to various methods of explaining away the myths of their discredited religions - myths which had been handed down as sacred, but of which they were now ashamed. Therefore they rationalized the sacred narratives into allegory and believed themselves justified in doing so,

since the stories had not been completely destroyed.

When Christianity became more powerful the gods and goddesses of antiquity were regarded as beings of diabolical origin, or at any rate as pagans, and the Christian writers naturally criticised the heathen religion on the side of myths, where it was most vulnerable. Eusebius first attacked the Egyptian interpretation of their bestial and semi-bestial gods. He showed also that Greek myth was only a veneered reproduction of the faith of Egypt. He saw that the various interpretations destroyed each other, for example, one system regarded Zeus as fire and air; another thought he represented higher reason. Again, many different gods could represent the sun. The same criticism was applied much later to the philological interpretation.

Eusebius postulated the evolution of ideas, from the savage to the barbarous, and thence to the civilized stage. "Since Eusebius had no sentimental reason for wishing to suppose that the origin of the impurities of myth was itself pure, he found his way to the very theory of the irrational element in mythology which is offered by the anthropologists." (1)

Still later, it was believed that myth was history in disguise. This is called the Historical or Euhemeristic method, after its founder Euhemerus. He was regarded as an atheist by most of the ancients because his explanation assumed that the gods were once living men, but that the mists of time, and later of fantasy, had so magnified and distorted their figures as to make them appear divine. Myths of the gods would then be exaggerated adventures of historic individuals; and supernatural events

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(1) A. Lang: Myth, Ritual and Religion. P. 19.

would be distortions of natural, but wonderful, occurrences. Jupiter, for example, had been glorified, then deified, then given many characteristics and adventures appropriate to his exalted condition.

This theory was, strangely enough, revived in a new form by Herbert Spencer. It is probable that the method explained the origin and growth of some myths, but it accounted for the reasonable rather than the senseless element.

Nearly two thousand years after Theagenes, Lord Bacon treated myths as "elegant and instructive fables". He tried to interpret the classic myths of Greece as moral allegories. Thus Cronus, who devoured his own children, would be identified with the power that the Greeks called Chronos (Time) which could truly be said to devour whatever it brought into existence. The story of Memnon showed what might happen to any rash young man of promise.

Other scholars traced myth to Biblical sources. They thought that all mythological legends were derived from the Scriptures although the real facts were disguised, and altered. According to them, Hercules was another name for Samson; and the dragon who kept the golden apples of Hesperides was the serpent who beguiled Eve. While many such coincidences can be found, many myths antedate the scriptural narratives of which they were said to be copies, and many more originated among people who had no knowledge of the Hebrew Bible.

About 1760 the first step was taken in the modern direction when it was pointed out by De Brosses that animal worship in ancient Egypt was much the same practice as that existing among contemporary savages. In this he followed the path which Eusebius had indicated. It was also

shown by Lafitu, a Jesuit missionary among North American Indians, that the savage elements in the stories of these people was basically the same as that surviving in Greek myth.

The Grimm brothers in Germany were the pioneers of the modern scientific treatment of folk-lore. They differed from their predecessors in regarding myth not as the result of conscious speculation, but of mythopoeic impulse. But both they and their successors, pressed philological evidence too far.

At the beginning of his career W. Mannhardt, the fore-runner of the anthropological school of folk-lore, shared in this mistake, and Max Muller claimed him as a supporter of the philological view. Mannhardt later renounced such opinions and made folk-custom and belief his basis of mythological thought. He began to collect and compare the superstitions of the peasantry, and, although he never completed his task, many results of his labours were utilized by Frazer, and are found in "The Golden Bough".

Truly scientific treatment of myth and folk-lore began with the publication of K. Muller's book in 1825. He saw that the true laws underlying mythic science were to be approached by many ways rather than by only one; that the explanation of myth must be the explanation of its origin. He saw also that knowledge of the real life of primitive times was necessary for full comprehension, since nature myth might so easily become sophisticated by philosophy and poetry.

This is the starting point of the theories that are discussed in the following pages.

P A R T 2

The Philological Aspect.

I

Although the philological method of interpretation of myth has no adherents to-day, it was at one time held in such high favour that instead of being classed as historical it must here be given particular consideration; also, the disease of language theory on which the philological interpretation depends, has a more important psychological aspect than have the historical theories which were discussed in the preceding chapter.

The system of this school of mythic interpretation rested chiefly on a comparison between the Sanskrit names in the Vedas, or ancient Hindu Scriptures, and the names in Greek, German, Slavonic, and other Aryan myths. The value of this comparison depended in turn, on the assumption that the development of thought followed the same course in all countries and with all peoples. The philologists of the period engaged in constant warfare with Darwin and his followers, but the two parties were agreed on this point. The difference was that while the early anthropologists said that language was only one way, and an unimportant one, by which this development could be traced, the philologists said it was the key, and the only one, to the study of the development of thought and therefore of humanity.

Because the poems of the Veda were apparently of independent origin and not due to the intermixture of ideas with those of other races, they were believed to contain the key to the subsequent development of India, of kindred races, and of the whole domain of reason.

The anthropologists agreed that there was a common cause of development throughout the species, but they traced this development in social organization, religion, art, and in many forms of culture besides language.

To do this was, according to the students of language, to overlook man's real characteristics, reason and speech, for less important external causes. They admitted that reason was involved in religion, art, and social organization, but they maintained that the functions of reason were performed by concept and that these could not be formed without the aid of words. They said, in short, that the history of language was the history of human reason, and that since myths were a form of thought, the inexplicablee elements of myth must be caused by a disease of language.

For philologists then, the problem - "What are myths, and how do they begin?" - reduced itself to the question - "What is language, since myths are caused by language diseased?"

II

Outstanding among philologists was the figure of Max Muller, who, at the age of twenty-three, went to England to examine the Sanskrit manuscripts in the East India House at London, and in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. He was later commissioned to edit the Rig-Veda at the expense

of the East India Company.   While engaged in this task he

published treatises on a variety of philological topics which did more

to awaken in England a taste for the science of language in its modern

sense than the labors of any other single scholar.

In all controversies Müller's battle cry was, "No reason

without speech, no speech without reason."   Without language, thought,

and therefore myth, is impossible.   But he did not answer the question,

"What is language?"   He believed that philology had done its work when

it had reduced this problem to the question, "What is the origin of roots?"

or, "How do mere cries become phonetic types?"   He said that phonetic

cries become roots of the words which formed a language but he did not

say how the cries themselves originated.

Muller thought that the first period of language which the

antiquarians could reach was the Rhematic Period, a time when expressions

were coined for the most necessary ideas; and that later, in the Dialectic

Period, two families of languages left this stage and received their own

peculiar form which is still found in all the dialects of the Semitic

and Aryan speech.   After this period of the origin of language and the

formation of grammar, but before the time of any political society,

national literature or laws, there came what Muller called an Eocene or

Mythological Age.   During this era man's thoughts must have been 'savage

and senseless* since the myths handed down from that time left 'ugly scars'

on the history of gods and heroes.

Unfortunately the existence of this mythological age could not

be reconciled with Muller's faith in the regular and consistent progress

of human intellect through all ages and in all countries.   The story of

Cronus and Uranus was said to be 'unworthy of the ancestors of

Homer'. This caused Muller to inquire anxiously whether there had

been a period of insanity prevalent both in India and Iceland and in

all regions between. He reached the conclusion that "there was an

age which produced these myths, the fact is there and we must explain

it or admit that during the growth of the human mind there were some

violent resolutions arising from some unknown cause." (1)

From a comparison of sets of paradigms Muller drew the

conclusion that there was an ancient language spoken by a small tribe

in Asia (it was not preserved because there was no literature) that

was the mother of such Aryan dialects as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and

Celtic. By finding words in different languages which show a relation-

ship to each other and to an earlier or parent word, it might be possible

to discover when that earlier word was first used, and, consequently,

when the idea it carried was discovered, or at least when it was

commonly known. Muller admitted that this information would not be

very complete, but he considered that it would be helpful in learning

something about the intellectual or cultural state of the people who

had known the ancient language.

This point may be illustrated by showing how a word can be

traced to its root meaning. If the root is one of the eight hundred

that Muller recognized as earliest in the Sanskrit language, it is

then proved that the idea conveyed by the word was common at an early

date. For example, the word 'father' means "to protect, support or

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(1) Max Muller: Comparative Mythology.

nourish". The fact that this word was coined at a very early period shows that the father then recognized the offspring of his wife as his own, for thus only had he the right to claim the title which meant protector. Out of the many possible names by which the idea of father could have been expressed, only one was admitted to all the Aryan dialects, showing that there must have been a traditional usage in language before the separation of the Aryan family occurred. The existence of many words, compounds of the root meaning cattle, proved that the people who formed these words must have led a half nomadic, half pastoral existence. Muller thought that if the language of a maritime people were examined, ships and water would form part of many words which would afterwards take a more general meaning; or that language reflected the occupation and manners of the people using it.

Some light was thought to be thrown on the early organization of the Aryan family life when it was found that there was a recognized word for widow, which seemed to prove that at that period the wife was not doomed to die with her husband.

In Sanskrit the word for king came from a compound which meant literally "lord of the people". The word for father meant originally "strong", so that what the father was in the house, namely the lord, or strong protector, the king was among his people, and there was apparently at that early period, a well organized family life which was even beginning to be absorbed by the state.

The existence of such words in many different Aryan dialects seemed to indicate that these words were in use before the Aryan

separation, and that the idea expressed by the word must have been
generally known and accepted at that time.

The race of men who coined such words could not have been
a race of savages, nomads, and hunters, and consequently they could
not have invented barbarously savage myths.   The fact that the words
for warfare differ in each of the Aryan dialects seemed to prove that
the tribes were peaceful until after the separation.   This became
more of a certainty when Muller found that words connected with the
arts of peace, names for cooking and baking, for clothes and sewing,
were the same in the different dialects.   Again, it is asserted
that the ancestors of the Aryan race did not know the sea, and it is
true that the word for sea is different in the various Aryan languages.

Muller believed that this earliest period of the race, previous
to any national separation, was what he called the Mythopoeic Period, an
age during which every object was given a name expressing one out of
many attributes which seemed to be characteristic.   Each word then,
became in a certain sense myth, since it told its own story.

It is no easy matter to accept a theory founded on the
assumption that the earliest men could assign names to objects in the
proper classificatory manner.   Muller said, "The having of general
ideas is what distinguishes man and brutes: e.g. The ability, after
seeing chalk, snow and milk, to comprehend these several perceptions
under the general idea of white." (1)   Thus subsumption of concepts
was thought by philologists to be the primary form of reasoning, but
it has been claimed by later writers that many other relations, such

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(1) Max Muller: The Science of Thought.

such as categories of number; the distinction between subject and object; and that between the sexes; had an earlier existence.

By assuming subsumption of concepts to be the primary form of thought, philologists found that their theory of roots worked in very neatly. By this theory language was held to have started with a few simple forms and to have reached its present complexity through addition of the various endings of declension and conjugation. It implied on accompanying evolution of thought from primary simple forms by increasing differentiation to its present complex state. On the contrary, it is equally probable that development of language has been from early, manifold, and complex forms of thought and speech, through gradual generalization and formation of concepts, to the present more or less simplified and logical process.

The rest of Muller's theory follows when it is taken for granted that every word had a termination expressive of gender, and so of sex. This is why it was impossible for the early peoples to speak of morning or evening, spring or summer, without giving them a sexual character. Nature, for example, was not an abstract idea, but a very definite person endowed with power more than human. Unfortunately the language of the mythopoeic age was heavy and unwieldy and many of the words expressed more than they should have said. This is one explanation advanced for much of the strangeness of mythological language. The people of this age were absolutely incapable of abstract ideas, and could explain the phenomena of nature only in language of their own experience. The sunset seemed to be the sun growing old and dying: sunrise was the night giving birth to a brilliant child.

These fancies were mythical but they were not yet myth, for the essential character of a true myth was that it should no longer be intelligible by a reference to the spoken language.

The problem for the philologists was to discover how these mythological concepts, these words that were the product of the mythopoeic age of thought, lost their expressiveness and fell victims of a disease of language, and so became true myths.

Muller overcame this difficulty by explaining that the majority of names expressed originally only the most characteristic quality of an object, and although a word might have had several meanings, or variations of meaning, yet, if one idea predominated, the word usually came to mean only what was conveyed by that leading idea. In the English language there are many examples of such a process. The word "knave" meant originally "the cook's boy who washes the dishes", but since some servants are rascals, the emphasis on that part of the idea gave the present meaning of rascality to the word. Old, or first, words were based on metaphors and when these figures of speech were forgotten many of the words lost their root meaning. A new meaning became attached to the word and it was understood directly in its secondary sense. The metaphor of the rainbow of the eye has faded until the word "iris" has come to mean: "the coloured part of the eye", and not: "the goddess of the rainbow". Since the Sun with its golden rays was called "Golden handed", Apollo also was soon called golden handed, and a tale sprang up telling how Indra lost

his hand and had it replaced by one of gold.

The theory was that names could not become mythological until their radical meaning had been obscured and forgotten in the language to which they belonged. Sanskrit was the eldest among primitive languages and held somewhat the same position among them as Latin holds among European languages to-day. If a Latin or Greek word could be traced to its corresponding form in Sanskrit its root meaning usually could be determined.

After the separation of the Aryan race, no language was richer, and no mythology more varied than that of the Greeks. An explanation of the myth of Endymion and Selene will serve to illustrate Muller's method of mythic interpretation by discovering the root meanings of words.

Several of the characters in this tale have names intelligible in Greek and because of this fact Muller considered it possible to explain the rest of the myth.

"We find that Endymion is the son of Zeus, but also the "son of the king of Elis (called Zeus). This localizes the "myth; we know that Elis is its birthplace, and that, according "to Greek custom, the reigning race of Elis derived its origin "from Zeus. Selene (Diana) or Asterodia is translated " 'wanderer among the stars', Endymion is one of the names "for the setting or dying sun. But this original meaning "of the word Endymion being once forgotten, what was told at "first of the setting sun was now told of a name, which, in

"order to have only meaning, had to be changed into that

"of a god or a hero. In the ancient poetical and proverbial

"language of Elis people supposedly said: 'Selene embraces

"Endymion', instead of: 'The sun is setting and the moon is

"rising'; or : "Selene kisses Endymion into sleep', instead of:

" 'It is night'. These expressions remained long after their

"meaning had ceased to be understood. Then a story arose by

"common consent, and without personal effort, that Endymion must

"have been a young lad, loved by a maiden Selene. These stories,

"in the hands of a popular poet, became mythological facts

"repeated by later poets. In the same way many myths have been

"transferred to real persons by a mere similarity of the name,

"although it must be admitted that there is no historical

"evidence that there ever was a Prince of Elis called Endymion". (1)

Thus, one word gave the basis of a legend, and later became a
curiosity for the antiquarian whose chief sources, the ancient chroniclers
took mythology for history and used it only as much as they needed for
their purpose. Because of this, the mythologist always had to dis-
criminate before he could reduce each myth to its primary form,
determining its locality and age by the character of its workmanship.

Max Muller believed that when this was done the mythologists
might find traces of organic thought in the relics. From a study
of the Endymion myth he concluded that the story arose, and was understood

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(1) Max Muller: Comparative Mythology.

at the time when the people of Elis used the old expression of the
Moon (Selene) rising under the cover of night (or in the caves of
Latmos, the mountain of Oblivion) to admire the beauty of the
setting Sun (Endymion).

It is interesting to compare how Tylor and Spencer agreed
with each other and opposed Muller on this point. Spencer said:

"Philological proofs are untrustworthy unless supplemented
"by psychological proofs. Not to study the phenomena of mind
"by immediate observation, but to study them mediately through
"the phenomena of language is necessarily to introduce additional
"sources of error. The interpretation of evolving thought is
"likely enough to be mistaken, but the liability to mistake is
"much greater in the interpretation of evolving language.
"Linguistic development should be contemplated through mental
"development, and not vice versa as Max Muller does". (1)

Tylor's views seem to be almost a continuation of Spencer's:

"Deep as language lies in our mental life, the comparison
"of object with object and action with action lies yet deeper....
"Language, no doubt, has had a great share in the formation of
"myth; it has individualized such words as winter, summer and
"cold, and has given the myth makers the chance of imagining
"these thoughts as personal beings. But I am inclined to
"think that the mythology of the lower races rests especially
"on a basis of real and sensible analogy, and that the great
"expansion of verbal metaphor into myth, belongs to more

(1) Principles of Sociology. Appendix B.

"advanced periods of civilization.   In a word, I take material
"myth to be the primary, and verbal myth to be the secondary
"formation". (2)

Most philologists had a favourite theory of the ultimate
source in natural phenomena of all Aryan mythology.   The Rev. Sir
G.W.Cox insisted on the solar character of all myths, and Max Muller
thought the dawn was "one of the richest sources of Aryan Myth".   So
convinced of this was/that he believed most legends referring to the
strife between winter and summer, the return of spring, or the revival
of nature, were but variations of older tales of the strife between
night and day, the ultimate return of the morn, and the revival of
the whole world.   The stories of solar heroes fighting through a
thunder storm against the powers of darkness, were supposed to come
from the same source.   Balder, Adonis, Achilles, and other gods,
young, beautiful and heroic, all died in the fullness of youth, at the
end of a summer season.   Their fate was inevitable.   Muller insisted
that the tragedy of nature was the beginning of all such stories; the
Sun forsook the Dawn, and died in his youthful vigor at the end of
each day.

Muller held that early man regarded with awe such sights as
the rising sun, and similar occurrences of nature; that he thought of
the sun and stars as free beings chained for a time in servitude; and
that from regarding the sun year after year as a being that did not
change, primitive peoples obtained the idea of immortality.   This
view has been rejected by later writers who are of the opinion that

ancient or primitive man wondered no more about, and felt no more awe
for the phenomena of nature than do ignorant and uneducated people to-day.
It is probable that instead of theorizing, the savage simply accepts facts.
The tendency of the uninstructed, or partly instructed mind to accept
conclusions without question or criticism is shown by the modern layman
who attributes certain effects to electricity although he may not have
any idea of what is implied by the term.

In short, Muller's theory was that mythology was only a dialect
or ancient form of language, chiefly concerned with nature, although it
was applicable to all things. "The blood that runs through all the
ancient poetry is the same blood, it is the ancient mythical speech. The
atmosphere in which the early poetry of the Aryans grew up was mythological,
it was impregnated by something that could not be resisted by those who
breathed it." (1)

Thus Muller tried to learn the original meaning of the names of
gods by the method of comparative philology. By tracing the names back
to their Sanskrit roots, he concluded that the radical meaning usually
had some references to natural phenomena, and the seemingly irrational
tales of gods were found to be merely descriptions of such elemental
phenomena as storms, sunset and dawn. If the names in many different
myths could be traced back to roots in Sanskrit the linguistic unity
of the Aryan races would be established. Unfortunately, the
philologists did not often agree on the etymological analysis of the
root meanings of mythical names, or on the interpretation they put
on these names, and the same deity may be reduced by different
interpreters to half a dozen elements of nature. A certain goddess

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(1) Max Muller: Comparative Mythology.

may represent the upper air, light, lightning or clouds. The
difficulty then arises of determining the root from which her name has
degenerated. As a matter of fact this is exactly the point upon which
students of language disagree.

Because of this disagreement, the philological method, by
itself, is insufficient to account for the origin of myth; especially
when myths just as irrational as those of the Aryan races are found among
South Sea Islanders, Australians and Eskimos, and other tribes in whose
language it is impossible to find any Aryan roots, even diseased ones.

Muller did not agree with the anthropologists' conception of
the animistic ideas of savages, that gender terminations were survivals
of an early stage of thought in which personal characteristics, including
sex, had been attributed to all phenomena. He was convinced that later
generations came to think of all natural phenomena as possessing personality
because of the gender terminations of words - he had said that all words
originally had an ending indicating gender, and consequently sex. As
a matter of fact, the distinction expressed by gender need not necessarily
refer to sex. It may just as validly stand for size, shape, position or
worth. Any one of these categories would occur to a primitive mind as
readily as would the idea of sex as a means of classifying objects.

If the philologists had not assumed that all objects of nature
originally had names denoting sex, they would have had no foundation
for their theory of the disease of language and the consequent formation
of unreasonable myth.

III

One of the most naive theories of the origin of roots, and one which showed to what lengths the solar theory was carried by its exponents, was advanced by Morgan Kavanagh in his book "Origin of Language and Myths". Kavanagh said that gesture language came before any kind of sound language, and that man first uttered inarticulate sounds for the purpose of drawing attention to what he was representing by signs, just as an animal or deaf-mute might do.

This in itself is no different from many of the most generally accepted views of early language. But Kavanagh elaborated his theory and said that the first real word must have grown out of a single sound made by the mouth, and that this sign must have stood for the word "sun". Because of its shape the mouth can only represent what is circular, and naturally the first circular object to which primitive man would refer would be the sun. Consequently when he formed his mouth into a circle to represent the shape of the sun, such a sound as phonetic O must have been heard. A constant association of this sound with the sign for sun resulted in the adoption of the sound instead of the sign, and primitive man had his first word! The author of this theory expressed his astonishment that Max Muller could continue to say that the origin of roots was still a mystery after such light had been thrown on the question by the solar theory of the origin of the first word.

Muller rejected the so-called "bow-wow" and "pooh-pooh" theories of language as being merely imitative and interjectional. He

said that real language began where such sounds ended. These sounds
did not remain as constituent elements in different families of languages,
but the sounds that did remain were called by him "phonetic types", and
to him these roots were ultimate facts requiring no further explanation.
Words, for him, were merely impressions taken from various phonetic
moulds. He felt that the science of language had done its work when
it had reduced the vague problem of the origin of language to the more
definite one of the origin of roots, or to the question: "How do mere
cries become phonetic types?"

"The essence of language lies in the fact that the sound serves
to say something, that with the saying something is thought, and that
something is predicated of the object thought and spoken about" (1)

Muller assumed that in order to name, the mind must first
conceive, but other writers have asserted that in the development of
the race, as well as in that of the individual, an object was named before
it was recognized as something to be named.

Any theory of the origin of words is necessarily speculative,
although attempted parallels have been drawn between the early speech
of the child and of the race, and an example has been quoted (2) showing
that twin children developed a language understood only by themselves.

Ludwig Noire thought that sounds broke out in a group of
working men as a result of the common action that was being carried on,

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(1) L. Noiré: Max Muller and the Philosophy of Language.

(2) G.J.Romanes: Mental Evolution in Man.

and that since these sounds were heard every time that form of
activity was repeated, they soon became the means of recalling the
memory of the action which thus had a name assigned to it. Instead
of believing with Muller that myths were entirely the result of language
diseased, Noiré thought that the rise of mythological thinking was
merely an important stage in the development of language and the
intellectual life of humanity.

Wundt defended the gesticular theory of language origin - that
gestures are the result of emotions, and of the involuntary expressive
movements that accompany emotion. The angry man gesticulates with
movements which show his impulse to attack, and because of the emotions
aroused within them by this exhibition, the onlookers reply with similar
movements. Such communication of one person's experience to the other
results in an exchange of thought; that is - in language. The only
syntax of gesture language is that the various ideas must be presented
in what appears to be the natural order in which they follow each other
in thought. Only in this way will the whole idea become intelligible,
because the thinking of primitive man is supposed to be almost purely
associative.

Allport has a theory whereby he assumes that a laryngeal period
existed in the history of the development of language when cries constituted
speech. At that time it became possible for those who produced the cries
to use them for their own ends in controlling the responses of their
companions. A chance articulation of such a kind, spoken in association
with some object or situation and in the hearing of others, fixated in all

persons assembled a "circular reflex of the ear-vocal sort", and when this sound was spoken by another person at another time it evoked the same response. Allport argues that the success in communication and in controlling one's companions that resulted from this stimulation, fixation and response, would, through time, establish the words of a language.

About the only general truth that can be assumed from these different theories is that not one of them is sufficient in itself to account for the origin of speech, although some of the principles of each view undoubtedly play an important part in the ultimate explanation. Certainly animals possess the ability to make signs, and it may be taken for granted that earliest man was similarly capable. At a very early stage some of the signs used for communication must have been made by the voice. It is possible that at a later period these signs made by the voice, or sounds, may have been uttered in association with gestures and facial expressions. The next step may have been articulate sounds conditioned in some such way that they brought fixed responses from members of the same tribe. Probably denotative words implying no attributes were formed first, then predications, and lastly grammatical distinctions.

P A R T   3

The Anthropological Aspect.

I

Herbert Spencer, Dr. Sigmund Freud, Sir E.B.Tylor, Andrew Lang, and Sir J.G.Frazer, are grouped under the appellation of anthropologists because a careful survey of their theories shows that underlying their diverse methods of presentation, is the common belief that the minds of men at parallel levels of culture are everywhere substantially the same and develop naturally along similar lines.

Such is the early anthropological and evolutional point of view. Comparative anthropology studies man in the sum of all his works and thoughts as evolved through the whole process of his development. It studies the elaboration of custom, the growth of art, and the advance of society from the horde to the nation. As Lang said: "it was inevitable that the science should also try its hand at mythology."

The evolutionary interpretation is built on the assumption of such unity of mind that, under the influence of similar physical environment, man will produce similar culture. Additional tenets of the theory are - that cultural development always proceeds through similar stages in an orderly and fixed progression; and that the changes taking place will be uniform, gradual, and always in the direction of improvement.

Every adherent of this method has attacked the problem from a different point, and every one has advanced an original opinion. But just as each of the ancient mythologists answered the question of the

origin of myths in accordance with his own tastes and prejudices, and
in harmony with the general tendency of his studies, so did the
interpreters of myth in the nineteenth century.

Spencer developed the uncritical and rationalistic theory of
evolution in general; Frazer and Lloyd Morgan applied it in specific
instances; Freud used it to explain myth as a parallel of the neurotic's
unconscious taboos.

A change in this viewpoint was caused by the accumulation of
data on culture in limited areas, and by the application of a more
critical psychological method which realized the interplay between the
environmental influence on individual behaviour, and the part performed
by the individual as a unit in the culture into which he was born.

II

Sir E. B. Tylor may be called the founder of the Anthropological
School. His interest lay in the history of human culture in general,
and his name is always associated with the evolutionary and psychological
methods.

In 1871, when he published his most famous work, "Primitive
Culture", Tylor was above all interested in the problem of evolution.
Just at this time Darwin's "Origin of Species" had begun to stimulate
historical thinking along other than biological lines. By investigating
the history of culture Tylor hoped to find sequences in social organization,

industrial arts, and belief, similar to those found in the science of

biology. He saw that there are "numberless uniformities displayed by

primitive culture as a whole, and, somewhat less obviously, by various

wholesale levels or stages that can be distinguished within it". Some

of these uniformities he knew were due to accident, and some more were

the result of borrowing/customs. But there remained other similarities

which, according to Tylor, could only be accounted for by direct reference

to that similarity of mind which, up to a certain point, all human beings

alike display. He asserted further that even if a myth could be proved

to have been borrowed, the very fact that it had been incorporated into

the history of the people with so little change that its origin could

be traced, was additional proof of the similarity between the minds of

the people who had accepted the story and those to whom the myth had

originally belonged.

A frequently quoted paragraph from "Primitive Culture" sums

up this viewpoint:

"The principles which underlie a solid system of interpretation

"are really few and simple. The treatment of similar myths from

"different regions, by arranging them in large groups, makes it

"possible to trace in mythology the operation of imaginative

"processes recurring with the evident regularity of a mental law.

"Thus stories of which a single instance would have been mere

"isolated curiosity, take their place among well-marked, consistent

"structures of the human mind. Evidence like this will again and

"again drive us to admit that even as truth is stranger than fiction,

"so myth may be more uniform than history". (1)

He believed that there was a myth-making stage of the human mind; that this stage is found in full vigor in the savage condition of mankind; that it grows and continues into the higher culture of barbarism, or half-civilization; and that finally, in the civilized world, this state of mind turns from belief in myths, and finds relief in fanciful poetry.

Animism, the belief that inanimate objects and natural phenomena possess a living soul, was the fundamental condition of the most primitive sort of religion, according to Tylor, and was one of the first factors in transforming the events of daily experience into myth. A survival of this belief is seen even to-day in some localities in the custom of "telling the bees" when a member of the family has died. Animism then, led to personification. Sun, moon and stars were personified, and all people told tales of animated nature. Examples from the nature mythology of different countries prove that the myths are similar, and that in their formation a "mental law" must have been operating.

To illustrate this supposed course of thought, from savagery to civilization, Tylor gave examples of the mythology of stars. He saw a striking correspondence between savage and cultured notions in regard to the interpretation of the Milky Way. Some tribes called it the Way of the Gods, or the Way of Spirits by which souls go up to heaven. North American Indians know it as the Path of the Master of Life, or the Path of Spirits where they travel to the land beyond the grave. Tylor

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(1) Page 256.

detected a resemblance between such myths of savage imagination,
and the Lithuanian myth of the Road of the Birds at the end of which
the souls of the good dwell free and happy.

"At the beginning of this course of thought", says Tylor,
"there is the savage who sees individual stars as anima beings, or
combines star groups into living celestial creatures, or objects
connected with them; while at the other end of the scale of civilization,
the modern astronomer keeps up just such ancient fancies, turning them
to account in useful survivals, as a means of mapping out the celestial
globe." (1)   The facts he collected seem to favour the view that the
wide differences in the civilization and mental state of the various
races were differences of development, rather than of kind.   "The state
of things is not that one race does or knows exactly what another race
does or knows, but that similar stages of development recur in different
times and places .... and that the history of mankind has been on the
whole, the history of progress". (2)

So long as the stars, the sun, and all objects of nature were
spoken of consciously in mythic language, their legends were understood,
the actions ascribed to them seemed natural, and it was comparatively
easy to trace the same myth in different countries.   But when the
phenomena of nature became identified with personal heroes and gods, the
real origin of the myths was obscured and the whole tale became less
consistent.

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(1) Primitive Culture, P. 323

(2) Early History of Mankind, P. 372.

Tylor differed from Spencer in being an exponent of the progression theory of myth as well as of all other forms of culture. He realized that civilization has to contend not only with survivals from lower levels, but also with degeneration within its own borders. But he asserted that the institutions which can best hold their own in the world gradually supersede the less fit so that "direct or devious, the path of civilization lies forward."

He differed from Spencer again, in his opinion that man's desire to know the causes of things is no product of higher civilization, but is a characteristic of the race down to the lowest stages. Tylor believed that in the myth-making stage of intellect, man invented a story to account for any custom or occurrence which he could not understand, and that anyone who heard the story later, believed it to be a legend of his forefathers. He expressed this belief in his definition of myth which is,

"Sham history, the fictitious narrative of events that never "happened ...... We know how strong our own desire is to account "for everything. This desire is as strong among barbarians and "accordingly they desire such explanations as satisfy their minds. "But they are apt to go a step further, and their explanations turn "into the form of stories with names of places and persons, thus "becoming full made myths ..... People of untrained mind in what is "called the myth-making stage, have no scruples about converting "their guesses at what may have happemed, into the most life-like "stories of what they say did happen." (1)

(1 Tylor   Anthropology. p.387.

Wilhelm Wundt had very decided opinions on the other side of the question. He scouted the idea that mythological thinking arose from an attempt to explain natural phenomena. Wundt believed, as do most recent writers, that primitive man did not see any need for explanation, and that for him everything is just as it is because it has always been so, its regularity being reason enough for its existence.

"Survivals", as Tylor called them, were additional evidence which helped to trace the course the civilization of the world had actually followed. Survivals are the left-overs of the customs and beliefs of other generations, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new condition of things. They remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has evolved.

III

Herbert Spencer tries to express in a sweeping general formula the belief in progress which prevaded his age, and to erect it into the supreme law of the universe as a whole. His work coincided with the great development of biology under the stimulus of the Darwinian theory, and the sympathizers with the new views, feeling the need of a comprehensive survey of the world as a whole, very willingly accepted Spencer's philosophy at its own valuation. But his "Principles of Sociology", the book which deals with the subject of myth and folk-lore, is a wholly uncritical

utilization of the comparative method, and has little more than an historical interest to-day.

Critics have placed Spencer in the first rank of the "classic evolutionists" but he never aspired to distinction on such a score. His principles, as he laid them down, were not classic, since he professed to recognize more than organic causes of development. The classic evolutionists did not realize that social factors may be much more powerful.

Spencer visualized the early situation in a sober spirit, and although he has been called the arch-evolutionist, passages could be quoted from his work revealing insight and prudence in regard to the evolutionary viewpoint. But it cannot be denied that as he further elaborated his theories, he was inclined to forget the caution he had displayed in his earlier position.

Herbert Spencer recognized superorganic evolution as well as organic. He said that forces of such nature began when something more than the combined efforts of the parents come to bear on the individual. "Evolution", he said, "does not imply in everything an intrinsic tendency to become something higher. It is determined by the cooperation of inner and outher forces. If the environing forces remain constant from genera- tion to generation the species will remain constant. If the environing actions change the species change until it re-equilibrates itself with them. But it by no means follows that this change in the species constitutes a step in evolution. Usually neither advance nor recession results". (1)

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(1) Principles of Sociology.

To Spencer the foundation of myth was a state of mind in
which man personified and animated all phenomena. But instead of
agreeing with Max Muller that there had been a degeneration of words,
he believed that there had been a degeneration of thought caused by
man's misconception of statements. His position was thus half-way
between the progression theory of Tylor, and the language-diseased theory
of Muller, since he thought there was just as much evidence to prove that
savagery and savage myths were caused by a lapse from civilization, as
there was to prove that the lowest form of savagery had always been as
low as it was at the time he wrote. "It is quite possible, and, I
believe highly probable, that retrogression has been as frequent as
progression" (1)

Spencer did not accept the current theory that primitive man
had an innate disposition to ascribe powers of life to inanimate objects.
He argued contrarily that the power to distinguish between such objects
is one of the first powers vaguely shown even by creatures with no special
senses and that this ability becomes increasingly manifest as intelligence
evolves. The child, for instance, would not think, "Naughty chair hit
me", unless the idea had first been given him by another and older person.
Similarly primitive peoples do not first believe everything to be endowed
with life. There never was any reason why men, even the earliest, should
confuse distinction^{s} which had been growing clearer through all lower forms
of animal life.

From these premises Spencer concluded that the beliefs which
ascribed personalities to inanimate objects were not primary, and that

(1) Ibid p.106.

on the contrary, primitive man came to believe that all nature was
animated, and consequently fashioned myths of a wholly animated world,
because he was unable to draw the generally accepted distinction between
natural and unnatural.

In the state of trance, faintness, sleep, or dream, living
things simulate things not alive. There is an extremely subtle dis-
tinction between these states and actual death. If a savage has a very
vivid dream he thinks there must be a duplicate self who has performed the
actions, since he learns from his companions that he has remained in one
spot throughout the course of the dream. Shadows are also regarded as
other selves.

"Fully to understand the development of human thought under all
its aspects, we must recognize that the hypothesis of ghost agency gains
a settled occupation of the field long before there is either the power
or the opportunity of gathering together and organizing the experiences
which yield the hypothesis of physical causation". (1)

Following the general idea of evolution, Spencer believed that
the ghost was at first similarly conceived everywhere, and that from this
conception rose various supernatural beings. The ideas of the spirits,
and the myths about them, become more and more elaborate as the complexity
of civilization increased. But every one of these supernatural beings (2)

(1) Principles of Sociology, p. 241.

(2) Note: 'Supernatural' here means only 'transcending the ordinary'.
 A man remarkable in any way would be regarded as supernatural.

was originally a human being.

The savage's earliest conception of a supernatural being was the ghost which was treated as a deity. Spencer concluded, therefore, that ancestor worship was the root of every religion and the prototype of all religious ceremonialism. He understood ancestor worship in its broadest sense, including plant, animal, and nature worship, and comprehending all worship of the dead, whether or not they were of the same blood. The deity developed out of the powerful man, and the ghost of the powerful man, by small steps. The dream suggested a wandering double which departed at death. Originally the ghost (or double) was supposed to have a very short second life. Later the idea came that ghosts existed permanently and so increased in numbers. These numerous ghosts became supernatural agents and were the cause of all superstitions.

In the entire course of his hypothesis, the general formula of evolution was adhered to, and this, for Spencer, was proof enough that the process actually had been as he postulated.

According to this theory, early man came to have animistic ideas and so formed myths about inanimate objects, because of degeneration of thought, or misconception. Statements which had originally a different significance were misinterpreted, and this gradually led to a belief in personalized phenomena.

"Spencer believed that the names of human beings in early society were derived from incidents of the moment, the period of the day, or the condition of the weather. If a story existed about a person named Dawn, in process of time the tale would be transferred to the object or event which

would therefore become personalized." (1)

He thought that many of the mythic tales relating the adventures of bears, wolves, leopards, and other animals, and even of inanimate objects like mountains, were the result of the misinterpretation of nicknames. Primitive tribes were believed to designate individuals by animal names. Thus if a man was named Bear his children would also be called Bear . If the original Bear was famous for any particular deed, the story would be handed down and the descendants would be proud of their distinguished forefather. But through time the identity of the ancestor might fade, and the idea would then take root that Bear's descendants were the offspring of a real bear. The stories of the ancestor's heroic deeds would then be told as if they had been performed by an animal, and the respect and perhaps the worship accorded to the human ancestor would be given to the bear. In this way totemism would arise.

According to Spencer, then, a tribe adopted totemism because, through degeneration of thought, the members forgot their human ancestors and came to believe they were descended from animals.

Tylor's chief objection to this argument was that the very tribes most distinguished for their division by animal totems reckon descent not on the male, but on the female side, if the name of Bear came from the mother why was it not a woman's name? Also, he could not but think that the author had gone too far with his hypothesis of verbal misunderstandings and had ignored the myth making tendency of primitive

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(1) Lewis Spence : An Introduction to Mythology, P.60.

man which personifies nature.

A theory based on the assumption that a tribe would forget how, and from whom its name arose, but would remember an ancestor's famous deeds, makes allowances for a great deal of forgetting on the one hand, and of remembering on the other. Spencer had been so anxious to prove the absurdity of most current speculations on the origin of nature myths, that he went too far in the opposite direction.

Very much later Wundt discarded the rationalism of Spencer and Tylor. He saw that primitive man was not an individual who faced nature with a set of problems to be solved by the answer 'animism' or 'magic'. He believed that man's earliest reactions to the world were spontaneous and emotional and that such irregular happenings as sickness and death, or even dreams, aroused his emotions and so became objects of magical and demonical belief. Demons and other supernatural beings are products of emotions, elaborated by ideas. Emotions and not reflections, according to Wundt, give rise to mythological thinking.

IV

The three landmarks in the history of human development, as set forth in Frazer's "Golden Bough" have been likened to three threads in the web of human thought and the history of the race. They are, the black thread of magic, the red thread of religion, and the white thread of science. Because of this "The Golden Bough" has been criticised as

leaning too much to the side of the stratification theory, or the belief in the existence of certain fixed religious conditions at different epochs in man's experience.

Sir James Frazer's mythological studies relate chiefly to vegetation and the duties connected therewith. He believed that the god who lived in the Arician Grove and was the priest of the Golden Bough, was also a god of vegetation. This was disputed by Lang who said the ghastly priest of the Arician Grove had not necessarily any connection with the Golden Bough or with the cult of vegetation.

Frazer believed that in the beginning man trusted in magic and had no religion. But as he advanced from the lowest savagery and gradually attained to higher material culture, he found that he could not really control the weather and the food supply by magic and he became disgusted with it. The next step was to invent gods and spirits, beings like himself but more powerful. These gods were worshipped or propitiated by magic ceremonies, prayer, and sacrifice.

In accordance with this theory medicine men, who were really magic workers, finally developed into both kings or chiefs, and man-gods (or heroes, as Wundt called them). Frazer thought that magic came before religion in human development. To him religion was "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the cause of nature and of human life". (1)   Lang said propitiation and conciliation need not be the whole of religion. He thought that a belief in a higher power, who sanctions conduct and is a

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(1) The Golden Bough, Vol. 1. p. 63.

loving father to mankind, was a fairer conception. Frazer maintained that such a belief, often called the 'All-Father theory', could not be religion unless it was accompanied by prayer. Lang retorted that it was only by limiting his definition as he had, that Frazer was able to establish his theory of the origin of religion.

The basic source of magical ideas, Frazer said, is a mistaken application of the very simplest and most elementary processes of the mind, the association of ideas by virtue of resemblance and contiguity. An image of the enemy, mal-treated in the belief that harm will befall the real enemy, shows association by similarity. Association by contiguity takes place if a person has in his possession a garment, hair, nail parings, or anything that has been in close contact with the enemy. Spirits and other supernatural agencies may be involved, but, "when sympathetic magic occurs in its pure form one event is supposed to follow another inevitably, without the intervention of any personal or spiritual agency. Thus its fundamental conception is identical with that of modern science, underlying the whole system is a faith, implicit but real and firm, in the order and uniformity of nature". (1)

Frazer's theory was that religion assumed the operation of conscious or personal agents, superior to man, behind the visible screen of nature. This conception of personal agents was more complex than the simple recognition of the similarity or contiguity of ideas and it represented an upward step in the development of human thought. For a theory

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(1)   The Golden Bough,   Vol. 1.

which assumes that the course of nature is determined by conscious agents, requires for its comprehension a far higher degree of intelligence and reflection than the belief that one event results from another by reason of the contiguity of the persons and things involved. Realizing this, Frazer argued that magic probably arose before religion in the evolution of the race.

For Tylor, magic was a pseuo-science based on erroneous assoc-iation of ideas, but Frazer saw a basic unity in magic and science since both assume unchangeable laws. So long as the magician adheres to the rules of his art he is infallible. A similar act will evoke identical results whenever repeated, due to the power of the magician, or his control of the powers implied in certain substances and acts. In this he resembles the scientist who repeats the same experimental conditions, thus producing the same reaction. The mental operations involved in the two acts are similar. Although magic is false and science is valid, both employ the association of ideas. The only difference is that the associations involved in science have been empirically tested and established, while those involved in magic are really illegitimate. The magical act is only a part of magic; it is a part also of supernaturalism in general. Similarly the act in a scientific experiment is only one part of the working out of a scientific law.

Religion is in contrast to magic and science, since it does not assume the immutability of nature, but always includes an appeal to a god. Both magic and religion are on the supernatural level, but Frazer says magic comes first while religion has a later and independent origin. He

acknowledges and cites cases to show that this clear-cut distinction
between magic and religion does not always obtain.   Among the
peasantry of Europe, gods are prayed to while the supplicants at the
same time resort to magical processes.   Here magic, the pseudo-science,
makes common cause with religion.

"The Golden Bough" thus contains the theory of the ritual and
sociological function of myth.   It has been pointed out by Malinowski (1)
that Sir James Frazer established the intimate relation between the word
and the deed in primitive faith.   He showed that the words of the story
and of the spell, the acts of ritual and of ceremony are the two aspects
of primitive belief.

Frazer had said that taboo is merely a negative magic, involving
the belief that harmful consequences are averted when certain acts are not
performed - a system of magic abstinence based on the avoidance of certain
consequences.   R. R. Marett says taboo is more than this, that it involves
a feeling of the supernatural or mysterious which has many indefinite
effects.   To break a taboo, according to Marett, (2) is to set in motion
against the offender, a supernatural power of undefined shape.   Any
number of things might happen to the violater, and so taboos may be
precautionary measures against mystic perils in general.   A stranger may
be taboo because of his strangeness and not merely because he may bring

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(1) Myth in Primitive Psychology.

(2) The Threshold of Religion.

contagion. This implies mana, or supernatural power in general, absolutely distinct from any physical power. A chief is taboo because he has mana, and not because he might pass on his kingliness, an honour not always coveted among primitive tribes.

Marett thought this idea of supernatural power was common to both magic and religion, and for this reason he could not recognize Frazer's distinction between magic, religion, and science. He also said that magical ideas depended on more than false associative processes and that they should be studied on the emotional side.

If, as Frazer thought, religion always involves the intervention of a god as a personal agent, it follows that there can be no religion, in his sense of the word, where there are no gods. As it happens, Frazer has considered a primitive phase of mind and society in which gods and even spirits are of little or no account, but in which occult powers can be moved, by means of ritual, to work for the good of man. Surely these ceremonies to propitiate occult powers are at least as much religion as they are magic.

It may be that, instead of existing separately in point of time, religion and magic are really competitors, one representing good, the other evil. Marett (1) came to the conclusion that savages have religion in his sense of the word, but that they have also a black art, or magic, "Their black art is to them what magic is to us, and their magic is to them what religion is to us". By accepting this view recognition of a non-theistic type of religion is avoided.

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(1) Psychology and Folk-Lore.

V

Andrew Lang was negatively suggestible in his literary contacts. He belonged to that rare company of men who do not readily bow to the mere authority of learning. He was far from being cowed by the pronouncements of such acknowledged masters as Muller and Frazer; their very ideas exerted on him a contra-suggestive influence which was useful in his roll of critic of the current theories of myth and folk-lore.

Like Muller, Lang sought a condition of the human intellect in which what seemed to him irrational would appear natural and would be accepted as ordinary occurrences of every day life. He contended that if this condition could be found it might be regarded as the origin of myths, and the 'senseless' elements could be looked on as survivals of an age of savagery. He also said that if it could be shown that the mental stage was one through which all civilized races had passed, the universality of such a myth-making period would help to explain the universal diffusion of the stories. For, while the possibilities of diffusion by borrowing and transmission could be granted very often, the hypothesis of the origin of myths in the savage state of the intellect might supply another explanation of their wide diffusion.

Sir E. B. Tylor had been convinced that primitive man deliberately sought the reason for things. He thought this craving to know the reason why, was, even among rude savages, an intellectual appetite,

and that such a desire was satisfied only by inventing stories to account for any phenomena or custom which seemed to have no obvious reason.

Lang says that a survey of the content of savage myth is enough to prove that Tylor was right in this opinion. To him myth was a sort of primitive science; the savages' way of satisfying the early forms of scientific curiosity.- " Does primitive man want to know why

"this tree has red berries, why this bird utters a peculiar cry,

"where fire comes from, why a constellation is grouped in one

"way or another, ... in all these, and in all other intellectual

"perplexities, the savage invents a story to solve the problem....

"As these legends have been produced to meet the same want by

"persons in very similar mental conditions, it follows that they

"all resemble each other with considerable closeness." (1)

Lang believed that myth and religion could be separated, even in the early period of the race, and that although the gods of savages and of many civilized peoples were worshipped with cruel and obscene rites, yet the religious sentiment strove to transcend the mythical conceptions of the gods. People were shocked and puzzled by the myths, and accordingly they invented explanations for what seemed to be crude and absurd and irrational in the narratives. Such a method of interpretation was purely arbitrary and depended on the fancy of the authors. It implied that the original myth makers were men with philosophic and moral ideas like those of their descendants.

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(1) A. Lang. Modern Mythology, p. 185.

Lang'stheory is stated concisely in "Myth, Ritual and Religion", (1)

"Everything in the civilized mythologies which we regard as "irrational, seems only part of the accepted and natural order of "things to contemporary savages, and in the past seemed equally "rational and natural to savages concerning whom we have no "historical information. Our theory is, therefore, that the savage "and senseless element in mythology, is, for the most part, a legacy "from ancestors of the civilized races who were once in an intellect- "ual state not higher, but probably lower, than that of Australians, "Red Indians, Bushmen, and other worse than barbaric peoples. As "the ancestors of the Greeks, Aryans of India, Egyptians, etc., "advanced in civilization their religious thought was shocked and "surprised by the myths that had been preserved by the priesthood "who dared not reject the religion of their ancestors. The "senseless elements in the myths would, by this theory, be for the "most part"survivals", and the age and condition of human thought "whence it survived, would be one in which the most ordinary ideas "about the nature of things and the limits of possibility did not "yet exist. The age of savagery"

The advantage of this hypothesis, according to Lang, was that it rested on facts· The actual condition of the human intellect is a fact; so is the existence of the common intellectual habits, or conditions which are common to backward people. Also he maintained, it cannot be
denied

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(1) Page 30. Vol. 1.

that survivals do account for many anomalies of law, politics, dress, and society in the present state of civilization. In addition the hypothesis helps to explain the diffusion, as well as the origin, of the wild and crazy element in myth. The origin is the intellectual condition of the savage, and the diffusion is the result of the prevalence in every part of the world, at some time or another, of similar mental habits and ideas.

This conception of similarity must not be pressed too far. It can be made to account for the same type of myth, but not for the universal distribution of detailed mythical plots, as Lang himself acknowledged.

The emotions and feelings of the savage in regard to men's relations with the world are fairly well summed up in the words "curiosity" and "credulity". There is also the belief that every object in nature is endowed with life and a personality. The savage is unable to draw any line between himself and the things in the world. He considers that he has a relationship to animals and that he can be transformed into the shape of a beast, or perhaps into a constellation. He fancies that he, or at least the medicine man, possesses such magical accomplishments as bringing rain, warding off demons, and restoring the dead to life. There is also the belief that the soul is separable from the body, and can wander about at will; and there is the common faith in protecting animals, called totemism.

Such, according to Andrew Lang, were the principles upon which the savage constructed his myth. These, in turn, were his scientific explanations of the universe, and, in a certain sense, his religion,

although Lang recognized a fundamental difference between myth and religion. He thought myth consisted of unholy stories of gods and was religion in an erratic mood.

VI

Freud's theory of myth is included with those of the early anthropologists because, like them, he thought that similar stages of development recurred in different times and places, but always in accordance with the same "mental law". He is a firm believer in the omnipotence of thought, and in the like working of the human mind under like conditions. Not content to deal with the individual alone, he has sought material for psycho-analysis in history and primitive man. He teaches that myth is the day-dream of the race, and that it cannot be explained by the answers "nature", "history", or "culture" which other mythologists have employed, but by "diving deep into the dark pools of the subconscious where at the bottom there lie the usual paraphernalia and symbols of psycho-analysis." (1)

Freud follows Frazer in believing that the fundamental basis of all magic lies in mistaking an ideal connection for a real one. A wax figure representing the enemy is tortured with the idea that the enemy will actually suffer. In such a case the similarity between the desired result and the performed act evokes the belief that the result has been obtained. This is an illustration of Freud's favorite

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(1) B. Malinowski: Myth in Primitive Psychology.

theory of the omnipotence of thought. The same substitution of ideas for actions is a characteristic of neurotics. A guilty conscience may be the result of criminal thoughts which have been objectified by the victim of the neurosis until he regards them as criminal deeds or acts.

Because both fall into the mistake of confusing imagined and real connections, Freud draws a parallel between the individual and the race.

He believes that one of the most widespread taboos, that of sex, is based on ancient and very deep urges of which society is not aware, but which persist in the unconscious life of individuals; that the taboo on sexual relations between members of a family is the individual manifestation of the taboo of totemism in the history of the race.

In the totem life of the savage there are two strict taboos. The totem animal must not be eaten or even killed, and a man and woman of the same tribe must have no sexual intercourse. Sometimes they may not even speak to each other.

Freud believes that these conditions are exactly similar to those which cause the Oedipus complex in the present day. Here the totem animal is parallelled by the father, of whom the son is jealous, and the woman of the same tribe is represented by the mother of the neurotic. Because of this he tries to find the original meaning of totemism through the indications by which it reappears in the development of children.

It has been pointed out by writers, that in the development of psycho-analysis there were many indications that the childhood of the individual showed marked resemblance to primitive history, or the childhood of races. The knowledge gained from dream analysis, myths, and fairy tales, seemed to indicate that the first impulses to form myths were due to the same emotional strivings which produced dreams.

Even such a careful and conservative psychologist as Wundt, says: "the taboo of the Polynesian savage is after all not so remote from us as we are inclined to believe. The moral and customary prohibitions which we ourselves obey, may have some essential relation to this primitive taboo." (1) Wundt believed that primitive taboos had their origin in fear of the effect of demonic powers, that the fear remained a power because of a kind of psychic persistence, and so became the root of present day customs and laws.

Freud said Wundt's explanation was insufficient, since it did not go to the root of the matter. He maintained that demons were only the product of the "psychic powers" of man, and that they must have been created out of something. In an attempt to discover how the idea of demons began the psycho-analyst considers the case of compulsion neurotics. These are people who create prohibitions for themselves, and follow them as strictly as the savage does his. So, extending the doctrine of the unconscious to the mentality of the group, Freud recognizes that impulses devoid of meaning in the sense of rational justification may nevertheless exert a secret mastery over thought and action.

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(1) Folk Psychology. Chapter on Religion and Myth.

In a typical case of compulsion neurosis, the patient has during infancy and childhood, taken extreme pleasure in touching certain parts of his body. Later a prohibition forbidding the act has prevailed and stopped this habit. Then the child no longer touches himself, but he still has the impulse to do so. This impulse is repressed and/relegated to the unconscious. Since both the impulse and the prohibition remain, there is a conflict between the two characterized by an ambivalent behaviour. The child, and later the adult, wants to perform the act; he can see pleasure in it, but he knows he should not do so and for that reason he hates the act. To him the touching implies something sacred or consecrated, but it also means something dangerous, forbidden, and unclean; and the whole process involves an ambivalence of emotions which is signified also in the meaning of the word "taboo". The result is that the idea of the prohibition becomes fully conscious and prevails, but the strength of the prohibition is due to the fact that it is associated with the forbidden pleasure.

Similarly, savage taboos are very ancient prohibitions which have been carried on as an inheritance from earlier generations. The very fact that the taboo has persisted is evidence that there is still an unconscious desire to perform the act. To Freud the basis of a taboo, for the individual as well as for the race, is a forbidden action towards which there exists a strong inclination in the unconscious. Persons who obey the taboo have an ambivalent feeling toward what is affected by it. Therefore he argued that if it could be shown that ambivalence exists in

taboo regulations as well as in the case of neurosis, then one of the most important points in the psychological correspondence between taboo and compulsion neurosis would be established.

He conceives the primal state of human society to have been a horde of sons with one father and a female captive. The sons killed the father, and ate him, to secure the woman. Together they did what they would not, and could not, have done singly. They had envied and feared the father and they identified themselves with him, by association, when they ate him. The totem feast then became a commemoration of this act when the brothers grew sorry for their deed. The totemic sacrifice became an occasion for joy and sorrow, It was a dramatization of the tragedy in which the brothers murdered their despot father, and later, conscience striken, reimposed on themselves the original taboo. Thus they identified the father with the totem, and formulated one of the laws of totemism - that the totem animal should not be killed. Then,in order to live together peacefully, they were forced to invent the second law, that forbidding incest.

One of the gravest flaws in this argument is that totemic sacrifice is practically unknown, and that the eating of the father cannot be paralleled in any known tribe.

The foundation of Freud's theory rests on the belief that the beginnings of religion, ethics, society and art, meet in the Oedipus complex and that ambivalence may be considered as a fundamental phenomenon of emotional life. Psychoanalysts thus base all their arguments upon the

assumption of a "psyche" of the mass, in which processes occur as in the psychic life of the individual. According to such reasoning, a sense of guilt might survive for centuries and remain effective in generations which could not have known anything of the guilty deed.

Thus instead of utilizing social inheritance or tradition as a means of passing on the ambivalent attitude, Freud assumes the link of the racial unconscious to be inherited from generation to generation. Such a doctrine is hardly more than a revival of the theory of the inheritance of acquired characters, and is, in itself, as Goldenweiser points out, "a curious example of that omnipotence of thought which Freud regards as characteristic of the psychic life of primitive man, and of the neurotic". (1)

(1) Early Civilization.

PART 4.

Recent Psychological Aspects.

I

The previous chapter set forth the principles by which the
early anthropologists or evolutionists attempted to explain man's
social and individual conduct as it was revealed in myth and folk-lore.

In the following pages will be found some of the latest
results of research in the field of cultural anthropology.   Students
of the subject have been collecting data from people with customs less
complex than their own, and in doing so they have discovered material
which, because of its application to the problems of human behavior,
is of great importance to psychology.

Myth and folk-lore are regarded as a part of general culture;
but to break this into more or less artificial divisions is to encourage
a rather mechanical view.   Therefore, although culture as a whole is
much too vast a subject to be investigated here, yet the general term
will be frequently used to include myth and folk-lore.

In order to distinguish between that part of man's behavior which
is explicable in terms of his cultural heritage and that resulting from
inborn tendencies, it is necessary to know what culture is and where
the line between it and biological factors can be drawn.

Nearly sixty years ago Sir E. B. Tylor defined culture, or
civilization, as, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief,
art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired
by man as a member of society". (1)

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(1) Primitive Culture. P. 16.

Writing in 1922 A. A. Goldenweiser enlarged the scope
of this definition to include: "Our attitudes, beliefs and ideas, our
judgments and values; our institutions, political and legal, religious
and economic; our ethical code and our code of etiquette: our books
and machines, our sciences, philosophies and philosophers - all of
these and many other things and beings, both in themselves and in their
multiform interrelations". (1)

As has been pointed out, there are limitations to a strictly
psychological interpretation of culture.   But while objection has
been raised against Freud's method as illustrated in "Totem and Taboo",
it is nevertheless a fact that the findings of psychology may be
employed in translating cultural data.   F. C. Bartlett of Cambridge
University has given a comprehensive review of the psychological factors
that must be considered in studying folk-lore (2); and Dr. Rivers, of
whom it has been said, "he was a psychologist first and an ethnologist
afterwards", gave full weight to the considerations of psychology.

Wilhelm Wundt escaped the grosser pitfalls of the evolutionary
theory and his work on folk-psychology marks a great advance over the
classical anthropologists.   He did not favour the doctrine of the
separate "folk-soul", nor did he overemphasize the social, but he
believed that whatever may be the contributions of the individual to
society, no valid interpretation of civilization can be achieved by

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(1) Early Civilization. P. 15.

(2) Bartlett: Psychology and Primitive Culture.

separating him from his social and cultural setting. Lucien Levy -
Bruhl, on the other hand, stressed the importance of the social side of
primitive life.

The American anthropologists, especially Boas and Goldenweiser,
employ psychological methods with greater deliberation. They believe
that there are phases of culture which need more interpretation than
can be given by psychology alone, but they neither ignore the influence
of the individual nor push to extremes the ideas they have obtained
from objective study.

Present day research shows the course of culture, and hence of
myth and folk-lore, to be complex and varied rather than uniform; gradual
at times, but revolutionary at others; progressive here and there, but
very often regressive - and most of the time indifferent. No anthro-
pologist to-day believes in an orderly and fixed progression of cultural
development. Culture as a whole, and each constitutent element of it,
is now believed to change in ways that are diverse and intricate, and
not necessarily in the direction of improvement.

The evolutionists' habit of explaining the phenomena of myth
and folk-lore in terms of individual reaction has been replaced by a
disposition to consider the interchange of social stimulation and
individual response.

II

Wilhelm Wundt had no faith in a world-wide uniformity of cultural advance, either in respect to civilization in its entirety or to any of its separate aspects. Instead he realized the constant tendency to fluctuations and transformations. His "Elements of Folk-Psychology" is the result of a conviction that there are certain mental phenomena which may not be interpreted satisfactorily by any psychology which restricts itself to the standpoint of individual consciousness; and that the psychological foundations of civilization are not to be found in the isolated individual, but in the group which always actively cooperates in the production of attitudes and ideas.

"The problems of folk-psychology relate to those mental products which are created by a community of human life, and are, therefore, inexplicable in terms merely of individual consciousness since they presuppose the reciprocal action of many." (1)

Wundt did not confuse primitive magic and science in the way Frazer did. He thought that the experiences which caused myths, coincided with those which in time become the foundation of science. But he saw that the processes of thought, by means of which the common elements are utilized and elaborated, were radically distinct in science and in mythology.

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(1) Author's Introd. to: Elements of Folk-Psychology.

According to Wundt the content of primitive thought consists of two kinds of ideas. One sort is supplied to consciousness by the direct perceptions of daily life - ideas such as "go", "stand", "lie", "animal", "tree", "man". The second class does not represent things immediate to preception. Such ideas originate in feeling, in emotional processes, which are projected outward to the environment; included are all references to anything that is not directly amenable to perception, but is really supersenuous, even though it appear in the form of sensible ideas. This world of imagination, projected from man's emotional life into external phenomena, is what Wundt meant by the term "mythological thinking". By "mythology", he understood a system of beliefs concerning supersensuous phenomena which may include religion, magic and demons. He was convinced, however, that mythological thought did not arise from an attempt to explain natural phenomena. His theory was that primitive man does not see any need for an explanation of such things, that to him everything is just as it is because it has always been so, its regularity being reason enought for its existence.

By the same thoery Wundt believed that such irregular happenings as sickness, disease and death arouse the emotions of early man, engender fear, and so become objects of magical and demonical belief. When sickness attacks a person, fear of a demon is aroused and closely connected with sickness is the magic by which disease is warded off. The savage is filled with fear at the thought of death; to him the dead person becomes a demon. Wundt believed that emotion, and not

reflection, gives rise to mythological thinking; that demons are products of emotions elaborated by ideas.

Instead of tracing the development of one important phenomenon of community life, such as myth, after the other, and so dividing mental development into a number of separate phases, Wundt took "transverse instead of longitudinal sections" of the main stages of development with which psychology is concerned. This method gives a better picture of the inter-relation of all the different aspects. He thought that the only way of classifying the content of folk-psychology according to periods was to single out certain ideas, emotions and springs of action, about which the objects immediate to perception group themselves.

Wundt discarded the theory of an original god for the hypothesis that gods had developed from the lowest form of mythological thought - a belief in demons. He said also, that when the original idea of terror in connection with demons was moderated, expression was found for magic of a playful sort in such creatures as satyrs, sylphs, fauns, gnomes, giants, dwarfs, elves and fairies, none of which possessed a personality, for the demon, however powerful, lacked the attribute of personality. Heroes, on the other hand, were idealized men and had very marked personalities. Gods were universally the result of a union of demonical and heroic elements. The personal character, borrowed from the hero, superseded the impersonal nature

of the demon and exalted the god above both. In conceiving the god

as a result of the fusion of demon and hero ideas, Wundt lapsed into

the traditional evolutionary point of view, but on the whole his work

marks a great advance over the unilinear progression theory of the

classical anthropologists.

Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Wilhelm Wundt are at one in the con-

viction that the problems of folk-sychology are the problems of

community life, but the two men differ in their ideas on primitive

mentality.

The French philosopher's theory is founded on the recognition

of what he called "collective representations" and "the law of partici-

pation". He said that ceremonies, myths, language and religion must

be the expression of a collective mentality, since they represent

collective modes of action, and that such collective representations

may come at the will of the individual; force themselves irresistibly

upon his mind; or remain long after he has died. The ideas make no

pretense at being logical; according to them a person may often be in

two places at the same time; and inanimate objects, living creatures

and human beings belong in closely related groups based on ceremonial,

magical, or other supernatural connections; according to the law of

participation, men, beats, objects and even the various parts of the

human body are regarded as having independent existence and as such

occupying separate regions of space although they are no less parts of

the same individual.

Levy-Bruhl believed that primitive man had a "pre-logical"
mind and a distaste for reasoning, not because he was incapable of
thought, but because he did not consider it necessary since, for him,
secondary causes do not exist. To the savage a thing must always be
as it appears to his perception. Anything he does not directly
understand through his senses is caused by witchcraft or magical agency.
To reflect on such an object or event would be only a waste of time.

Occult forces are believed to be always present; consequently,
the more accidental an occurrence would seem to the civilized mind, the
more significance would be attached to it in primitive thought. There
would be no necessity for explanation because it would be recognized
immediately as a manifestation of the occult force. Thus any unusual
success coming to a man causes him to be regarded suspiciously by his
companions, who think magic is working through the lucky one; and such
unexpected happenings create in the savage more emotion than surprise.
But by giving such an illustration Levy-Bruhl has not shown the savage
to be any more prelogical than the man of today, who believes himself
to be lucky at cards.

Their disregard of secondary causes leads savages to recognize
in such events as eclipses manifestations of occult powers, and to under-
stand them as foretelling great misfortunes. Levy-Bruhl does not
believe that primitive man thinks out such connections but that he knows
an event has happened and imm ediately recognizes manifestations of a
mystic force. It is the same process as that whereby the meaning of a

word is understood as soon as the word is heard. According to
Berkley this process is not accomplished in two successive moments, but
takes place all at once.

Levy-Bruhl explained that the primitive mind is neither a
childish nor a pathological form of civilized minds, but that orientation
is absolutely different and that it is, "normal under the conditions in
which it is employed and both complex and developed in its own way."
The difference, he said, was that primitive mental activity is so
slightly differentiated that it is unable to regard the ideas or images
of objects by themselves apart from the sentiments, emotions and passions
which evoke them or are evoked by them. He did not believe such a form
of thought was the result of association but that it was caused by the
fact that to the primitive mind the mystic properties of things and
beings, such as the influence of the totem animal or of the sun, moon
and stars, formed an integral part of the representation which is at that
moment a synthetic whole.

"The mystic quality of the primitive's mentality permeates his
"whole method of thinking, feeling and acting. This is why he is
"so hard to understand. But if we enter into the native's way of
"thinking and feeling, if we trace their actions back to the group
"ideas and sentiments upon which they depend, we find that their
"behavior is by no means foolish but is the legitimate consequence
"of these group actions." (1)

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(1) Levy-Bruhl: Primitive Mentality. p. 431.

The proof that savages dislike to reason does not show that they are different from people of the present day, granting the potential ability of both to reason. As a matter of fact, logical thought plays a limited part in the mental processes of individuals in modern or civilized society, and prelogical thinking is not foreign to them. Savage man can only think of money in a concrete sense - as shells or beaver skins, something that can be handled. To the civilized man money is a medium of exchange, but it is difficult for many people to grasp this abstract idea.

Another feature of primitive mentality, according to Levy-Bruhl, is that thinking is not subject to the law of contradiction. The savage can hold opinions which, judged by the standard of more cultivated minds, are wholly incompatible. But Rivers, taking the primitive conception of death to illustrate his point, attempts to show that much of the supposed inconsistency of such thought, is the result of an idea of death very different from the one commonly accepted. He shows that one term of the alleged contradiction is taken from a civilized, and one from a native category. The classifications are so very different that there is not only no contradiction, but the proceedings of the native in such a case are strictly logical.

Rivers and many other critics of Levy-Bruhl's theory, notably Bartlett, suggest that more complete and exact knowledge of primitive beliefs would show that many of the instances brought forward by the French writer betray no real contradiction and no failure of logic in

the accepted sense; they are merely cases in which the facts of the
universe have been classified and arranged in foreign or unfamiliar
categories.   "I may say that in intellectual concentration, as well as
in many other psychological processes, I have been able to detect no
essential difference between the Melanesian and those with whom I have
been accustomed to mix in the life of our own society." (1)

III

Perhaps more than any other one man, Rivers was responsible
for giving psychology a foothold in British Universities. He was
originally an evolutionist, and in this he represented the English
point of view, that theoretical anthropology is inspired primarily by
the idea of evolution founded on a psychology common to mankind.

The efforts of British anthropologists had been devoted to
tracing the progress of custom and institution.   When similarities
were found in different parts of the world, it was assumed almost as
an axiom that they were due to independent origin and development.
This in turn was ascribed to the fundamental uniformity of the human
mind, so that, given like conditions, similar customs, institutions,
myths, and folk-lore would come into existence and develop along the
same lines.

As a result of his work in Oceania, Rivers was led, late in
life, to a point of view directly contrary.   Ethnology had no attractions

(1) W.R.H.Rivers: Psychology and Ethnology, p. 53.

for him until his work in psychology drew him into the field. One
of the most important results of his early psychological work was the
conclusion that his subject could solve all the problems of culture.
Later, when he returned from the Torres Straits, he was convinced that
the human mind is everywhere the same, and that culture can be explained
in terms of psychology. Finally his conviction was that only an
objective analysis of culture can solve the problems connected with the
subject; for even if minds were everywhere the same, culture could be
everywhere different. As illustration of this he cites examples to
show that the conditions which elicit fear and revenge are not universally
identical. Instead of asking, "How can the blood feud be explained
without revenge?" Rivers thinks the question should be, "How can the
workings of the human mind be explained without a knowledge of the
social setting which has played so great a part in determining the
sentiments and opinions of mankind?" or, "How can revenge be explained
without a knowledge of the blood feud?"

He also showed that acts which are praised in one district are
blamed in another. From the evidence of his cases he drew the conclusion
that culture analysis may show what the native endowments are, but that
analysis of the mental endowments will not necessarily prove what form
the culture will assume.

While he always observed the psychological interplay of
cultural features, it was his final opinion that the historic process
and the contact of peoples were much more complex than he had formerly
conceived them.

Rivers analyzed cultures to see what elements had been
introduced and whence they came. If a custom was uniform in a tribe
he believed that there had been no outside influence; if it took several
forms he said that some of these must have been introduced by an
immigrant people - that a mixture of cultures showed a mixture of
peoples. Such conclusions led Rivers to the viewpoint of the Historical
School which regards a sacred tale as a true historical record of the
past and believes that culture spread from Egypt to the rest of the
world.

The data which Rivers presented to show that diffusion took
place are true only if the very point on which they bear is taken for
granted. In "Psychology and Ethnology", he tried to prove that there
had been culture contact and he took as an example the fact that there
were among the tribes of Melanesia many different methods of disposing
of the dead. These various methods, he said, were proof of an
admixture of the cultures of many peoples and must have been imposed by
tribes coming into the country. Thus he assumed his major premise in
an attempt to prove an example which should itself illustrate the
proposition. "Psychology and Ethnology", a book of collected essays,
holds the point of view that civilization is dependent more on historical
events than an original endowment. This was Rivers' position late in
life after having been a champion of the opposite view. He said that
through comparative study it was possible to obtain material for an
outline of human progress - a history of the movements of thought, of

the long struggle of mankind with environment, and of the countless
institutions, beliefs and customs which have been the outcome of the
struggle.   He believed such comparative study of human custom and
belief provided information for the psychologist because in the last
resort every institution of society is the outcome of mental activity.

Generally speaking, Rivers held a middle course between the
doctrines of the evolutionary and historical schools.   He evaluated
psychological factors justly but he believed that the contact of peoples,
and the blending of their cultures, act as the chief stimuli, setting in
action the forces that lead to human progress.

F. C. Bartlett tries to show the circumstances under which
culture spreads and the conditions necessary to its circulation.   He
has given a very comprehensive statement of the psychological factors
that must be considered in studying the changes and spread of culture
especially the folk-story.

Bartlett's main argument is that the behavior of a social
group is not necessarily the result of the behavior of many individuals.
He contends that the mere fact of grouping contributes many of the
determining conditions of behavior within a community.   To regard myth
as the result of an individual reaction is a fallacy, according to
Bartlett.   Myth, folk-lore and legend are social products; individual
influence affects them only as a factor to determine the form and matter
of the story by personal characteristics.

In dealing with the psychology of the popular story, says
Bartlett, (1) two questions must be answered.   The first has to do with

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(1) Psychology in Relation to the Popular Story.

motivation - "What impulses or directed tendencies are at work in the formation, retention, transmission and transformation?" The second asks - "By what processes do these impulses or tendencies come to use such material as appears in the myths?"

Bartlett suggests that the tendency towards fantasy which arises in states of fatigue, reverie or rest, is an impulse to the formation of the tales. He recognized two classes of fundamental tendencies which find expression in human social behavior.

Such basic social relationships as submission, assertion and comradeship affect a primitive community and cause stories to be produced. But running through myth, folk-lore and legend, there are also instinctive responses which are individual in character and which distinguish the myths of one tribe from those of another.

Among the different "individual instincts", such as curiosity, acquisition, sexual instinct, danger responses, finding place in the popular story, some may be especially preferred as themes for folk-tales. The order of importance of these instinctive responses depends on the external environment. Fear, for example, is not a favourite theme in the popular tale, because it tends to destroy primitive comradeship. Preferred response will differ from group to group, thus determining the content of the story. To find out how certain psychological processes will act in a given case, exhaustive research must be made into the nature of the material on which these factors will operate.

Ideas of submission, assertion and comradeship, according to Bartlett's theory, are the forms of relationship that have the greatest appeal for an audience. The members of a submissive group will like to hear stories of how an oppressed tribe overthrew its enemy by trickery. The people in an assertive group will tell stories to produce astonishment. Thus there will be a tendency to create laughter in one assembly and wonder in another. The impulses or tendencies that go to form the tales use material that will give rise to a pleasing affective tone. How it will do this depends on the relation between the material and the customs of the country, for since the story is concerned with social connections it must make a common appeal, and in its form it must be such as to call forth a general response.

Narratives of this kind are likely to be reproduced and exaggerated, especially if they are told dramatically. They may also become personal property and then the story-teller will have to keep up his reputation among competitors. Group "preferred response" willoblige him to tell the tale in certain ways, and he, in his turn, will compel the group to listen to variations which are his own.

Such interaction of collective and individual influences in the shaping of a myth suggest a line of approach in which sociological and psychological facts are given due scope. Bartlett considers it necessary to realize that certain of the psychological conditions involved are social in origin. The story or myth will still be regarded as "individual expression" but it will be treated as such,

conditioned by factors arising from social relationships. To under-

stand the mode of operation, and the effect of many of these factors,

a sociological study directed upon the character and history of

institutions is often necessary.

Frank Boas, after a survey of the stories current among

American Indians of the Northern Pacific Coast, came to the conclusion

that almost all their stories are built upon some simple event,

characteristic of the social life of the people and appealing to their

emotions. The precise turn given to the detail in a particular region

was, he said, generally due to social institutions or beliefs current

there.

Bartlett was of the same opinion when he maintained that "the

truth about the origin of myth is only to be attained from a systematic

study of the whole culture to which myth belongs, with neighboring

cultures. We need to know not only the specific customs and beliefs

but also how these act upon the story telling as we find it, in whatever

people we are studying." (1)   He believed that all available evidence

suggests that it is not the institution that is derived from the story,

but the story from the institution. This is because the people who

tell and hear the folk-story have primitive comradeship; they share the

same opinions, and act and feel alike; they preserve their stories for

the same reason that they preserve their modes of behavior.

Whatever its ultimate origin, and Bartlett says this can

never be discovered, the popular tales, in many instances, refer directly

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(1) Psychology and Primitive Culture.

to social institutions already established in the circle in which they are told, and the characteristics of these institutions are reflected in the stories.

Bronislaw Malinowski, and other Functionalists in England, stress the importance of those intangible values which cause the same trait to play very different parts in the life of people of separate cultures. They feel that it is only by observing the psychological interplay between a civilization and the minds of the individuals who live in it, that there can be any comprehension of the cultural process.

This feeling may be in part a reaction to the excess of objective data which was collected often at the expense of any psychological investigation.

The work of the functionalists is of value in directing attention to the less striking and rather elusive aspects of social life. They aim at the understanding of the nature of culture rather than at conjectural reconstructions of its evolution, or past historical events. Malinowski has shown that two tribes may possess a similar inventory of traits, and yet differ in their cultures because of dissimilar ways of combining the traits.

His book on "Myth in Primitive Psychology" is an attempt to show, with examples from typical Melanesian culture, how intimate a connection exists between the word, the myths, the sacred tales of a tribe, and their ritual acts, their moral deeds, their social organization and even their practical activities. His chief danger is a

disposition to generalize for all mankind from the results of his work in the Trobriand Islands.

Malinowski believes that in studying myths it is not so important to concentrate the attention on the actual topic of the story as on the sociological references, since without the context the text is useless. He says also that the interest of the story is vastly enhanced by the manner in which it is told, and that the performance must always be given in the proper setting.

The myth comes into play when rite, ceremony, or social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality and sanction. Myths are regarded not merely as true, but as venerable and sacred, and they play a highly important cultural role.

Late in November is the time of year when folk-tales of a special type are recited in the villages, for there is a vague belief that the narration may influence the crops just planted. Each story is owned by one member of the community and he alone is allowed to recite it. When the season approaches for the annual feast of the dead, tales are told of how death began when a girl did not recognize her grandmother after the latter had changed her skin; and how the power of rejuvenation was lost when a woman spilled some broth from a cocoanut cup on the spirit of her mother which had come back for the annual festival.

Malinowski has tried to show that folk-lore, the stories handed on in a native community, lives in the cultural context of tribal life and not merely in narrative; that the ideas, emotions and

desires associated with a given story are experienced not only when the story is told, but also when the counterpart is enacted in certain customs, moral rules or ritual proceedings. He has not advanced any theory of the actual beginning of myth. It is probable that, with Bartlett, he thinks this cannot be discovered.

In offering a solution of the question - "How and why do survivals survive?" - R.R.Marett's method is to study the peasants of any country; then, using them as a bridge, he proposes to study the savage. "Not the child, as some have thought, but the peasant is the middle term to be used in anthropology". (1)   Marett has urged that when the student of folk-lore reports a piece of rustic custom an attempt should be made to discover the emotions hidden behind the superficial sayings and doings. The idea of luck is most apt to be found among such people as fishermen who live precariously. Marett believes that savage notions of taboo and mana may have contained the same idea of luck which has persisted because it once had a place in society and was a part of human experience. Through all the changes of civilization the idea had some resisting force that kept it alive.

Therefore survivals continue to live because they are no mere wreckage of the past, but are symptomatic of those tendencies of common human nature which have the best chance of surviving in the long run.

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(1) R.R. Marett: Psychology and Folk-Lore.

IV

American anthropologists are busy recording what is left
of their ancient cultures, and while they are not so much occupied
with general theoretical problems as the English writers, yet they
adopt a point of view which supplements objective description by an
evaluation of psychological factors.

Such men as Franz Boas and A.A.Goldenweiser reject the
extremes of speculative evolutionism and diffusionism, although they
accept some of the doctrines of both theories. They think of
diffusion not as mechanical, but as a process psychological in essence.
Their general contention is that each culture group must be investi-
gated and analyzed in the light of its own historical development and
contacts; and that consideration must be given to the process of
psychological association that takes place within the group. Each
tribe is considered as a unit, but it is also studied in relation to
other tribes.

The functionalist Malinowski approves of the field work that
is being carried on in America, but he has no sympathy with the
historical method. He favors a study of the interrelations of traits
found within a tribe at the present day, rather than an historical
reconstruction of civilization as it has been, or may have been.

Most recent authorities on the subject conclude that in a
study of culture, and of its sub-divisions myth and folk-lore, it is
necessary to observe the behavior of an individual as determined by

the character of the surroundings into which he is born, and by the extent to which he may, as a unit of society, influence his environment.

"For the psychologist", says Boas, "the starting point of investigations must not be looked for in anthropological phenomena that happen to be alike in outward appearance. He must realize that in many cases diverse phenomena are based on similar psychic processes, and that these offer a promising line of attack." (1)

Earlier inquirers, Spencer, Tylor, Lang, and their followers, neither described nor examined the psychological character of tribes apart from their social surroundings. All alike began the study of the evolution of law, marriage, myth, folk-lore and religion, with the assumption of a general correspondence of mental reaction in societies of similar structure. They tried to prove that man the world over develops the same rudimentary ideas on which the whole fabric of his mental activities is based, and that although the ideas may be modified by geographical and social environment,yet they remain essentially the same. These elementary concepts have to do with such knowledge as producing fire by friction; using tools for breaking and cutting; the belief in the continuity of life; and the law forbidding intermarriage in groups.

Present day authorities have realized that mere familiarity with concrete examples can not explain the underlying psychological

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(1) Psychological Problems in Anthropology, p. 384.

processes. Neither can it tell what produced such universal conceptions nor what caused them to endure, for many anthropological phenomena alike in outward appearance, are entirely different from a psychological standpoint.

Totemism is found in widely separated regions, but Goldenweiser who has made a special study of this aspect of culture (1) has discovered that it is far from being a self-contained problem. Totemism as defined by Goldenweiser is, "the tendency of certain social units to become associated with objects and symbols of emotional value". The author of this definition has laid emphasis on the fact that totemism signifies a relation between religious and social phenomena, rather than a sum of certain concrete factors.

A comparative study of totemic culture in Australia and British Columbia shows only a superficial analogy of the characteristic features. In all tribes the clan name is derived from the totem, but in some regions the animal is worshipped as an actual ancestor, and in others it is regarded as a mere protector.

There is a similar lack of comparable motives in the valuation of human life. Franz Boas has shown that the person who slays an enemy in revenge for wrongs done; the youth who kills his father so the latter may continue a still vigorous life in the other world; the father who sacrifices his child for the wellfare of the group; all act under such different motivations that psychological comparison does not seem permissible.

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(1) Totemism, An Analytical Study.

Instead of drawing a parallel based on the common concept

of murder, it would seem much more appropriate to compare the revengeful

slaying of an enemy with the malicious destruction of his property; or

to liken the sacrifice of a child on behalf of the tribe to any other

action done from an altruistic motive.

"It seems to me that one of the fundamental points to be

borne in mind in the development of anthropological psychology is the

necessity of looking for the common feature, not in the outward

similarities of ethnic occurrences, but in the similarities of psycho-

logical processes so far as these can be observed or inferred." (1)

In a study of primitive mentality, determination of the

fundamental categories under which phenomena are classified is extremely

important. Concepts which appear alike to civilized man are frequently

separated and rearranged. Classes of ideas ordinarily considered as

attributes are often regarded as self-directing, sometimes even as

animate objects. Health, sickness, hunger or fatigue may be looked

upon as independent realities or as objects that can enter the body

and later be removed. Life may be a material object dissociated from

the body; and the sun may have the power of putting on or laying aside

its luminosity.

The concept of anthropomorphism is one of the important

categories underlying primitive thought. Consequently the line of

demarcation between man and animals is never clearly drawn, and in

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(1) Boas: Psychological Problems in Anthropology, p. 375.

savage myths there is also a regular association of cosmic phenomena with purely human events.

Boas maintains that in many cases the stories are older than their mythological significance; for while the classification of concepts and various other types of association developed unconsciously, yet many secondary explanations were due to conscious reasoning. He regards association of human and cosmic attributes as symbolic. When primitive man became aware of the problem of the universe, he ransacked the entire field of his knowledge until he happened to find something that could offer a satisfactory explanation of the difficulty.

Automatic acts are of peculiar importance in the development of customs and beliefs. The emotional value of such actions is very slight, but the more unconscious the movements are, the greater the difficulty in accomplishing the opposition action and the stronger the feeling of displeasure accompanying the performance. Besides arousing a subjective feeling of annoyance, the unfamiliar action will attract attention and will tend to bring the idea of the more usual behavior into the consciousness of the onlookers. In this way a custom will persist.

The same influences are brought to bear when a story is recited to a group; the audience objects to any deviation from the customary form.

Boas, Goldenweiser, and R.H.Lowie, have collected several examples showing that it may be possible for ancient customs to develop

into taboos amid new surroundings.

If an Eskimo tribe which has always lived in a locality where seals are very scarce, moves to a district where the animals are more plentiful, the members of the clan may refuse to kill the seals even when they themselves are starving. To destroy a seal at that season of the year, or perhaps to destroy one at all, would be a breach of custom, and hence of ethics.

By observing the events of his daily life, primitive man may obtain information which can be employed in explaining his own actions, concepts, and types of association. Boas even suggest that the desire to understand his own mode of behavior leads savage man to speculate about the phenomena of the world in general. He says, "It is a common observation that we desire or act first, and then try to justify our desires and deeds".

In all stages of culture, customary actions are made the subject of secondary explanations that have nothing to do with their historical origin but which are inferences based upon the general knowledge of the people. Primitive man performs a ritual act or keeps a taboo because it is the custom of his tribe. Civilized men of to-day belong to a certain church and vote for a certain political party, because they have been brought up to do so. They try to justify their preconceived opinions by convincing themselves that the right and desirable principles are involved therein.

Thus both savage and enlightened peoples are influenced in their behavior by heredity and environment.

Among affective causes on the hereditary side is the
group of laws determining the modes of thought and action, irrespective
of the subject matter of mental activity. Governed by these rules are
discrimination between perceptions, association of perceptions among
themselves, the interaction of stimulus and response, and the production
of emotions by the stimuli.

On the side of environmental causes, the influence of individual
expression may be significant. The greater part of man's experiences
is gained from oft-repeated impressions. The constant repetition of
particular stimuli increases the facility with which certain processes
are performed and lessens the degree of accompanying consciousness.
Thus one perception will be frequently associated with another, and one
stimulus will always call forth a specific action and a stated emotion.

A consideration of the causes of racial differences will
often show the latter to be more apparent than real, for the fundamental
traits may be the same although the social conditions are unlike.

"The difference in the mode of thought of primitive man and
that of civilized man, seems to consist largely in the difference of
character of the traditional material with which the new perception
associates itself. When a new experience enters the mind of primitive
man, the same process which we observe among civilized man brings about
an entirely different series of associations and therefore results in
a different type of explanation." (1)

Boas: The Mind of Primitive Man, p. 203.

An event or phenomenon can be explained by a human being only in so far as it can be related to a stock of ideas previously acquired. The general information possessed by civilized man is his "traditional material". Mythology and folk-lore are the traditional materials of primitive man; they determine his mode of thought and his response to environment. "Reasoning becomes more logical with the advance of civilization, not because each individual carries out his thought in a more logical manner, but because the material which is handed down has been worked over more carefully and thoughtfully." (1)

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(1)   Ibid.

PART 5

Conclusion and Bibliography.

I

"How does any group acquire its myth and folk-lore?" is
a question that can be answered only after the problem of similarities
of cultures has been solved.

It cannot be denied that identities in material culture do
exist in countries far removed from each other. But because phenomena
are apparently the same in widely separated regions, it does not
necessarily follow that there is an actual similarity in the minds of
the people in whose civilization the trait is found.

For the older evolutionary school of anthropologists there
was a temptation to detach the individual entirely from his group and
to seek a pre-social origin for social behavior. Their fundamental
ideas can be understood only as an application of the theory of
biological evolution to mental phenomena. They regarded the
resemblances of material culture in different parts of the world, as
proof not only of the essential unity of mind everywhere, but also
of the theory of evolution of civilization.

Such writers as Lang, Tylor, Freud and Frazer erred on
this side. In trying to find the ultimate origin of a custom or a
story they took some outstanding, typical belief or group practice,
and assumed that every member of a tribe experienced this belief.
Instead of considering the interaction of individual influence on the group
and of environmental

the individual, they ascribed the origin of myth and folk-lore to

a single controlling power - the evolution of thought. Their

hypothesis was proved if historical evidence showed that by parallel

development among all races of mankind, the steps of invention in

every aspect of culture, followed at least approximately. in the

same order, and that no important gaps occurred.

The facts, so far as are known at the present time, do not

support this view.

Sir E. B. Tylor maintained that the development of religion

conformed to the general law of evolution. He argued that there must

have been some stage in the history of man, corresponding to either

human or prehuman level, when religion had not yet evolved. The

problem he set himself was to determine whether that period was still

represented by any existing tribe. He found the essence of religion

to lie in animism - "the belief in Spiritual Beings"; and he inferred

the universality of religion because such a belief was reported from

all tribes on the face of the globe.

But religion in Tylor's sense is made to arise in response

to an intellectual need, such as the desire for an interpretation of

certain phenomena. On the contrary it is possible that the craving

for explanations may lead to the idea of spiritual beings without the

slightest emotional reaction of the kind essential to religion.

Observation of savage life has shown that in struggling

with everyday problems, primitive man often employs precisely the

same psychological processes of association, observation and inference as do civilized men. Therefore it is conceivable that the savage may seek answers to questions in the domain of normal experience. This is in direct opposition to Levy-Bruhl's opinion that the extraordinary fancies of savages must be rooted in a mental condition radically different from that of civilized man.

But in addition to the common "workaday world", there is also a sense of something transcending the expected or natural, a sense of the unusual, mysterious or supernatural.

To R. H. Lowie (1) the question in elaborating a definition of religion is, "Need the sense of the extraordinary be always linked with the recognition of spiritual beings?" He believes that subjective states, indistinguishable from religious ones may or may not be accompanied by animistic notions, and that this proves Tylor's theory to be rationalistic. In its place Lowie offers the following definition, "Religion is a universal feature of human culture, not because all societies foster a belief in spirits, but because all recognize in some form or other, awe-inspiring, extraordinary, manifestations of reality." (2)

Sir J. G. Frazer attempted to account for the absolute origin of rites and ceremonies in terms of individual experience, without considering the individual specifically as the member of any social

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(1) Primitive Religion.

(2) Ibid.

group. Religious observances were considered interesting principally because of the underlying beliefs which they expressed. A man, for example, belonged to a particular clan because of some association, individual or collective, with the totem animal. Sometimes his tribe was determined by the animal seen by his mother before his birth.

Myth and folk-lore were regarded by Andrew Lang as the imaginative expression of more or less uniform individual tendencies, or as any representation of very early science.

By drawing a comparison with his wish fulfilment theory of dreams, Freud maintained that the folk-tale may arise as a result of certain deep-seated individual needs and desires.

All dreams are more or less alike, they differ only according to personal experience. Therefore Freud assumed that if dreams can be made to correspond to everyday life and to myths, then individual human beings must be as alike in the content of their myths as of their dreams. In conformity with his argument he treated myth as a waking dream.

Muller's hypothesis that myths resulted from language diseased, is now itself a myth. Investigation of the languages of North American Indians has revolutionized opinions on the subject, and has shown that primitive language is, on the whole, complex. Minute differences in point of view are often expressed by grammatical forms which do not exist to-day. That linguistic processes under-lying grammatical structures are psychological is seen in the classi-fication,generalization and abstraction contained in the categories of

native grammar.

It has been remarked that, "laid away in the museum, the paddle from South America and the paddle from Africa will not seem too dissimilar." This statement may be applied with equal truth, to myth and folk-lore studied on paper. Stories reported apart from their natural surroundings, may appear to resemble each other in form; their contents, examined as living forces of culture, may be very different.

Max Muller illustrated his theory of myth by the ancient romance of Endymion and Selene - a story that had been a classic for centuries but could not be found in the folk-lore of any contemporary savage. Malinowski and Rivers have obtained their examples from tales of origin or death among the native tribes of Australia.

In one interpretation the actual setting of the story has been studied, in the other everything but the words of the myth has been disregarded.

All such expositions of folk-lore and myth overlook or belittle the importance of an objective study of the character and growth of social institutions and customs, and the reactions of groups as such. The older explanations are based on laws of psychological reaction which affect the individual as an individual, and not as a member of a tribe.

The consensus of opinion among recent authorities is that

the discovery of the individual attitude accompanying the practice

of a custom or of the belief behind the institution, should be the

last, and not the first step in a psychological study of myth and

folk-lore.

In "Psychology and Primitive Culture" Bartlett says, (1)

"The attempt to find the beginning of social customs and

"institutions in purely individual experience may be essentially

"a mistaken one. In general terms our problem is to account

"for a response made by an individual to a given set of circum-

"stances of which the group itself may be one. It is very easy

"to forget this possible determining influence of the group.....

"In all our explanations of the behavior of man in the

"primitive community, we may have to assume the existence of

"some specific group possessing certain institutions and

"customs which have already become relatively established.

"Should we attempt to go back to a more remote stage and to

"build up social customs out of a combination of purely individual

"responses, we may lay ourselves open to the charge that we are

"running beyond any known facts."

W. R. H. Rivers was similarly convinced when he said, "My

position can be stated very briefly, and in words of the utmost

simplicity. I suggest that one should ascertain what happens or has

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(1) Chapter 1.

happened before he tries to explain why it happens and has happened".(1)

A quotation from Goldenweiser supplements this point of view, "No amount of insight into psychological probabilities, into the constitution of the human mind in general, and that of the primitive man in particular, would in the least assist in the reconstruction of the development of tribes, unless one also possessed actual knowledge of their culture, past and present." (2)

But while the cultural tradition of the group may dominate, and while the individual may be conditioned in his creativeness by the social environment, yet as a unit he reacts differently from any other person in his tribe.

Paul Radin's (3) study of the Winnebago Indian serves to illustrate how the individual in primitive civilization responds to his environment and how his unique responses can set in motion those subtle changes that are the cause of cultural instability. It also points out that life in primitive, as in modern society, is full and complete for the members, and that savage culture is much less stable than has formerly been supposed.

Although the minds of primitive and civilized men are found to have similar organization, and although mental activity is assumed to obey identical laws, it does not follow that these laws will combine the same material or that they will observe the same order in evolution; and even if they do, they may not show the same manifestations. The difference is found, not in the human organism, but in the ages of learning, science and tradition.

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(1) Psychology and Ethnology, p. 7.
(2) Totemism, an Analytical Study.
(3) Personal Reminiscences of a Winnebago Indian.

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