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EDITORIAL NOTE

The idea for this Journal has come from the graduate students at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford. Papers given at graduate seminars and ideas arising from work for dipolomas and higher degrees very often merit wider circulation and discussion without necessarily being ready for formal publication in professional journals. There obviously exists a need in social anthropology for serious critical and theoretical discussion; JASO sees this as its main purpose.

The editors would like to express their deep regret at the death of Professor Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, who did so much for the Journal. In this issue we are glad to republish what was probably his first major theoretical contribution to anthropology. We hope to continue publishing his works on the history of our discipline.

The editors will welcome any further remarks on the ASA conference in reply to Mr. Crick's article. They would also like to express their thanks and appreciation to Mr. Crick, who has resigned his post as editor. Thanks are also due to Richard and Stephen Heelas who have helped with the production of the Journal.

FORMAT

The journal is published three times per year. Articles are welcome from students of anthropology and from people in other disciplines. It is preferred that the main emphasis should be on analytical discussion rather than on description or ethnography. Papers should be as short as is necessary to get the point over. As a general rule they should not exceed 5,000 words. They should follow the conventions for citations, notes and references used in the A.S.A. monographs. Comments will also be welcome. Communications should be addressed to the Journal Editors, Institute of Social Anthropology, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford.

BACK ISSUES

We have a stock of back issues. Single issues are available at 35p. in the U.K. and $1 abroad. Complete volumes (I (1970), II (1971), III (1972) and IV (1973) are each available at the following rates: U.K. - £1.00 to individuals, £1.25 to institutions; abroad - $3.00 to individuals, $3.50 to institutions. The subscription for Vol. V (1974) is the same. (All prices cover postage). Cheques should be made out to the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford, and sent to the Journal Editors at 51 Banbury Road, Oxford. We regret the rise in prices which is caused by the increased size of the Journal.

The Intellectualist (English)

Interpretation of Magic *

All scientific theory is eclectic for a scientist takes the hypotheses of his predecessors and examines them by logical tests and checks them by observation. By these means he selects what he finds to be valid in each hypothesis and works them into a co-ordinated system. He adds his own observations and inferences and these in turn serve as hypotheses till they are verified by independent workers and are recognised as true by the consensus of specialised opinion. I have worked for several years on the subject of magic both by reading and by repeated observation of magical operations among savage peoples in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and have therefore had occasion to acquaint myself with most theories of magic and to test them by direct observation.

Writers about magic may be roughly divided into three schools of interpretation, the Intellectualist, the Emotionalist, and the Sociological[1], though we might include a fourth, the Historical. The constructions of these schools overlap and some writers find themselves in all three but a division of this kind enables me more easily to define the main viewpoints from which the subject of magic has been treated and to select the problems which we have to investigate. I propose in this paper to make a digest, analysis, and criticism, of what we may call the Intellectualist school of interpretation in England, chiefly represented by Tylor and Frazer.

Tylor and Frazer approached the problems of magic from an intellectualist standpoint. They considered that primitive man had reached his conclusions about the efficacy of magic from rational observation and deduction in much the same way as men of science reach their conclusions about natural laws. Underlying all magical ritual is a rational process of thought. The ritual of magic follows from its ideology. It is true that the deductions of a magician are false – had they been true they would have been scientific and not magical – but they are nevertheless based on genuine observation. For classification of phenomena by the similarities which exist between them is the procedure of science as well as of magic and is the first essential process of human knowledge. Where the magician goes wrong is in inferring that because two things are alike in one or more respects they have a mystical link between them whereas in fact the link is not a real link but an ideal connexion in the mind of the magician. A Greek peasant is quite right in classing jaundice and gold together in virtue of their common attribute of colour but he is in error in deducing from this common attribute that they can react on each other. The African peasant is quite right in seeing a connexion between rain falling and water which he has thrown up into the air falling but he is wrong in considering that on account of the similarity between the two processes there is a causal relationship between them. A causal relationship exists in his mind but not in nature. It is a subjective and not an objective connexion. Hence the savage mistakes an ideal analogy for a real connexion.

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1. P. W. Schmidt treats the subject under three headings in his Origine et Evolution de la Religion, translated from the German. Paris. 1931.

Tylor surveyed the facts of magic as a logician. Magic was to him "One of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind"[1] but at the same time he saw that it contained a logical scheme of thought which can be well understood by civilised men of the twentieth century.

"The principal key to the understanding of Occult Science is to consider it as based on the Association of Ideas, a faculty which lies at the very foundation of human reason, but in no small degree of human unreason also. Man, as yet in a low intellectual condition, having come to associate in thought those things which he found by experience to be connected in fact, proceeded erroneously to invert this action, and to conclude that association in thought must involve similar connexion in reality. He thus attempted to discover, to foretell, and to cause events by means of processes which we can now see to have only an ideal significance."[2]

Nevertheless Tylor pointed out that this ideal or subjective association of phenomena is not haphazard but rests on a rational appreciation of the similarities which exist between phenomena, an appreciation which takes the form of analogy or symbolism. Hence we can generally see at once wherein the analogy of magical symbolism lies, in what consists the symbolic principle of magic, as Tylor calls it.

"Fanciful as these notions are, it should be borne in mind that they come fairly under definite mental law, depending as they do on a principle of ideal association, of which we can quite understand the mental action, though we deny its practical results."[3]

However, not all symbolism is of this direct and obvious kind but some of it embodies associations which have been arbitrarily invented to fill in gaps in the magical system and never has any rational sense or of which the rational sense had been forgotten.

Tylor thus implicitly, for he does not explicitly discuss the question, recognises that the difference between magic and science is the difference between a false association of phenomena in which the link is of a subjective, symbolic, and ideal, nature, on the one hand, and an association of phenomena in which the link is of an objective, and real nature, on the other hand. In the same way he does not attempt to make a clear theoretical distinction between magic and Religion but is content to claim "as a minimum definition of Religion, the belief in Spiritual Beings"[4] and to leave the rest of the supernatural to magic.

It is evident from Tylor's treatment of the subject that he realised that the province of magic and religion, thus loosely defined, must continually overlap since there is often a notion of animism in the materia medica of magical rites. That he believed the terms were best employed without too great rigidity is shown by his statement that whilst dreams are more properly treated under the heading of religion since they are attributed

1. Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, 3rd ed. 1891. Vol. 1, p. 112.

2. Edward B. Tylor. Primitive Culture, pp. 115-116. The same type of explanation is given in his earlier work Researches into the Early History of Mankind. 1870. p. 129.

3. Id. p. 119.

4. Id. p. 424.

to spiritual intercourse nevertheless the art of oneiromancy, the art of taking omens from dreams by analogical interpretation, (e.g. the dreams of Joseph), may be treated under the heading of magic.
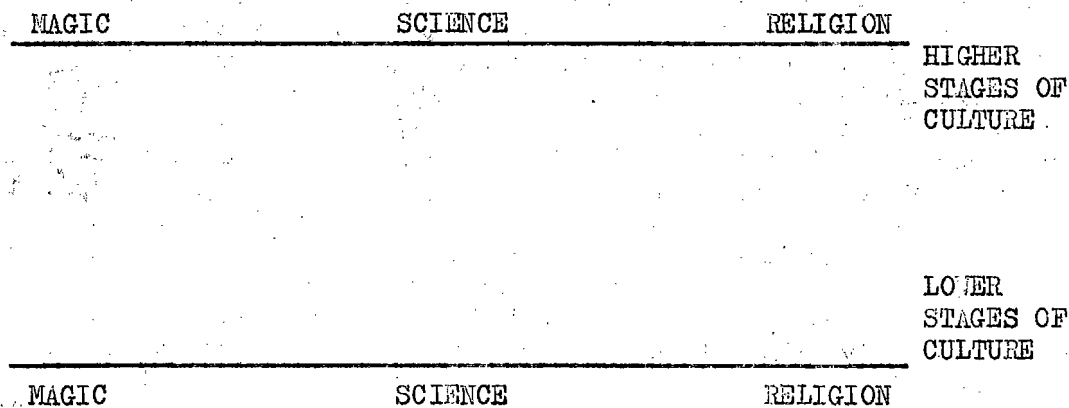
Tylor's theory of animism, the substratum of all religious experience, is typical of his intellectualist bias in examining the beliefs of primitive man and may be compared with his discussion of magic when it will be clearer from an analysis of his treatment of religion how he came to reach his conclusions about magic than if we read his views on magic alone. Tylor was of the opinion that mankind came to believe in the human soul and, by extension, in the souls of animals and plants and even of objects which we call inanimate objects, through an effort to account rationally for such phenomena as life and death, waking and sleeping, disease and trance, dreams and visions.[1]

His treatment of religious facts throughout thus follows the same method of rationalistic interpretation as his treatment of magical facts. This is well illustrated when he asks how it is that mankind has for so long placed implicit faith in "the whole monstrous farrago" of symbolic magic in which there is no truth whatever. Explaining the logic of magic, as Tylor does, by interpreting it as a rational, if mistaken, inference from natural phenomena, he feels the need to account in a similar manner for the fact that primitive man did not perceive its falsehood. He explains what appears to us as unaccountable density of intelligence on the grounds that magic is not obviously futile since (1) the arts of magic are associated often with commonsense behaviour; the cunning and knowledge of the magician achieving what his ritual fails to achieve: (2) it is difficult to perceive the fallacy of the magic art when what it sets out to achieve so often follows its practice; nature performing what the magic appears to perform: (3) when a magic rite fails, its failure is not attributed to the futility of the rite, but to neglect of one of the prescriptions or prohibitions which accompany its performance: (4) there are always hostile forces at work which may counteract a magic rite, rival practitioners in particular furnishing a useful excuse for failure: (5) the plasticity of such notions as success and failure allow that what seems to some people a complete failure may seem to others a comparative or partial success. People everywhere find it hard to appreciate evidence and one success outweighs in their minds and memories many failures: (6) the very weight of authority behind magical practice forces men to accept what adds support and confirmation and to reject instances which contradict its claims.

The two positive contributions made by Tylor to a study of magic were the unravelling of its symbolic principle or its idealogical logic and his analysis of the causes which have prevented its exposure as a fraud. Both have the merit that they are capable of psychological and sociological investigation and can therefore be scientifically rejected or accepted. Tylor's account also, in my opinion, contained a negative virtue, a virtue all the more to be commended when his bias towards evolutionary interpretation of culture is taken into account. Whilst tracing the development of magical and animistic ideas both in the known chronology of history and in the logical stratification of cultural types he made no attempt to build out of his facts a hierarchy of historic stages of magic, religion, and science, an error into which Frazer was to fall. Tylor contented himself with demonstrating beyond doubt that whether we consider those cultures whose history we know, and compare the earlier forms of their cultures with the later forms of their development, or if we compare

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1. Id. p. 428.

the more primitive societies in the world today with the more advanced
societies, we shall find the same broad statement to hold true, that every-
where there is magic and religion and science but that in the later stages
of development or in the more advanced societies magical and animistic ideas
play a lesser part in the thought and behaviour of men than in the earlier
stages of development or in the more primitive societies. In modern
civilisation they tend to become idealised or to survive as superstition,
though a tinge of pessimism suffuses Tylor's thought when he considers the
human psyche and its limitations and makes him conscious that nothing
survives which does not spring from deep-lying mental causes whose opera-
tion continues always and may at any moment change what appears to be a
languishing survival into a flourishing revival. We may perhaps, there-
fore, present Tylor's scheme of development in a simple diagrammatic form,
as we may imagine he would have presented it himself.

MAGIC   SCIENCE   RELIGION
_____
                                                          HIGHER
                                                          STAGES OF
                                                          CULTURE

                                                          LOWER
                                                          STAGES OF
                                                          CULTURE
_____
MAGIC   SCIENCE   RELIGION

Frazer added little that was new to Tylor's brief survey of magic but he
expanded the salient points of the survey and made a deeper analysis of
their meaning. Arguments implicit in Tylor's account are developed as
explicit theses, illustrated by a lavish catalogue of examples, by Frazer.
But if Frazer has built substantially on the foundations laid by Tylor
he has also fallen into some pits which his cautious predecessor avoided.
We will discuss his contribution under five headings: (1) his analysis
of the logic of magic, (2) his theory of the relationship of magic to
science, (3) his theory of the relationship of magic to religion,
(4) his chronological scheme of development of magic to religion and from
religion to science, (5) his observations on the part played by magic in
political development.

(1) Whilst Tylor showed that there is a false association of ideas
underlying the ideology of magic he did not then proceed to classify into
types the analogies upon which it is based. This task Frazer has accomplished
in his Golden Bough which rightly ranks among the great achievements of
English literature and scholarship. He writes:

"If we analyse the principles of thought upon which magic is based,
they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first that like
produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that
things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on
each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The
former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, the latter the Law
of Contact or Contagion. From the first of these principles, namely the
Law of Similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he
desires merely by imitating it: from the second he infers that whatever

he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not. Charms based on the Law of Similarity may be called Homoeopathic or Imitative Magic. Charms based on the Law of Contact or Contagion may be called Contagious Magic."[1]

And again he says:

"If my analysis of the magician's logic is correct its two great principles turn out to be merely two different misapplications of the association of ideas. Homoeopathic Magic is founded on the association of ideas by similarity. Contagious Magic is founded on the association of ideas by contiguity. Homoeopathic magic makes the mistake of assuming that things which resemble each other are the same: contagious magic commits the mistake of assuming that things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact."[2]

In other words we may say that to a European observer all acts of magic rest upon one or other, or both, of two simple modes of classifying phenomena, by the similarities which exist between them and by their contiguous position in relation to each other. This is a scientific, objective, mode of classification but the ideas of objects which are similar or contiguous are linked in the savage mind by a notion that there is real connexion between them. Hence it is thought they have a sympathetic relationship between them and can act on each other. So Frazer classes the two types of association under a single heading:[3]

SYMPATHETIC MAGIC
Law of Sympathy

Homoeopathic Magic   Contagious Magic
(Law of Similarity)   (Law of Contact)

Into this scheme of magic Frazer has incorporated in the second edition of the Golden Bough the notion of taboo as Negative Magic and he considers that the basis of taboo is just those two Laws of Similarity and Contact which are the invariable laws of magical thought.

The inclusion of taboos in Frazer's general theory of magic gave it a more rounded form and a fuller comprehension of the cluster of facts which are included in the performance of a magical rite. In his own words:[4]

"For it is to be observed that the system of sympathetic magic is not merely composed of positive precepts: it comprises a very large number of negative precepts, that is, prohibitions. It tells you not merely what

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1. Sir J. G. Frazer. The Golden Bough, 3rd ed. 1922, Vol. 1., p. 52.

2. Id. pp. 53-54.

3. Sir J. G. Frazer. The Golden Bough, 3rd ed. 1922, Vol. 1., p. 54.

4. Id. pp. 111-112.

to do, but also what to leave undone. The positive precepts are charms:
the negative precepts are taboos. In fact the whole doctrine of taboo, or
at all events a large part of it, would seem to be only a special applica-
tion of sympathetic magic, with its two great laws of similarity and
contact. Though these laws are certainly not formulated in so many words
nor even conceived in the abstract by the savage, they are nevertheless
implicitly believed by him to regulate the course of nature quite independ-
ently of human will. He thinks that when he acts in a certain way, certain
consequences will inevitably follow by virtue of one or other of these laws;
and if the consequences of a particular act appear to him likely to prove
disagreeable or dangerous, he is naturally careful not to act in that way
lest he should incur them. In other words, he abstains from doing that
which, in accordance with his mistaken notions of cause and effect, he
falsely believes would injure him; in short, he subjects himself to a taboo.
Thus taboo is so far a negative application of practical magic. Positive
magic or sorcery say 'Do this in order that so and so may happen.'
Negative magic or taboo say 'Do not do this, lest so and so should happen.'
The aim of positive magic or sorcery is to produce a desired event; the
aim of negative magic or taboo is to avoid an undesirable one. But both
consequences, the desirable and the undesirable, are supposed to be brought
about in accordance with the laws of similarity and contact."

Thus with the inclusion of taboo in his analysis of magic Frazer
presents his conception of the theory and practice of magic in the following
diagram:

MAGIC

Theoretical
(magic as pseudo-science)

Practical
(magic as a pseudo-
art)

Positive magic
or
Sorcery

Negative magic
or
Taboo
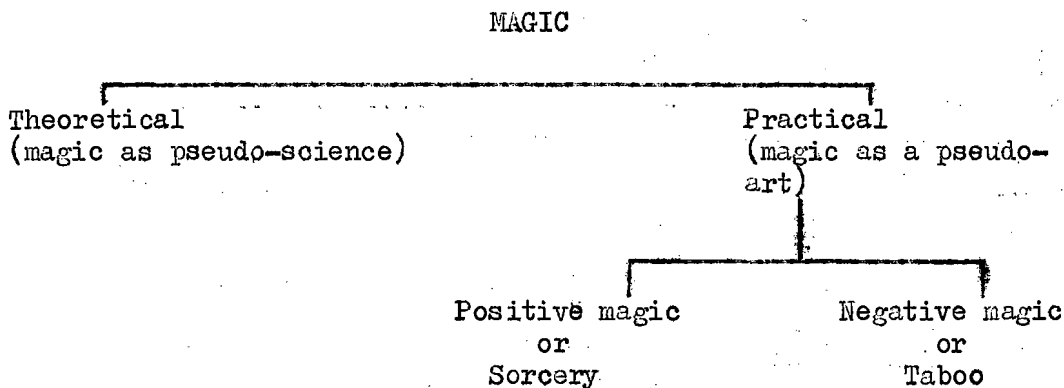
When Frazer asks himself why the beliefs and experiments of magic are
not at once detected as fraud by the sensible savage, he answers by giving
one of the several reasons enumerated by Tylor to account for such
supineness, namely that the end aimed at in a magical rite is actually
attained sooner or later by processes of nature. Hence the very failure
by primitive man to detect the fallacies of magic is a tribute to his
rational and enquiring mind which is able to observe that magic rites and
such happenings as rain falling, wind blowing, sun rising, man dying, have
a temporal sequence which may fairly be considered a causal sequence.
Hence the primitive philosopher may point to the evidence of his senses
as proving to any intelligent man that magic is a sensible belief. More-
over it is part of Frazer's argument that the more intelligent minds did
at least perceive the futility of magic.

(2) The analogy between the basic ideas of magic and those of science
which we find merely sketched by Tylor is presented to us as a finished
picture by Frazer. To him magic represents a Weltanschauung in every way
comparable to the Weltanschauung of science. Both view nature as "a series

of events occurring in an invariable order without the intervention of personal agency".[1] In a well known passage Frazer has stated his theory of the intellectual kinship of magic to science.[2]

"For the same principles which the magician applies in the practice of his art are implicitly believed by him to regulate the operations of inanimate nature; in other words, he tacitly assumes that the Laws of Similarity and Contact are of universal application and are not limited to human actions. In short, magic is a spurious system of natural law as well as a fallacious guide of conduct; it is a false science as well as an abortive art. Regarded as a system of natural law, that is, as statement of the rules which determine the sequence of events throughout the world, it may be called Theoretical Magic; regarded as a set of precepts which human beings observe in order to compass their ends, it may be called Practical Magic. At the same time it is to be born in mind that the primitive magician knows magic only on its practical side; he never analyses the mental processes on which his practice is based, never reflects on the abstract principle involved in his actions. With him, as with the vast majority of men, logic is implicit, not explicit; he reasons just as he digests his food in complete ignorance of the intellectual and physiological processes which are essential to the one operation and to the other. In short, to him magic is always an art, never a science; the very idea of science is lacking in his undeveloped mind. It is for the philosophic student to trace the train of thought which underlies the magician's practice; to draw out the few simple threads of which the tangled skein is composed; to disengage the abstract principles from their concrete applications; in short, to discern the spurious science behind the bastard art."

And again:

"Wherever sympathetic magic occurs in its pure unadulterated form, it assumes that in nature one event follows another necessarily and invariably without the intervention of any spiritual or personal 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. The magician does not doubt that the same causes will always produce the same effects, that the performance of the proper ceremony, accompanied by the appropriate spell, will inevitably be attended by the desired results, unless, indeed, his incantations should chance to be thwarted and foiled by the more potent charms of another sorcerer. He supplicates no higher power: he sues the favour of no fickle and wayward being: he abases himself before no awful deity."[3]

Magic assumes "a sequence of events determined by law".[4] Science differs from magic not in its assumptions and approach to reality but in the validity of its concepts and the efficacy of its art.

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1. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed., 1922, vol. I, p. 51.

2. Id., pp. 52-53.

3. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed., 1922, Vol. I, p. 220.

4. Id., p. 221.

(3) Frazer's distinction between magic and science by the test of objective validity clearly will not hold as a means of differentiating magic from religion, between which Frazer saw "a fundamental distinction and even opposition of principle."[1] Magic is to him something different in kind to religion and not merely the earliest phase in the development of its thought. He differentiates between them in much the same manner as Tylor. Tylor considered belief in spiritual beings to constitute religion and recognised that belief invariably leads to cult. Frazer stresses the cult rather more than Tylor; otherwise their theories are identical. Religion according to Frazer is:

"A propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life. Thus defined, religion consists of two elements, a theoretical and a practical, namely, a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them."[2]

Hence religion assumes that nature is under the control of spirits and that these spirits can alter its course as they please. Frazer contrasts this notion of a plastic and variable nature with the notion of nature subject to immutable laws as postulated by magic and science.

"The distinction between the two conflicting views of the universe turns on their answer to the crucial question. Are the forces which govern the world conscious and personal, or unconscious and impersonal? Religion, as a conciliation of the superhuman powers, assumes the former of the alternative. For all conciliation implies that the being conciliated is a conscious or personal agent, that his conduct is in some measure uncertain, and that he can be prevailed upon to vary it in the desired direction by a judicious appeal to his interests, his appetites, or his emotions. Conciliation is never employed towards things which are regarded as inanimate, nor towards persons whose behaviour in the particular circumstances is known to be determed with absolute certainty. Thus in so far as religion assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion, it stands in fundamental antagonism to magic as well as to science, both of which take for granted that the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically. In magic, indeed, the assumption is only implicit, but in science it is explicit."[3]

Frazer recognises the problem of reconciling this definition with recorded knowledge of barbaric cultures in which the gods are influenced by magic or are even themselves magicians. Are not magic and religion, as Frazer defines them, in such cases an insoluble compound of ritual and belief? From his intellectualist position Frazer says that they are not insoluble for in such cases it is easy to see whether mankind treats the gods in the same way as he treats inanimate objects, as subject to his spells which they are bound to obey through the same immutable laws as

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1. Id., Preface, xx.

2. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed., 1922, vol. I, p. 222

3. Id. p. 223.

regulate all natural and magical causation, or whether mankind
admits their absolute control over nature and tries to conciliate or
propitiate them in consequence of his belief in their powers.

(4) But it is not merely in their philosophies and in their modes
of attempting to control nature that magic and religion are different.
They belong to different strata in the history of human development and
where we find that they have amalgamated we may regard this overlapping
of one stage on to the other as being in no sense primitive and we may
conclude that "there was a time when man trusted to magic alone for the
satisfaction of such wants as transcended his immediate animal cravings."[1]
For this startling conclusion, borrowed from Jevons, Frazer gives us three
reasons. Firstly he claims that magic is logically more primitive than
religion, and may therefore be fairly considered to belong to an earlier
stage in the development of thought, since the simplest recognition of
similarity or contiguity of ideas is not so complex as the conception of
personal agents, even animals being supposed to associate the ideas of
things which are like each other or which have been found together in
their experience, while no one attributes to the brutes a belief in
spiritual agents. To this purely deductive argument Frazer adds a second
and inductive observation. He claims that among the aborigines of Australia,

"the rudest savages as to whom we possess accurate information, magic is
universally practised, whereas religion in the sense of a propitiation or
conciliation of the highest powers seems to be nearly unknown. Roughly
speaking, all men in Australia are magicians, but not one is a priest;
everybody fancies he can influence his fellows or the course of nature by
sympathetic magic, but nobody dreams of propitiating gods by prayer and
sacrifice."[2]

It is not, therefore, unreasonable, says Frazer, to deduce from the
fact that the most backward culture in the world is prolific in magic and
barren in religion that all other races have advanced to their higher
cultural position through the same historic stages of development from
magic to religion and he asks whether the recorded facts from Australia
do not justify the query that "just as on the material side of human
culture there has been everywhere an Age of Stone, so on the intellectual
side there has everywhere been an Age of Magic?".[3]

His third argument in favour of the priority of magic asserts that
since we find everywhere an enormous variation in the forms of religious
belief while the essence of magical belief is always the same we may
assume that just as magic represents a substratum of belief in civilised
communities whose upper social elements are busied with some one or other
of the multitude of religious creeds so it represents as well an earlier,
more primitive, phase of thought in the history of the human race in which
all men held the same magical faith.

"This universal faith, this truly Catholic creed, is a belief in
the efficacy of magic. While religious systems differ not only in
different countries, but in the same country in different ages, the system

1. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed., 1922, Vol. I, p. 233.

2. Id., p. 234

3. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd. ed., 1922, Vol. I, p. 235.

of sympathetic magic remains everywhere and at all times substantially alike in its **principles** and practice. Among the ignorant and superstitious classes of modern Europe it is very much what it was thousands of years ago in Egypt and India, and what is now among the lowest savages surviving in the remotest corners of the world. If the test of truth lay in a show of hands or a counting of heads, the system of magic might appeal, with far more reason than the Catholic Church, to the proud motto, "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus," as the sure and certain credential of its own infallibility." [1]

Frazer then proceeds to enquire about the process of mental change from an exclusive belief in magic to a belief in religion also. He thinks that he can do no more than "hazard a more or less plausible conjecture" about this change in orientation of belief. This conjecture is that the shrewder intelligences began to see that magic did not really accomplish what it set out to accomplish and fell back on the belief that there were beings, like themselves, who directed the course of nature and who must be placated and cajoled into granting man what he had hitherto believed himself able to bring about through magic on his own initiative.

"The shrewder intelligences must in time have come to perceive that magical ceremonies and incantations did not really effect the results which they were designed to produce, and which the majority of their simpler fellows still believed that they did actually produce. This great discovery of the in-efficacy of magic must have wrought a radical though probably slow revolution in the minds of those who had the sagacity to make it. The discovery amounted to this, that men for the first time recognised their inability to manipulate at pleasure certain natural forces which hitherto they had believed to be completely within their control. It was a confession of human ignorance and weakness. Man saw that he had taken for causes what were no causes, and that all his efforts to work by means of these imaginary causes had been vain. His painful toil had been wasted, his curious ingenuity had been squandered to no purpose. He had been pulling at strings to which nothing was attached; he had been marching, as he thought, straight to the goal, while in reality he had only been treading in a narrow circle. Not that the effects which he had striven so hard to produce did not continue to manifest themselves. They were still produced, but not by him. The rain still fell on the thirsty ground: the sun still pursued his daily, and the moon her nightly journey across the sky: the silent procession of the seasons still moved in light and shadow, in cloud and sunshine across the earth: men were still born to labour and sorrow, and still, after a brief sojourn here, were gathered to their fathers in the long home hereafter. All things indeed went on as before, yet all seemed different to him from whose eyes the old scales had fallen. For he could no longer cherish the pleasing illusion that it was he who guided the earth and the heaven in their courses, and that they would cease to perform their great revolutions were he to take his feeble hand from the wheel. In the death of his enemies and his friends he no longer saw a proof of the resistless potency of his own or of hostile enchantments; he now knew that friends and foes alike had succumbed to a force stronger than any that he could wield, and in obedience to a destiny which he was powerless to control." [2]

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1. Id., pp. 235-6.

2. Sir. J. G. Frazer, <u>The Golden Bough</u>, 3rd ed., 1922, Vol. I, pp. 237-8.

In the end magic is suppressed by religion and eventually comes under the ban of the priesthood as a black art. So at a late period in the development of human thought we find a distinction drawn between religion and superstition, magic being classed as a superstition.

"But when, still later, the conception of the elemental forces as personal agents is giving way to the recognition of natural law; then magic, based as it implicitly is on the idea of a necessary and invariable sequence of cause and effect, independent of personal will, reappears from the obscurity and discredit into which it had fallen, and by investigating the causal sequences in nature, directly prepares the way for science. Alchemy leads up to chemistry."[1]

(5) Finally Frazer rounds off his account of magic by showing the part it has played in the history of political development. Magic is practised in primitive societies not only by private individuals for their own private purposes but also by public functionaries on behalf of the whole community and these men are able to gain great wealth and repute and may acquire rank and authority by their ritual functions. Moreover the profession of public magician selects the ablest, most ambitious, and most unscrupulous, men in society since it sets a premium on knavish imposture. That 'public magic' is often a road to political influence and social prestige and private affluence Frazer shows by many actual examples from Australia, New Guinea, Melanesia, and Africa, and he justly concludes that:

"in point of fact magicians appear to have often developed into chiefs and kings. Not that magic is the only or perhaps even the main road by which men have travelled to a throne."[2]

In this progress from magician to king the fear inspired by ritual power is backed by the wealth the magician is able to amass in the exercise of his profession. The profession of magician appears to be the earliest professional class in human society and the first sign of social differentiation. Frazer then brings his thesis of political development into connexion with his theory of the chronological sequence of magic to religion. For he believes that the evolution of the magician-chief goes hand in hand with the breakdown of magic and the birth of religion. Hence the magician as he gains political supremacy tends at the same time to emerge as the priest.

"Hence the king starting as a magician, tends gradually to exchange the practice of magic for the priestly functions of prayer and sacrifice. And while the distinction between the human and the divine is still imperfectly drawn, it is often imagined that men may themselves attain to godhead not merely after their death, but in their life time, through the temporary or permanent possession of their whole nature by a great and powerful spirit."[3]

While Tylor traced the changes which have taken place in the form and functions of magic, religion, and science, through the ages and kept his conception of their growth and decay within the limits set by knowledge

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1. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed., 1922, Vol. I. p. 374.

2. Id., p. 332.

3. Sir J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 3rd ed., 1922, Vol. I., p. 372.

derived from history and a comparative study of cultures, Frazer traced
the progress of human thought through stratified grades of unilinear develop-
ment, each grade representing a step on which mankind has everywhere
rested awhile on his path of upward progress. We may therefore present
Frazer's scheme diagrammatically to compare it with the diagrammatic
presentation which we have drawn to demonstrate Tylor's viewpoint.

SCIENCE	HIGHER CULTURES
RELIGION	
MAGIC	LOWER CULTURES

     Having summarised the theories of Tylor and Frazer I shall now try
to sort them out and class them as hypotheses capable of inductive proof
and in accordance with present knowledge, hypotheses which cannot be
proved inductively but which have heuristic value, and hypotheses which
are useless either because they are contrary to ascertained facts or being
beyond proof or disproof by inductive enquiry lack also even heuristic
value. Into the last class come Frazer's theories about the affective
and ideational similarity between magic and science, about the development
of thought through stages of magic, religion, and science, and the greater
part of his analysis of magical symbolism.

     Tylor and Frazer were both dominated by the evolutionary ideas of
their time and tended to see different types of behaviour as representatives
of historic stages. Frazer especially arranged his types in a temporal
sequence which was hardly justified by his methods of investigation. He
could have shown the historical development of magic and science, as
Thorndike, for instance, has done, in a definite culture of which we have
historical knowledge, or he could have carefully defined cultural types
on a consensus of cultural traits and demonstrated the correlation between
these types and modes of thought. He used neither of these methods with
the result that his theory of evolutionary progress of mankind through stages
of magic, religion, and science, has earned Marett's title of a platonic
myth and it is possible that Frazer would have been content with this
description and regarded his scheme as a convenient framework on which to
weave his vast assortment of facts. There is nothing in Frazer's arguments
which proves a chronological priority for magic over religion and empirical
knowledge. Frazer's argument that the Australians, who have the simplest
material culture we know, show much magical and little religious behaviour
falls to the ground on the impact of critical analysis. It has been pointed
out that other peoples who may be considered as low in the cultural scale
as the Australians, have little magic; that the Australians cannot be
taken as a cultural unit since they differ widely among themselves; and
that moreover many Australian tribes have pronounced animistic beliefs and
cults. Frazer's plea that animals make mental associations between
phenomena and that this is also the essence of magical beliefs is a very
remote and superficial analogy. Magic is a system of ritual techniques and
not simple mental associations between phenomena. Moreover this evolutionary
theory suffers from the same drawback as others of its kind, namely that

it is quite beyond proof or disproof. If anyone had been present when men performed their first rites he might have recorded their nature and we could then have classified them as religion or magic according to our several formulae. Frazer's theory of how mankind changed from a magical to a religious view of the universe is hardly presented as a serious thesis and is not treated as one here.

Nevertheless the priority in time of magic over religion, though it cannot be inductively proved might have been deductively concluded if Frazer had made an exhaustive survey of the facts by the method of correlation such as was employed by Tylor, Steinmetz, and Hobhouse, Ginsberg and Wheeler. It might be possible to show that magic is specially prominent in those societies with a low technological equipment and undeveloped political organisation and that when we examine types of society with more efficient technology and more complex social organisation we find a greater absence of magical rites and a greater number of religious ones and that finally we reach societies of greatest technical efficiency and most complex social life in which magic is almost absent and religion less prominent than in the second type while behaviour and thought are becoming more and more exclusively empirical.

An analysis of the kind suggested here, particularly of the correlation of magical and empirical thought with forms of social behaviour would be well worth the labour that it would cost. There can be no doubt that magic as a dominant form of social behaviour is restricted to savage and barbarous peoples. This does not mean that all uncivilised societies are magic-ridden nor does it mean that magic is totally unknown in civilised communities.[1] What it means is that if we trace the changes which have taken place in those civilisations for which we possess written history we shall find that there is a slow and cumulative increase in empirical knowledge and a slowly diminishing body of magical knowledge and that also if we compare societies without the art of writing and without advanced technology with those that possess the art of writing and are technologically advanced we shall find that on the whole the technique of magic is less prominent a mode of behaviour in the latter than in the former. We may say therefore that magic is a technique characteristic of simple societies and tends to disappear with the advancement of civilisation, a point of view advanced by Tylor and strikingly developed by Levy-Bruhl in the provoking contrast he makes between Primitive Mentality and Civilised Mentality.

If we mean by science an elaborate system of knowledge, the result of experimentation in the hands of specialists, such as we think of when we speak about science today, there is little difficulty in assigning to it an historical stage in the development of human thought. But if we mean any correct knowledge of natural processes and acquaintance with technological methods then it is clearly improper to place science at one end and magic at the other end of a series of developmental stages, as Frazer has done, since it is evident that no peoples could possibly have lived in a state of culture sufficient to engage in ritual unless they first had sufficient technological knowledge to master their environment. You cannot have agricultural or hunting magic unless you have agriculture and

1. A vast literature could be cited on magical rites practised by the peasantry of Europe.

hunting. Moreover, the most primitive societies of today are always found
to be equipped with a sound knowledge of nature. The difference between
scientific knowledge used in the first sense and scientific knowledge used
in the second sense is one of degree but it may be generally stated that
the first usage means that you understand that certain things do happen
invariably and that the second usage means that you understand how and
why they happen. In the first case you know that if you plant maize seeds
in a certain type of ground at a certain time of the year maize will grow.
In the second case you know why the seeds grow at all, why they grow in
one soil and not in another, and why they grow at one time of the year and
not at another. But even here there are many degrees of knowledge and the
empirical shades into the scientific.

It is never clear what Frazer means by science for he uses the word
now in one sense now in another but on the whole he seems to mean the
conscious striving after knowledge, the systems of criticism and controls,
and the use of logic and experiment, which the word implies in ordinary
usage today. Used in this sense the analogy which he draws between science
and magic is unintelligible. He says that science and magic both visualize
a uniform nature subject to invariable laws and that the scientist and the
magician have a like psychological approach to nature. It is clear from
accounts of savages that they have no conception of nature as a system
organized by laws and in any case the utilisation of magic to influence the
course of nature is surely in direct opposition to the scientist's con-
ception of the universe. You cannot both believe in natural law and that
you can delay the sun by placing a stone in the fork of a tree. If there
are any regularities and uniformities of thought they are in the workings
of magic and not of nature. But the whole discussion seems rather point-
less for you have to be a scientist to note regularities and uniformities
and organise them into a conscious theory of the universe. Indeed Frazer
himself speaks of the magical view of the universe subject to law and
expressing uniformity as implicit and not explicit and it is difficult to
see any sense in theoretical magic which is not explicit. All it can
mean is that if we used magic in the same way as the savage uses it we
would have a theory that the world was sufficiently regular in its working
for us to rely on magic to control it since it may be expected always to
react in the same manner to the performance of the same spell or rite.
We should generalise our experiences in this manner because we are scienti-
fically orientated but since we are scientifically orientated we should at
once perceive the fallacy of magic. With regard to the supposition that
the man of science and the man of magic both approach their task with
quiet confidence and masterful assurance and that their psychology contrasts
with the nervous apprehension and humility of the man of religion it can
only be said that Frazer produces no facts in support of his contention.

The apparent futility of Frazer's analogy between science and magic
is due to the fact that he sees both as modes of thinking and not as learnt
modes of technical behaviour with concomitant speech forms. If he had
compared a magical rite in its entirety with a scientific performance in
its entirety instead of comparing what he supposes to go on in the brain
of a magician with what he supposes to go on in the brain of a scientist
he would have seen the essential difference between science and magic.
This difference is most strikingly shown in the experimental standpoint
on the two modes of behaviour. Science experiments and is open to ex-
perience and ready to make adjustments in its notions of reality whereas
magic is relatively non-experimental and the magician is impervious to
experience, as science understands the term, since he employs no methods
of testing or control. If moreover Frazer had not brought the scientific

specialist on to the scene in order to compare him with the magical specialist but had compared magical knowledge and behaviour with scientific knowledge and behaviour, that is to say had compared those forms of knowledge which accord with objective reality with those which distort objective reality and those forms of behaviour which achieve their purpose with those forms of behaviour which are only believed to achieve their purpose, and had compared them as types of thought and behaviour in the same cultural conditions instead of in totally different cultural conditions, his investigations would have been of greater value. He might have compared empirical behaviour with magical behaviour among the savages of Australia and observed their interaction, their social inter-relations, and their concomitant psychological states, with some chance of reaching valid conclusions about the differences which exist between them. Lévy-Bruhl who took an exactly opposite point of view, holding that magical thought and scientific thought stand to each other as black to white, made the same mistake of comparing our science with savage magic instead of comparing savage empiricism with savage magic.

Besides suffering from the influence of current psychological and evolutionary theories Frazer's exposition also suffered from current methodological deficiencies. He used what is known as the comparative method and this does not mean the conviction that any scientific generalisation must rest on a comparative study of similar phenomena, a conviction common to all men of science and an essential part of their methodology, but a particular way of comparing phenomena which was extensively used by all anthropological writers at the end of the last century. It consisted in selecting from a vast mass of data, uneven and often poor in quality, whatever phenomena appeared to belong to the same type. This proved to be a very dangerous proceeding because the selection of facts was made on the grounds of similarity between phenomena in virtue of a single common quality. The qualities which were different in each instance were neglected. This is a perfectly sound method of scientific analysis so long as conclusions are restricted to the particular quality abstracted and it is not then assumed that because phenomena are alike in respect to this single quality that they are alike in other respects which have not been subject to critical comparative analysis. In a study of social facts the procedure is all the more hazardous for these are defined by their inter-relations and if they are abstracted from their social milieu it is essential to realise that they are only comparable in a limited number of respects and not as complete social facts. By use of the comparative method Frazer was successful in demonstrating that the ideology of magic rests upon fundamental laws of thought for it is possible to isolate the ideological associations of a vast number of magical rites and to compare them simply as examples of evident notions which are the raw material of all human thought. But when Frazer then proceeds to find a similarity between magic and science merely because the scientist and the magician use the processes of all thought building, sensation, abstraction, and comparison, the procedure is clearly inadmissible because it does not follow from the fact that both magic and science display in their ideologies the most elementary processes of thought that there is any real similarity between scientific and magical techniques and systems of thought. This pars pro toto fallacy is again shown in Frazer's argument that because magic and science both disregard spiritual beings they are similar in virtue of this absent association. This is equivalent to saying that x is not y and z is not y and that therefore x and z are the same. I conclude therefore that Frazer's theories of the similarity between magic and science and of their historic stages are unsupported by either sound evidence or logic and that they have little heuristic value. Indeed they are formulated in such a manner that it is

difficult to present them in a scientific form at all and consequently they
impede rather than assist us in our quest. It is useless to attempt to
solve the queries which Frazer raises. We have to formulate the problems
anew if we are to conduct a scientific enquiry.

Of what value is the whole Tylor-Frazer conception of magic as a
mistaken association of ideas? Here we may distinguish between two
propositions:

(1) in the words and actions of magic we can discern the operation
of certain elementary laws of thought. The associations which link the
rite and its objective are so simple that they are evident to us who are
far removed from the cultures in which magic flourishes. They are found
to rest on perception of position and perception of similarities.

(2) These associations are to us no more than memory images of
qualities of things which have an ideal relationship in our minds but the
savage mistakes these ideal relations for real relations in the world
around him. We and savages both think in the same way insofar as per-
ception and comparison of sensations are concerned but the savage then
leaves us behind and goes a step further by believing that because two
things are associated together in his memory image that they are objectively
associated. He believes that because things are like each other they will
act on each other since they are bound by an invisible link.

We can accept the first proposition without hesitation. It was
clearly enunciated by Tylor and abundantly illustrated by Frazer. We can
adopt the terminology of the Golden Bough and speak of Homoeopathic Magic
and Contagious Magic. But it is surprising that Frazer made no deeper
analysis, for to tell us that magical thought rests on perception of posi-
tion and similarities is not to tell us much since these are the elementary
processes of all thought and it follows from the fact that magic is man-made.
A more comprehensive analysis could be made by listing the particular
qualities of objects which are associated in the ideology of magic. For
example in the instance of the gold-jaundice association it is the quality
of colour. The mental associations embodied in magic can thus be resolved
into even simpler elements than Frazer's laws of similarity and contagion;
they can be resolved into the simplest of conscious sensations and the
notions and memory images resulting from them. It can be shown upon which
abstractions magic is built up, whether of sight, hearing, odour, taste,
or touch. When a stone figures in magic which of its qualities is ab-
stracted in the magical association, its size, its colour, its roughness,
its temperature, or its weight? Magical associations can likewise be
resolved into elementary notions of the dimensions of sensations, position
in space, position in time, dimensions of size, and so on. He might also
have shown us how in a complicated rite a single part of a process is sel-
ected to stand for the whole, as Thurnwald has done. A third, but difficult,
task would be to show whether it figures in a number of cultural situations;
sometimes even being given a permanence and inevitability by language.
Are gold and jaundice associated together only in the magical situation
of therapeutic treatment or have they an association outside this situation
in the minds of Greek peasants? An example of association fixed by language
is elephantiasis for when we speak of the disease we inevitably mention
this animal. The Azande of the Nile-Uelle Divide make the same comparison
and the association is embodied in the word and is therefore not restricted
to situations in which elephant's foot is used to cure elephantiasis. We
have to enquire also whether the abstraction of a quality in magical
associations is always a culturally indicated perception, e.g. in colour

associations; and other lines of enquiry could be suggested.

The second proposition is most misleading and is illustrative of one of those perilous leaps backwards and forwards in the dark from observable social behaviour to individual psychological processes which distinguish anthropological gymnastics. Frazer's argument runs as follows: to the Greek peasant jaundice and gold are of the same colour and since things which are alike react on one another gold if used according to certain rules will cure jaundice. I would prefer to state the proposition as follows: gold and jaundice produce the same sensations of colour and this similarity is culturally indicated by their association in magical behaviour. It is the middle expression in Frazer's thesis to which objection is taken. In his account he frequently informs us that in savage minds like produces like and that contiguous things remain in contact when their contiguity ceases to be objective and remains, as we would say, only a memory image. We are told that "the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it" and that "homoeopathic magic makes the mistake of assuming that things which resemble each other are the same."

We may first note in criticism of this point of view that it is always uncertain what Frazer means by his statements because the inferences he refers to are only "implicitly believed" or "tacitly assumed". But beliefs and assumptions are judgments, they are conscious processes in which the middle term between two associated images is known to the thinker. Apart from this terminological haze which hangs over the whole discussion and which alone serves to obscure all issues there is a hopeless jumble of psychological and sociological problems in which psychological concepts are used where they are quite irrelevant. We must keep our problems distinct if we are to find our way through this labyrinth of vague generalisations. Sensations and abstractions and simple comparison of abstractions are psychological processes common to all mankind and in a sociological study of magic they do not concern us as psychological facts. We are also not concerned with the question why magical associations embody notions of position and resemblance. It is inconceivable that they should not. The problem which concerns us is related to the social value or social indication which is given to objects and qualities. This value may be empirical, that is to say it may attribute to a thing, and utilise, the qualities which it really possesses. For example, a stone is considered to be hard and is therefore used as a tool. Or the value may be mystical, that is to say it may attribute to a thing qualities which it does not possess and which are not subject to sensory impressions. For example a stone may be used in magical rites or be considered the dwelling place of a spirit. The perception of similar colouring in gold and jaundice is a psychological fact which requires a psychological explanation. The embodiment of this perception in a social technique is a sociological fact and requires a sociological explanation. It is not our business to explain the sensations which the physical qualities of an object produce in men but it is our task to explain the social qualities with which men invest the object. The tendency of Tylor and Frazer to explain social facts in terms of individual psychology have been justly criticised by Durkheim and his school. Either this means that a pattern of thought can be explained in terms of psycho-physical functioning of an individual's brain which appears to be absurd if only because the pattern existed before the individual was born and he inherited it as part of his social heritage, even when it involves sensations which have to be individually experienced, or it means that a pattern of thought can be explained by an individual's mental content which is, of course, no explanation at all.

Even the simplest associations if they are to be anything more than
passing images are creations of social usage, of language, of technology,
of magic, and so on. This is why in experiments on association there is
really so little free association and why the responses evoked in so many
subjects are so often of the same type. One is not surprised that a
Greek peasant can see a resemblance between the colour of gold and the colour
of jaundice but the problem is why he should associate these two things
together in magical performances when he does not associate them together
in other situations and why he associates these particular things and not
other things which have the same qualities of colour. It would never
occur to us to associate gold and jaundice together so why should the
Greek peasant associate them together? The answer can hardly be avoided
that he associates them together in certain situations because he learns
to do so when he learns to speak and behave as other members of his society
learn to speak and behave. But one presumes that the Greek peasant does
not always make this association and that it is possible for him to think
of and use gold without thinking of jaundice and even that he can think
of jaundice without associating it with gold. It is also pertinent to ask
why he should associate gold and not something else with jaundice, and in
posing this question a whole range of problems present themselves. We
ask whether there are other things which in their culture fulfil the con-
ditions of colour and adaptibility to the requirements of magical usage,
we ask what is the social value given to gold in other situations, we ask
whether there is evidence of the association, in the situation of jaundice,
having been borrowed as a single trait from neighbouring peoples, and we
may ask many other questions.

The point I wish to emphasize is that these associations are situ-
ational associations. They derive their sociological significance because
they are social facts and not because they are psychological facts. It is
the social situation which gives them meaning, which even gives them the
possibilities of expression. Magic and gold come into cultural associations
in the life of an individual because they are linked together by a magical
rite. We must not say that a Greek peasant sees that gold and jaundice
have the same colour and that therefore he can use the one to cure the
other. Rather we must say that because gold is used to cure jaundice
colour associations between them become established in the mind of a
Greek peasant. It may even be asked to what extent the resemblance
between their colours is consciously formulated by the performer of the
rite, to what extent he is aware of the colour link in the association of
gold and jaundice.

No savage believes that everything which has the same size, or
colour, or weight, or temperature, or sound, etc., are in mystical con-
nection and can be used to operate on one another. If primitive man
really mistook an ideal connection for a real one and confused subjective
with objective experiences his life would be chaos. He could not exist.
It is a psychological absurdity. Why then do savages only _sometimes_
make these associations between phenomena and not _always_ make them? Why
do _some_ peoples make them and _others_ on the same cultural level, not make
them? Knowledge of the cultural situation in which the association is
made will alone answer these questions. The association will be found to
be not a general one but a particular one which is specific in a certain
situation. Stones and sun are not linked in a general association but
only in the special situation in which a stone is placed in the fork of a
tree to keep the sun from sinking. The association comes into being by
the performance of a rite. There is ny mystical relation between sun and
stones but man endows a particular stone with a ritual quality by using it
in a rite and for the duration of the rite. When a savage throws water
into the air he does not imagine that by doing so he produces rain. He
only thinks this when he throws water into the air during the performance

of a rite to produce rain. Hence there is no mistaken association of ideas. The association between a certain quality in one thing and the same quality in another thing is a correct and universal association. It does not violate the laws of logic for it is a psychological process altogether outside their sphere. It would certainly be a mistake were the savage to hold that because things are alike they can, in virtue of their likeness alone, act on one another at a distance or that by merely imitating an act he can produce it. But here again the savage makes no such mistake. He believes that certain rites can produce certain results and the mimetic or homoeopathic elements in the rite are the manner in which the purpose of the rite is expressed. It is the rite itself, the performance of standardised movements and the uttering of standardised words and the other sterotyped conditions of ritual, which achieves the result. The savage does not say "Whatever I imitate will happen so that if I throw water into the air rain will fall". What he says is "There is no rain at this season of the year when there ought to be rain and if we get the rain-maker to perform a rite rain will fall and our crops will be saved". Why rites so often take a mimetic form is a psychological problem which we shall not discuss here. Marett has put forward a brilliant hypothesis but it is possible to advance other theories. We must therefore make the objection with Freud "dass die Assoziationstheorie der Magie bloss die Wege aufklärt, welche die Magic geht, aber nicht deren eigentliches Wesen, nämlich nicht das Missverständnis, welches sie psychologische Gesetze an die Stelle natürlicher setzen heisst".[1]

If I have criticised Frazer severely I render homage to his scholarship. The Golden Bough is an essential source-book for all students of human thought and the faithful way in which he has treated his authorities is an assurance that we drink at an undiluted stream. His writings have always been, and no less today than in the past, a stimulus to those working in the same field and every criticism is a tribute. But we can go farther than making these acknowledgments - we must take over from Tylor and Frazer many sound ideas and use them in the foundations of any theory of magic which is to stand the test of criticism and research. As we are, as it were, taking these ideas away with us, they may be listed as briefly as possible since in future writings they will be utilised, while those ideas which we believe to be erroneous and to which we have devoted lengthy criticism are being jettisoned once and for all.

(1) Tylor's exposition of the variations of magic as a form of social behaviour with variations in cultural development.

(2) Tylor's brilliant analysis of the mechanisms which compel and maintain faith in magic among savage and barbarous peoples.

(3) Frazer's observation, cautiously stated, of the oft found identity of the public magician with the political chief.

(4) The division of ritual into religion and magic on the formal basis of presence or absence of belief in spirits with attendant cult, put forward by Tylor and adopted by Frazer, is an acceptable terminological device. So much time and labour has been expended in a futile endeavour to define the respective spheres of magic and religion in the abstract that it is necessary to state that sociology studies social behaviour and distinguishes between one type of behaviour and another and whether a particular type of behaviour is labelled with one term or with another term is of minor interest. What is of importance is that all students in the same field should use keyterms like magic and religion with the same meaning. Magic and religion are clearly what we define them

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1. Totem und Tabu, p. 111

them to be in terms of behaviour. We do not want a discussion about the relation of abstractions to one another in a cultural vacuum but we want a discussion about the relations between magical behaviour and religious behaviour in specific cultures. Tylor and Frazer defined religion much more clearly than they defined magic and their division has been accepted by many scholars[1] and may be used as a convenient starting point for more intensive research.

(5) Frazer's division of magic into "homoeopathic" and "contagious" likewise is a step in advance of Tylor's analysis and serves as a basis for still further analysis of the symbolism of magic.

E.E. Evans-Pritchard.

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1. To mention only one: W. H. R. Rivers, Medicine, Magic and Religion, Kegan Paul, 1927, p. 4 and passim. This writer does not consider, however, that primitive peoples have the "concept of the natural" and therefore not of the supernatural.

Is Belief Possible ?

A noteworthy conclusion of Needham's Belief, Language and Experience is that: "Indifference to the constraint of possibility is a curious property in a psychological verb, but it is certainly a distinctive mark of the notion of belief" (Needham, 1972; 66). While this statement is not the keystone of Needham's argument, it is still one of the more suggestive points on which his conclusion is founded, and for that reason provides an opportunity for re-examining its more important implications. Needham's conclusion that belief is indifferent to possibility comes by reflecting on Tertullian's paradox; an alternative approach is to consider the nature of possibility, which is, after all, a notion of some importance in the writings of Needham's acknowledged inspiration, Ludwig Wittgenstein. The complexity of Wittgenstein's writings is such that a dedicated adherent can find himself in the odd situation of disagreeing on almost every matter of philosophical importance with one who is equally entitled to wave his banner. This is the case concerning Needham's treatment of the possibility of belief, for while one must admire his handling of Wittgenstein's later writings, he makes not a single reference to the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Indeed, this work is not even listed in his bibliography.

Wittgenstein's own repudiation of the Tractatus has contributed to its unpopularity, but since a reader's opinion of a book need never be the same as its author's, it is possible to see Wittgenstein's several published volumes as parts of a whole. Naturally, some parts of the Tractatus are more convincing than others, but there are, to use Wittgenstein's own metaphor, enough overlapping threads from one book to the next to string the ideas together. One of the arguments begun in the Tractatus that persists through the later writings is a certain notion of possibility. The argument of this essay is, in part, that had Needham used the word "possibility" in the sense imparted to it by Wittgenstein in the Tractatus, his statement concerning the possibility of belief would be reversed, and that this would in turn alter his reflections on the universality of belief.

Wittgenstein's idea of possibility can be seen in the following statements both from and about his work:

> Thought can be of what is not the case. (Philosophical Investigations, # 95).

> Thought is surrounded by a halo. - Its essence, logic, presents an order, in fact the a priori order of the world: that is, the order of possibilities, which must be common to both world and thought. (Philosophical Investigations # 97)

> It is essential to things that they should be possible constituents of states of affairs. (Tractatus, # 2.011)

> .... if a thing can occur in a state of affairs, the possibility of the state of affairs must be written into the thing itself. (Tractatus, # 2.012)

> A thought contains the possibility of the situation of which it is the thought. What is thinkable is possible too. (Tractatus, # 3.02)

> The limits of my language mean the limits of my world. (Tractatus, # 5.6)

> We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we
> cannot think we cannot say either. (Tractatus, # 5.61)
>
> Just as the only necessity that exists is logical
> necessity, so too the only impossibility that exists
> is logical impossibility. (Tractatus, # 6.375)
>
> 'Possible' is for Wittgenstein what is expressible
> in language. (Maslow, 1961; 25)
>
> An impossible thought is an impossible thought (5.61) -
> and that is why it is not possible to say what it is that
> cannot be thought. (Anscombe, 1959; 163)
>
> .... 'possibility' must here be taken as excluding
> both certainty and impossibility. (Anscombe, 1959; 157)

These quotations need little elaboration. Thought, possibility and
language are related. What can be thought can be put into language, what
can be put into language is possible. Within the scheme of the Tractatus,
none of these terms has anything to do with reality, the world, or the way
things are. "Possibility" is a logical constraint. One can say of a
statement whether it is possible or impossible before one holds it up
against experience to see whether or not it is part of the world. If
logical, then thinkable and hence possible. Examples are few, since it is
difficult to think of things that are unthinkable. Suffice it to say that
any abrogation of the rules of logic is an unthinkable state of affairs.
The round square, the three-dimensional triangle, the bounded infinity,
are all logically contradictory. They defy conception; there can be no
general notion of what they would be if they were the case. Here, then,
are legitimate uses of the words "possible", "impossible", "possibility",
"impossibility". Considering this definition, what can Needham mean by
saying that "to believe" shows an "indifference to the constraint of
possibility"?

Putting the question "is belief possible" into Wittgenstein's term-
inology is to say: does believing describe a state of affairs? Is there a
picture of what would be so if believing were the case?
Is the English concept
"believing" thinkable? There are several approaches to these questions,
but before elaborating them, it is expedient to consider their general
nature, and, as a consequence, the nature of any statement that could be a
satisfactory answer. The first point is quite obvious, that each of these
questions is posed in the same language, and, therefore, that any answer
to them will only be relevant to that one language, and only be valid for
that one culture. These are general questions about a specific language,
or way of thinking, and any answers to them will not necessarily reflect
on other languages.

The next consideration is even more important: that these are questions
of conceptualization, not fact. Every question here encountered is so framed
that reference to the gross facts of language would be inappropriate. The
generality of the statement sought as an answer demands the application of
deductive reasoning. Thus, particular uses, or misuses, of "to believe" do
not signify.
The problem is not whether every use of "to believe" describes
a state of affairs, but whether any use of the verb describes a state of
affairs, which is to say whether or not there is a possible use of "to
believe" that describes a state of affairs; this after all is the problem:
is belief possible? Such questions express no interest in examples of
believing where other words can be substituted, but rather in those where

"believing" seems to find no substitute.

Because this essay flirts with the idea of meaning, it is essential
to recognize that in order for a word to have a meaning, it need not have
one meaning, or even a single clear meaning. Indeed, one can imagine few
words with even remotely clear meanings. Likewise, a word need not picture
a clear state of affairs for it to describe a state of affairs. After all,
there is nothing self-contradictory, i.e. impossible, about vague, fuzzy,
strange, preposterous, fantastical, or even silly meanings; they are
meanings nonetheless. Furthermore, that "belief" may be an "odd-job" word
is not a problem. Being an odd-job word would frustrate any attempt to
define the essence of a word. But one can hardly imagine a lexicographer
denying a word dictionary space because its meanings are unrelated. Words
with entirely different meanings are still thinkable.

Now, on to the question: Is believing a state of affairs? The most
tempting answer is one which begs the question yet deserves consideration.
Insofar as one can only think about the world through the media of the
language which one has received more or less passively, and the conception
of belief is a part of the English-speaker's world, would it ever be possible
to think of a world without belief? If English lacked "belief" and its
related conceptions, what would the world be like, and how would one think
about it? Or, if it has no meaning, why do people use it? These are questions
that anyone who claims that believing has no meaning must answer. One would
do well to heed the admonition of J. L. Austin:

> .... our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions
> men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have
> found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations:
> these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound,
> since they have stood up to the long test of the survival
> of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary
> and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I
> are likely to think up in our armchairs of an afternoon -
> the most favoured alternative method. (Austin, 1961: 182)

From this, one could also say that because people use and understand
"believe" it obviously has a meaning; or, that people who use the word seem
to know what it means. Thus, the argument that "belief" has a meaning gains
weight from the inertia of culture. Because it is used so frequently, and
because it is at the foundation of many important Western ideals, because
it would be difficult to think about certain things at all without it, it
is tempting to claim that its meaning is obvious. Thus, a Dr. Johnson of
the idealist persuasion might argue. But, of course, this is no proof at
all. In fact, this argument is only likely to convince those who stand
in awe of language. Philosophers who see their task as purifying, or cleaning
up language, as do many in the Wittgenstein tradition, would not sympathise
with this. Nevertheless, the English language limps along, ignorant of the
prunings and amputations of philosophers. If not awe, respect for language
is vital. Cleaning up language can be likened to sweeping a dirt floor; the
debris and dust are pushed away, but nothing is really changed; sweeping
forever will not find the floorboards. So, one must find a meaning between
the urge to destroy the mystifying elements of language and the pleasure of
being awed by its venerable majesty.

The only substantial answer to the title of this essay is that believing
does describe a state of affairs. This is certainly not easy to describe,
for believing is unquestionably a difficult conception. Nevertheless, to
begin with the obvious, "belief" is a word that never appears alone. Someone
must always believe something. Only people believe, and they never believe

in nothing. So, believing always has an object; it is a relational concep-
tion. This necessitates a distinction between the believing itself being
a state of affairs and its object being one. Sometimes "believing" seems
not to describe a state of affairs because it is coupled with an inappropriate
object. When one believes in the Loch Ness Monster, the Abominable Snowman,
or a flat earth, it is more or less clear what one believes, after all people
write books about these things; but it is not clear what one believes when
one believes in a spatial object outside of space. Although one could say
that the sentence "he believes in a round square" has no meaning, this is
not a comment on the verb, because it is not the "believing" but the "round
square" that is absurd. A purple cow is a state of affairs, a purple
green-spot is not. Thus, the question "does believing describe a state of
affairs" can only be answered in the context of a complete and legitimate
use of the word in a sentence, bearing in mind that for this to be so it
must have an object which is itself a state of affairs. The question, then,
becomes: what is the state of affairs described by the relation of a believer
to any possible object of belief? This state of affairs will define the
verb.

A way into the idea of believing is through further consideration of
the things that form its possible objects. What sort of things can one
believe? Do they form a class? Certainly, one would not say of everything
that he believed or disbelieved it, even if the word were being used very
loosely. And, even when the word is used very strictly, there are not many
things which the ordinary speaker would be inclined to believe or disbelieve.
Only some things then are possible beliefs. About what sort of things can
one say that one believes them? To what do belief statements apply? The
key to this is found in Needham's own pages, where he lists as an attribute
of believing its independence of "canons of reality" (Needham, 1972; 71).
This is supported by a quotation from Wittgenstein to the effect that if
there were evidence bearing on matters of belief, "this would destroy the
whole business" (Wittgenstein, 1966; 56, quoted in Needham, 1972; 71). Here,
then, is the nature of the words which one believes. The objects of belief
statements have but a tangential relation to the world. One does not hold
an object of belief up against the world to see if it exists or not; nor
does comparison with the world render a belief statement true or false.
Hence, the inevitable failure of attempts to hold an idea of God up against
the world, or to infer a conception of God from the world. And due to the
nature of believed objects, the adherent of the flat earth theory rejects
all evidence. Also from this comes the sense of a believer saying, "though
I cannot prove God, nor can you disprove Him". Likewise, one will never
prove that the Loch Ness Monster does not exist. The objects of belief
make no claim against reality, rather, to put it another way, they make
only a claim against language, and, therefore, not against our world, but
against our conception of all possible worlds. In this way, belief state-
ments and their objects are radically different from ordinary discourse.
In thinking about belief statements one cannot make a simple hop from
language to verifiable reality. Belief statements are a projection of
the possibilities of language onto a void beyond what one can conceive of
as world. If one could make correspondences between beliefs and reality,
one could be related to them in some way besides believing; if that were
the case, beliefs could be experienced, known, proven, verified, dismissed,
or refuted. It is because of the nature of beliefs themselves that the only
relation one can have to them is to believe, or disbelieve. They are meta-
physical.

In what state of affairs is the believer caught up? The relation of
a believer to the non-experiential states of affairs called beliefs is that
he is convinced of their truth, existence, or value. Because a legal proof
is necessarily an after the fact interpretation of an episode, a jury never

"knows" that a man is guilty; and they never send a man to prison because they "think" he is guilty, but they would certainly do so if they "believed" in his guilt. This is a common situation where there is no alternative to convictions strong enough to be labled "belief". These convictions may or may not be persistent, in evidence, the cause of action or the subject of doubt. These are qualities of belief that may be inseparable from it, but are not a necessary part of its conception and hence have no bearing on its existence as a state of affairs. Although Belief, Language and Experience (pp. 89-92) rejects "conviction" as a criterion of belief, this seems to be based on a confusion of essence with attribute. Admitting the truth of what Needham says, the problems he finds in the word "conviction" make it difficult to tell how firmly a person may believe something, or even whether in fact he does believe it, but they do not make it inconceivable that people do have convictions, and thus are irrelevant to the question of whether or not believing is a state of affairs. Throwing these objections aside then, the state of affairs described by believing is that of a man having convictions about non-experiential states of affairs. This is a simple picture of what it means to believe; but it is strong enough to suggest that belief is indeed possible.

What follows from the conclusion that believing is a state of affairs? Considering what states of affairs are, no concrete revelations could be expected. Belief is still an obstreperous word, both difficult to explain and difficult to do without. It is hard to imagine that philosophers will purge it either from the English language, or from the attempt of social science to produce technical languages. But if the argument that belief is possible is able to disclose but a small part of the substance of that idea, it does have the power to suggest the reasons for both the persistence and vagueness of the word. "Believing" is one of many non-experiential states of affairs. In fact, language is strewed with words describing what is beyond empirical experience, and few speakers ever notice the peculiarity of these conceptions. There are sound reasons for this being so, and they are suggested by reflecting on the nature of language and world and the intuitive semantic theory through which they are related.

The difference between experiential and non-experiential states of affairs suggests a similar distinction between factual and conventional discourse. The Tractatus is Wittgenstein's attempt to define factual discourse. Hence, his preoccupation with truth and the resultant development of the theory of verifiability. "Facts", as the Tractatus describes them, are produced by confirmation of propositions about the world which are derived from states of affairs. The "world" is the totality of known facts. One can think about states of affairs that are not facts, but, in Wittgenstein's scheme, when one speaks of "knowledge", one refers to facts, i.e. states of affairs that actually are the case. Thus, the alternatives are to speak of facts, factual discourse, or to speak of states of affairs that are not facts. The term "conventional discourse" is being suggested for the latter arrangement of speech. In the Tractatus, Wittgenstein sets out to define the limits of factual discourse, to partition what can be said from what cannot be said. In his treatment, factual discourse becomes coextensive with the language of science. Following from this, Wittgenstein argues that what can be known is equivalent to the sum of all propositions of natural science. Beyond natural science, one knows nothing; about which one knows nothing, one may not think; where there is no thought there can be no speech; and, finally, the concluding statement of the Tractatus: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (Wittgenstein, 1921, # 7). The language of science, or factual discourse, encompasses only a fraction of linguistic phenomena, and the theory of meaning in Wittgenstein's Tractatus is intended to refer exclusively to this small part of the whole. That Wittgenstein recognized the limitations of his endeavour is clear: "We feel

that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched (Wittgenstein, 1921. # 6.52).

The difficulty of understanding belief statements is obviously not susceptible to any solution that is solely concerned with scientific discourse. Belief statements about non-experiential states of affairs are not verifiable in the same way as Wittgenstein's "facts". "Are you a trinitarian?" is of a different order than "Is that book red?". The latter question is articulated to the physical world and is answered on the basis of sensory experience. The former is not articulated to the physical world and sensory experiences are no help in answering it. But the puzzle of belief statements is that questions of this form are answered. How is this possible?

Assuming that belief statements are in the realm of conventional discourse, the problem is to define that realm. How does it differ from factual discourse: What semantic principles operate in this non-scientific domain? The statements of conventional discourse are neither true nor false, since there is no "thing" to which its words can be correlated. Conventional discourse floats free of the world. Even to verify the assertion "he is married" one must first of all know where "he" lives and what people in that country think about marriage. Or, to put it another way, one must know what the conventions are that deal with marriage. Knowing the convention, one could compare the history of the person concerned to see whether he had committed those actions deemed necessary for marriage to be in effect. The nature of a convention is obvious from the word itself. A convention is an agreement. Only people make agreements. Agreements are often broken; they are easily changed. Thus, conventions are human creations; words that have conventional meaning are artificial both in the Saussurian sense and in a more absolute sense. "Dog" is a human creation insofar as the same class of objects can just as easily be called "Hund", but only the word is artificial. Language permits the statement "a dog is a cat", but the world intervenes with this statement and contradicts it. In conventional discourse the thing itself is artificial; it is created and dispelled by human contract. A criminal may be called by some other equally arbitrary name, "Verbrecher" for example, but also the thing that is criminal today may not be criminal tomorrow. Language permits these statements: "Murder is criminal", "Priests are criminal", "Property owners are criminal", "Students are criminal"; but concerning the validity of each, the world is mute. This is the oddity of conventional discourse, that the world itself changes at man's whim. Or, to reverse Wittgenstein's aphorism, the conventional world does depend on man's will.

Statements made in the conventional domain are precisely those about which Wittgenstein advises us to be silent. Yet conventional discourse is a remarkably large part of what people do with speech, and the efforts of logical positivism have not yet prevailed against it. What then are the semantic principles of this segment of discourse. How do people think about conventional discourse? Oddly enough, Wittgenstein himself gives the answer to this, albeit by implication.

This is in fact a question that answers itself. One does not think about conventional discourse as if it were different from factual discourse. Indeed, one does not usually think of conventional discourse at all; it is a term whipped up for the purposes of this essay, not a standard English conception at all. But even when one does ponder language, one does not make this division and erect one semantic theory for one kind of language, and another theory for the other. The truth is that people, philosophers included, think about conventional things as if they were physical things. Conventional discourse operates as if it were factual discourse. The two

are very different, but that people often lose sight of the art underlying
their words, agreements and institutions is a common error. Even in the
Age of Reason, constitution builders did not appreciate this fact. The
theory of "natural law" has gone hand in hand with the theory of social
contract for precisely this reason (see Sir Ernest Barker, 1946). In the
very act of drawing up conventions, men could not take full responsibility
for their deeds. "We hold these truths to be self-evident" says Jefferson,
not "we find these ideas expedient". Even Marx does not argue that arti-
ficially conceived institutions are wrong, but that those who formed them
were out of touch with the natural course of history, and its claims to be
scientific are still its great temptation.

That the semantic principles of factual and conventional discourse
are the same is indicated in the Tractatus. The structure of language,
says Wittgenstein, reduplicates the structure of the world. Thus, the
order of the world generates the order of language, a statement that applies
to all language as opposed to all speech. Factual and conventional discourse
are different types of speech, but they are epiphenomena of the same language,
so that once the order of the world is duplicated by language, all speech
will have the same form. Hence, it is inevitable that factual and conven-
tional speech are built on the same semantic principles. One really need
only say that they are speech, and all else follows from the nature of the
language/speech division (see deSaussure; 7-32). Now, this essay is not an
attempt to develop a theory of meaning, but rather to direct any theory
of meaning to the sort of speech of which believing is a part. And, following
from this, to determine the relation of believing to conventional discourse
as a whole.

Why is it so difficult for speakers to admit the arbitrary nature of
those words which if not the most clear are certainly the most important?
One approach to this is through consideration of the way in which con-
ventional discourse is arbitrary. While one may well argue that language
is arbitrary in deSaussure's sense, and that conventional discourse is
arbitrary in an even more absolute sense, this is not the final word.
Conventional discourse is not only arbitrary, it is imperative; one simply
cannot do without it. In fact, it seems possible that the more obviously
arbitrary a word is, the more imperative it becomes. After all, the words
for which wars are fought, the words for which one lives and works, are
the most resistant to definition. Likewise, the social institutions
most closely united with human happiness are in fact the most arbitrary
and varied. The only moral vision of anthropology is this: that marriage,
family, friendship and love are neither ubiquitous nor universally
desirable; human organization and thought are relative, and what pleases
some may horrify others. Thus, when men take their own felicity to
heart, they develop firm attachments to the most arbitrary parts of their
language and their arbitrary ways become imperative. Even when one is
distressed by the arbitrariness of a favourite institution, it is only
replaceable with another equally arbitrary one. Yet the chronicles of
anthropology are also filled with accounts of people becoming demoralised
by the revelation of their culture's relativity. While doubt is resisted
by the natural mechanisms of language, once it sets in, cures are not easy.
The most popular ideas of sociology are in fact names for this condition:
Marx's "alienation"; Weber's "disenchantment"; Durkheim's "anomie".
The quaint customs of the exotic people who have taught us the
relativity of culture are imperatively natural to them. Significantly,
this discussion parallel's Needham's own attitude toward language
when he refers to "the contingent and arbitrary forms of order that
for them /men_7 are reality itself" (Needham, 1972; 244).
As a supplement to this he continues:

> I am not saying that human life is senseless, but
> that we cannot make sense of it. If only it were
> at least a tale told by an idiot, we might arrive
> at some coherent meaning, but the metaphor pre-
> supposes criteria of intelligibility and sanity
> that we do not possess except by convention. Once
> outside a given form of life, man is lost in a
> 'wilderness of formes'. (Needham, 1972: 244).

In part, it is language that convinces us of the "naturalness" of the conventional meanings of our words, by encouraging us to think about them as if they were experiential reality. Language is thus the first obstacle to doubt, or, from another point of view, the strongest protection against it. Moreover, language has an arsenal to keep speakers on the narrow path implied in its being learned. One of the most effective tools in this arsenal is "belief". If one feels unable to "know" the reality of human conventions (this is, once one has performed the very unnatural act of thinking about language at all? then one can still "believe" in them. In the realm of conventional discourse, believing it is so makes it so. The conscious artifice of Pirandello's plays is their most natural quality. Belief is a way of relating conventional ideas to the realm of factual discourse. Considering the limitation of thought and the importance of what one tries to think about, the persistence of the word is not surprising. To purge English of "belief" would involve more than a change in the language itself; omission from language implies a radical change in that strange and only partially knowable entity one thinks about as "world".

There is a final twist to "possibility". Because belief is possible in a general sense, it may be possible in a universal sense. This argument is a simple one. Believing arises from the way that language is articulated to the world. And since this is a philosophical argument, and not an exegesis of English, this means the relation of all possible, i.e. all conceivable, language to any possible world. Remember what was said above about belief statements making a claim only against all possible worlds. The question then is: is it conceivable that any language could have a one to one attachment to the world? Is it possible that a determined language exists, i.e. one that is not arbitrary in any way? Will the research of anthropology unearth a language that is the same as the world? If the previous part of this essay is correct, these questions must all be answered no. Regardless of how much comparison is done, no man's language will be the world.

Thus, not only are all known languages arbitrary and conventional, but any conceivable language is so as well. Conventions, since they are neither true nor false, can be doubted; and, generally speaking, what can be doubted can be believed. Thus, the possibility of believing in English points to the possibility of believing in every language. Needham's particular question, about the universality of belief must be answered in the negative if Evans-Pritchard is correct. "God's existence is taken for granted by everybody" says Evans-Pritchard referring to the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard, 1956; 9) and from that it is clear that they have no need to believe in God. It is possible not to doubt. It is possible not to be worried by the difference between factual and conventional discourse, and whenever this is the case it is inappropriate to think about belief. So, belief is possible but not necessary; and, it is possible in two senses. First in the sense that it describes a state of affairs, and second that the state of affairs it describes is a comment on the relation of language and world and hence is one in which the speaker of any conceivable language may find himself. Thus, although belief itself cannot be considered a human universal, it may be said that belief is a universal possibility.

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'Behaviour': A social anthropological criticism

We have been offered the term behaviour as a cross-disciplinary concept with applications throughout the component subjects of the Human Sciences degree.[1] It is a strange term to use for it is a genuine product of social life - with a characteristic sociolinguistic history. Like its verb 'behave', it seems to be a fifteenth century coinage. The verb was originally always reflexive and consciously derived from 'have', (so that a person 'behad' himself), and the force of the be- preverb was to denote the imposition of a constraint on the person involved. The substantive was formed upon hayour, or haviour, 'possession', which came straight from French avoir at the same period. Although haviour and behaviour were thus of independent origin, the new substantive was, by its French ornamentation, quite appropriate to express a certain conception of deportment, or socially prescribed or sanctioned conduct. It became a semantic doublet of demeanour, but differently marked. Demeanour had a more lower class application: behaviour thus emerges in a period when an expectation of restraint in upper class behaviour could be regarded as desirable. The positive marking of concepts that referred to courtly life in the late middle-ages is well documented by Trier and his successors. Behaviour without modifier, was marked as 'good'; the 'behaviour' being watched for was 'good deportment'. Bad behaviour was failed behaviour. Demeanour without modifier was marked as 'bad': the 'demeanour' being watched for was 'bad deportment'. Good demeanour was corrected demeanour. Afterwards the semantic field of behaviour invaded not only that of demanour but of conduct, comportment and the rest.

It is important then to stress that behaviour is a term from a set of terms, and a set of terms from a particular historical period. It is strange to social anthropologists, steeped as we are in language, to be shown the term as something quasi-objective: as an 'idea' or 'concept' to be exemplified even 'defined' in various supposed manifestations in disparate kinds of data. Behaviour when we meet it first is, we note, a coining and a slightly grandiose one. It thus labels a new kind of component. In that world, there could be no such thing as 'random' behaviour.

The extension of 'behave' and 'behaviour' into scientific discourse is Victorian. The first applications are in Chemistry in the 1850's and '60's ('It combines violently with water, behaving like the bichloride of tin', 1854; 'In Chemistry, the behaviour of different substances towards each other, in respect of combination and affinity', 1866 - O.E.D.). These early examples have still some of the direct living metaphor about them. The very model of orderly discrimination of the conditions under which things acted as they did, was derived from social behaviour. Behaviour was marked therefore for its knowability in advance: an image or aspiration for the natural order. When in 1878 T. H. Huxley is talking of the 'behaviour of water', he is reducing to orderly terms the activities of a supremely unpredictable element. No doubt it was the continual use of 'behaviour' in contexts in which the activity was far from understood, that led to its association with 'activity in general', and even ('behaviour problems') towards relatively violent activity. The generalization of 'behaviour' to the inanimate world has since then gone so far that we tend to think of it as 'action that is not yet understood' rather than as 'action that is supremely understood' because prescribed.

It is ironical that the use of the term 'animal behaviour' probably owes more to its natural science uses than it does to its original social use. Paradoxically, then, we are offered 'behaviour' as a quantifiable universal, a mere century after its metaphorical use in natural science began. Of course, there has been retained throughout the essential component of

'constraint on action'. At all times 'behaviour' has been conceived of as
rule-governed: the natural science shift has moved the locus of the rules.
At one time behaviour is expressly the subject of rules, at another it is
the subject of an aspiration that it will turn out to be governed by rules.

Not all the 'behaviours' we have heard about today are the same. To
ask a social anthropologist to treat 'behaviour' as a universal and to
relate it to his own subject, is inevitably to miss the point of all recent
advances in the subject. To acquiesce in the game for a while, we note
that the post-Victorian uses of 'behaviour' do not easily translate into
the languages of other peoples. Even in other European languages there are
well-known difficulties. Many of the terms in use in them are too embarrasingly
close to terms for (social) good conduct. The translation of the American
Behavioral is a perpetual crux in international literature. The situation
is then not resolved by appeal to an independent scientific vocabulary.
'Behaviour' turns out to be wrenched from a set of terms in the English
lexicon, trailing still the evidence of its old connexions.

In more exotic but still reflective societies, 'behaviour' has to be
subsumed under various terms indicating acts of a socially appropriate or
inappropriate kind. Sometimes there is no lexical link between the terms
for 'bad behaviour' and 'good behaviour'. In Igbo, the verb radical m^e ('do',
make') appears in words like omume, ome, or the like, each of which expresses
activity that is marked according to social evaluations; ome in the phrase
ome nala ('ome in the country') is what whites usually misleadingly trans-
late as 'custom'. The important point to grasp is, however, that actions
in Igbo society are identified a priori. There is no objective field of
behaviour.

We are different, of course, you will argue. That is why we are 'human
scientists'. It does not always look very like it, when we tote terms about
in this way. Once we enter the human zone, we are dealing with classes of
action. Unfortunately, we are not the main classifiers. That position is
occupied by the human beings who are acting. It is always the major task
in social anthropology to find the actors' classification. This is not quite
the same as asking him why he is acting. Our first task is to agree on what
actions are significant for him. E.g. when a yam-hole is dug, among a
certain people, herbs are added and a quantity of ash. The whole activity
may be described by the farmer as done 'to make the yam grow'. It is not
uncommon in such situations for the observer to say that some of this action
is 'symbolic' - because for instance, the herbs have little or no chemical
fertilizing effect. The matter of the ash may however detain him, because
it may seem 'really' to have a fertilizer effect (potash etc.). He is thus
tempted to subdivide the action sequence into symbolic and instrumental
sections. He may still do this when (say) he learns from an agriculturalist
that, the ash does not have chemically significant effect, for even false
attempts at 'science' may be classified differently from hopeless non-science.
That kind of classification is seen in many ordinary monographs. Even Evans-
Pritchard came dangerously near to such distinctions at times. They lie in
the system of discriminations of the recorder. In the particular case we
are not justified in breaking up the planting sequence in this way. To do
so distorts the significance of the different parts of the sequence, according
to criteria which are irrelevant to the actor.

Presented with 'behaviour' then, we find that we can only speak of
kinds of significant action. The markers for that significance are however,
not directly given in the action itself (or if we think they are they
require a much more sophisticated theory to detect them). Where human beings
are concerned the action is the final output of a very complicated programme.
We are not, however, simply in the zone marked 'systems of thought'. Some
of our work may have been misleading in this respect. Societies differ

greatly in the degree to which they externalize (into action), or internalize (into language) the processes by which they (i.e. the societies) operate. Thus, it is often forgotten that E-P said that the Azande demonstrate their system by enacting it. The Ibo at times seem to belong to a society which 'knows' what it is doing only by doing it. We find richly differentiated rituals and the constant generation of 'new customs'; 'fashions' of all kinds sweep over the social surface in rapid succession. There is little mythological or ideological superstructure, in contrast with, for example, the Bakweri. This people, in contrast, has no rich variety of action: minor events, are, however, charged with enormous significance, which derives from the internalization of an unseen universe of causes, for which a command of the language and its expression of the non-behavioural world-structure is absolutely essential. For the Igbo, events are like a rapid continuous game of draughts, with a plethora of moves, and brilliant sequences leading to few basic changes in the balance of pieces. For the Bakweri events come after long intervals, charged with relational value, like those of chessmen in a master tournament.

The arguments for the view of society as a manifold both of ideas (stored in various linguistic and other 'semiotic' forms) and action, are made more cogent nowadays by the increasing evidence that societies (as in the cases I have mentioned) differ in the degree to which the action component itself embodies cues to its own significance. Historical periods marked by labile social forms may exemplify, in an exaggerated manner, some of the features I have ascribed to the Ibo, and may repay close attention to the 'action', which may embody many of the cues to its own interpretation. It is however, characteristic, that they in their turn, frequently become enshrined in the ideas store of a subsequent period. I have in mind unreflective action periods like that of the American West, which store their significance later as mythology. This mythology in its turn generates successive transformations of itself, and in turn generates actions of an existentially different type, in later periods - as it might be street-gang 'behaviour', or even aspects of the Vietnam War.

As a system over time, the social does not yield its essential features through a study of 'behaviour', even though for some stretches 'behaviour' may be more significant than others.

Social anthropologists have long been forced to realize that there is no universal unit of 'action' in society. The general theory is acquiring a certain solidity now. The kinds of empiricism required for its operation are appearing in a variety of disciplinary guises. Socio-linguistic approaches exist (some actions can only be triggered, or even recognized, in specified linguistic contexts). 'Situational analyses' of various kinds, are responses to some of these needs. Elsewhere we hear of 'symbolic interaction', even of 'symbolic interactionalism'. We sometimes hear regrettably of 'symbolic behaviour'. The separation of the empirical aspects from the theoretical is somewhat more characteristic of the sociological developments, than of social anthropology. Nevertheless we all have to guard against over-determining a distinction in our own culture, objectifying it through new data, and then receiving it back, no longer able to recognise our own artefact. 'Behaviour' is such a case: we may clutch it as those experimental monkey infants clutch their mothers made of wire, and receive precious little nourishment.

<div align="right">Edwin Ardener</div>

Note
1. This paper is the text of a comment on the term 'Behaviour' presented to a discussion between tutors in the Human Sciences Honour School at Nuffield College, 6 October, 1973.

Illusions of freedom: a comment
on Barth's individuals

One of the main lines of criticism of 'structural-functionalist' anthropology, typified in many minds by <u>African Political Systems</u> (1940), has been that 'society' cannot be adequately described in terms of norms, institutions, customs, values, for these things do not explain themselves. They exist because people have set them up, and continue to uphold them, for very good reasons of their own; and the same people may change their minds at any time. Social processes and the ebb and flow of politics must be examined in any society, stable or changing, before its formal organisation or cultural values can be understood. The individual in a society, on the whole neglected in structural-functional descriptions, is thrust into new prominence: he is represented as a free agent, exercising discrimination over values and choice over political allegiance, and making economic and social decisions and innovations. This general position derives its immediate inspiration from Weber rather than from Durkheim; and one of its most forceful, prolific and consistent exponents is Fredrik Barth, at the moment Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Bergen, Norway.[1]

One of Professor Barth's best-known formulations of the analytic principle of individual free choice is found in the opening pages of his monograph <u>Political Leadership among Swat Pathans</u>. It is enunciated in this context with specific reference to political organisation, and reads in part as follows:

> In many anthropological accounts of tribal peoples, one has the impression that political allegiance is not a matter of individual choice. Each individual is born into a particular structural position, and will accordingly give his political allegiance to a particular group or office-holder. In Swat, persons find their place in the political order through a series of choices, many of which are temporary or revocable.
> This freedom of choice radically alters the way in which political institutions function. In systems where no choice is offered, self-interest and group advantage tend to coincide, since it is only through his own group that any individual can protect or improve his position. Where, on the other hand, group commitments may be assumed and shed at will, self-interest may dictate action which does not bring advantage to the group; and individuals are able to plan and make choices in terms of private advantage and a personal political career. In this the political life of Swat resembles that of Western societies. (1959a,pp. 1-2).

This concept of freedom of choice does not oppose it to an external, imperative structure of institutions and rules. For the institutions and rules of society are themselves seen as the outcome of the aggregate of individual choices; and there is assumed to be an on-going, two-way process whereby behavioural choice is influenced by formal organisation and yet at the same time modifies it. For the political organisation of Swat:

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1. Professor Barth was kind enough to invite me to the Institute of Social Anthropology in Bergen, where I spent some seven months during 1971-72. I owe my interest in the kind of question discussed in this essay to the lively discussions and seminars I attended there, and to the challenge represented by the body of work being produced by members of the Bergen Institute.

The political system of Swat thus does not define a set of formal structural positions - it emerges as a result of individual choices. But these choices represent the attempts of individuals to solve their own problems; and as some of these problems spring from features of the formal organization, the form of the political system may, through this method of analysis, be seen in part to reflect such features. (ibid., p. 4)

A major theme running through Barth's work, including work on topics which are not strictly 'political', and made explicit in his programmatic statements, is that of the individual as free agent. He is assumed to be unbound by custom or moral dictate, and unfettered by social compulsion. The society and culture around him is represented as an environment, upon which he can act, though within certain constraints. His inner will, his autonomous power of making decisions and acting upon them, is seen as the seed of dynamic processes in society, and movements of historical change. Relations between people are seen as the coming together of two separate persons; and social institutions and cultural values are seen as emerging from the network of relations, encounters and transactions between people. Such interaction gives substance to the idea of 'values', for insofar as they are enacted in such a social world, they may be observed and investigated empirically. Assumptions can be made about the motivations of people in one society, rather than another; and contrasting social forms can be seen in the light of such a relativity of values. The freedom of individuals to choose does not therefore lead to complete anarchy, for particular incentives, or values, and constraints, govern the choice of people in a particular society, and lead to statistical regularities of decision. The empirical order found in societies, that order which is the object of the social anthropologist's enquiries, is the result of the aggregate pattern of individual behaviour. To examine the reasons why particular decisions are made by individuals, exercising their freedom to choose within the limits of their environment, the social situation as they see it and their 'values', is to approach an explanation of the form of society as a whole. Specification of the crucial reasons why decisions are made provides a formula which can be said to generate the relevant social forms. Barth's method and its justification are lucidly presented in his 1966 paper on Models of Social Organization, which I do not need to summarise. But I want to take a second look at the concept of the free agent upon which so much of his analysis rests, and the view of society which treats individual decision as the prime motive force.[1]

The puzzle is this: that although Barth starts with the idea of the free individual, the extension of the argument and its application to specific material so qualify the original concept that it is scarcely recognisable. In the ordinary language sense of freedom, choice and so forth, the person with whom we started out has lost much of what he had, for the sociologist is hinting at possibilities of behavioural determinants and predictions, given at least the intelligence and rationality of a population. The argument in the passages already quoted from Political Leadership... slips from the idea of free choice to that of self-interest; and then self-interest is said to 'dictate' action of a certain kind. How can 'free choice' be equated thus with the 'dictation' of action? On the first page of Barth's 1966 article, he writes of there being 'no absolute compulsion or mechanical necessity', of 'determining factors',

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1. Extended critiques of this kind of sociology, with specific reference to Barth's work, may be found for example in Dumont (1970) and Asad (1972).

and the difficulty in predicting behaviour. But ought these considerations to have any place in a sociology based on the idea of freedom?

> The most simple and general model available to us is one of an aggregate of people exercising choice while influenced by certain constraints and incentives. In such situation, statistical regularities are produced, yet there is no absolute compulsion or mechanical necessity connecting the determining factors with the resultant patterns; the connection depends on human dispositions to evaluate and anticipate. Nor can the behaviour of any one particular person be firmly predicted — such human conditions as inattentiveness, stupidity or contrariness will, for the anthropologist's purposes, be unpredictably distributed in the population (1966, p. 1).

The implication appears to be that if dispositions are known, and if stupidity, inattentiveness and so forth are eliminated, behaviour will be predictable. The idea of individual freedom, in itself, does not appear to interfere with the possibility of prediction.

I believe there is a real paradox here, and that it is rooted in the difficulty of combining the idea of personal freedom, essentially a moral notion, with a science of behaviour. Freedom and choice are not used by Barth in the way they are used in the language of political thought; his concept of free choice is a sociological idea, bearing little relation to the conditions or notions of personal freedom that might actually prevail in a society.

Before considering some of the details of the way in which this paradox reveals itself in Barth's writings, it is helpful to recall that the dilemma is not new. It is a problem deeply embedded in the tradition of utilitarian thought, and one over which there has been argument since the time of Jeremy Bentham (1740-1832) to the present. The relevance of the utilitarian tradition to the growth of social anthropology is not always realised, and its founders are absent from the pantheon of anthropological ancestors. But the principles of rational utility, in its twin guise as an assumed motive for individual action and as a standard for the judgment and justification of rules and institutions, has had a persistent influence in social anthropology, either as the vehicle for theory and substantive work, or as a ghost to be laid. Much writing in our subject has been shaped by the need to answer the utilitarian position. But the argument goes on and the ghost refuses to be laid. There is an internal consistency, a circularity, about the defences of utilitarian ethics and social science which make their case difficult to answer piecemeal.

Classical utilitarian thought rests on a few main assumptions. The first is that of psychological hedonism: that is that men are governed, in Bentham's terms, by the two forces of pain and pleasure (extensively defined), and they will naturally choose to seek pleasure while avoiding pain. Further, our system of ethics must be based on these facts, for we are obliged to define as good actions those which produce happiness, and as evil actions those which produce misery. Moreover, it must be right to seek the maximum happiness for as many as possible, not just oneself; social morality requires that a person should seek the general happiness. A rational person can see that the happiness of individuals is connected to the general state of happiness; and a scientific study of society can thus point the way to morally good legislation, which aims to secure those conditions in which the general happiness can flourish. There is no real opposition between self-interest and social duty, even though the less enlightened may perceive such a conflict; for in the ideal society they coincide, where each person devotes himself to the general good. With

the spread of understanding and education, men will increasingly realise
this truth, and meanwhile ought to work towards it.

John Stuart Mill, brought up in the tradition of Bentham, was
critical of its cruder formulations and qualified what he named
'utilitarianism' with great sensitivity and humanity, though claiming to
remain within the essential principles of Bentham's scheme. Mill saw
clearly that there could be no reconciliation of idealist moral philosophy
as represented by a man like Coleridge, and the radical utilitarian view;
but that they were complementary, and as such, necessary to each other.

'For, among the truths long recognised by Continental philosophers,
but which very few Englishmen have yet arrived at, one is, the importance,
in the present imperfect state of mental and social science, of antagonist
modes of thought: which, it will one day be felt, are as necessary to
one another in speculation, as mutually checking powers are in a political
constitution.' (Coleridge, in Leavis, 1950, p. 104).

In his Introduction to Mills' essays on Bentham and Coleridge, Leavis
presents them as key documents for any study of the nineteenth century, as
guides to the two opposite poles of thought by which the significance of
other writings can be charted. Leavis goes even further, to suggest of
Bentham and Coleridge that 'even if they had had no great influence they
would still have been the classical examples, they are of two great
opposing types of mind...' (loc. cit., p. 7). It is scarcely astonishing,
therefore, that the utilitarian mode of thought persists in philosophy
and sociology today; Mill himself wrote, 'In all ages of philosophy one
of its schools has been utilitarian' (loc. cit., p. 54). The dilemmas of
utilitarian ethics are still discussed; and are closely paralleled by some
of the dilemmas of what we could call utilitarian sociology. For just as
the ethical scheme rests on the identification of the individual and the
social good, so the corresponding sociological scheme rests on the identi-
fication of the formal 'values' and structure of society with the motiva-
tions and acts of those individuals who compose it. The principle of the
reducibility of collective phenomena to the subjectivity of individuals
is common to Bentham and Mill on the one hand, particularly in their
ethical arguments, and to Barth and other modern 'action-theorists' on the
other, where social-scientific arguments predominate. In both cases,
for example, the question of the relative freedom of the individual is
problematic, for it is difficult to reconcile the idea of personal liberty
either with a complete scheme of utilitarian ethics, or with the explanatory
ambitions of behavioural science. Bentham's view is of man as a somewhat
passive creature and the problem did not appear to worry him unduly; but
Mill championed the cause of the private freedom of the individual, especially
in his classic essay On Liberty. He argued with passion that a utilitarian
view did not reduce the individuality or worth of a person, and explored
the territory for private freedom which should be preserved within a scheme
of general utility. The problem itself he recognised clearly, and dealt
with it mainly in the context of practical politics. But it has a general
character, and arises from a real dilemma in all but the most extreme forms
of utilitarian theory.

Some answer must be given to the question: what can be the significance
of an individual person in a view of life, or an analytical scheme, which
merges him into the fabric of his society and morality, so that his standing
is that of a part within a wider whole? He contributes to the general
social sum, and partakes in its aggregate results; but what is he in himself?
The problem bothers modern critics no less than it bothered Mill. In a
recent essay, Bernard Williams takes issue with the utilitarian position

partly on these grounds. He shows that the integrity of the individual is seriously undermined by the utilitarian view, itself defended not long ago by J. C. C. Smart. Among other points, Williams shows that an impersonal calculation of general happiness disposes of the idea that one has perhaps more responsibility for one's actions than for someone else's; and also of the deeper commitments of a person, to which he will stick even though he may acknowledge that by giving way to projects of others he will cause a greater general happiness. To reconcile the two interests, which is the ideal ethical system of the utilitarians, is to jeopardize the very identity of the person:

> To take the extreme sort of case, how can a man, as a utilitarian agent, come to regard as one satisfaction among others, and a dispensable one, a project or attitude round which he has built his life, just because someone else's projects have so structured the causal scene that that is how the utilitarian sum comes out?...
>
> It is absurd to demand of such a man, when the sum comes in from the utility network which the projects of others have in part determined, that he should just step aside from his own project and decision and acknowledge the decision which utilitarian decision requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone's projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision; but this is to neglect the extent to which __his__ actions and __his__ decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity' (Williams, in Smart and Williams, 1973, pp. 116-117).

I quote this passage from Williams' argument, because it seems to me that like Mill's attempts to define and clarify the question of political liberty, it illuminates the nature of the corresponding problem in utilitarian sociology.

Barth faces the same difficulty in his presentation of the identity and freedom of the person in his analyses. The more strictly he adheres to the requirements of a utilitarian style of sociological analysis, the more precarious becomes the standing of the free agent; and the more concessions are made to the integrity and independence of this agent, the less distinctive and consistent the analysis. This theme can be developed in three main areas of Barth's work: his elaboration of the notions of status, role, etc. as abstractions from the empirical individual; his exploration of the rational motivation of action, especially in relation to entrepreneurs; and his analysis of the sources of an individual's 'values'.

Barth's use of status and role is a development from Radcliffe-Brown and Nadel. He sees 'status' as a cultural category (such as priest, doctor, etc.) and 'role' as the behaviour associated with a given status. Statuses often form series, and Barth uses 'status set' to mean a linked series such as doctor-nurse-patient. A person may occupy more than one status (wife, nurse, etc.) and each is then termed a part-status. This terminology forms the basis of his well-known article on stratification in north-west Pakistan, where he argues that the system is so similar to Hindu India that the term 'caste' can be used. The common principle of stratification in the Muslim Swat valley and Hindu India is that within each of a series of ranked groups, everyone holds a closely similar series

of part-statuses, highly compatible one with another.

The simultaneous comprehensiveness and clear definition of
units which characterizes caste systems results from the summation
of many part-statuses into standardized clusters, or social persons,
each identified with a particular caste position. Thus, in a Hindu
caste system, there is a diversity of economic and ritual statuses,
but these are interconnected so that all Priests are sacred and all
Leatherworkers are untouchable.
A sociological analysis of such a system naturally concentrates
on the principles governing the summation of statuses, and the
consequent structural features of the clusters of connected statuses
or caste positions... The caste system defines clusters of such
statuses, and one particular cluster is imposed on all individual
members of each particular caste.
The coherence of the system depends upon the compatibility of
such associated statuses... Each caste position must be such that
the requirements implied by its component statuses may be simul-
taneously satisfied; and the alignment of each individual in terms
of his different statuses should also be consistent and not fraught
with interminable dilemmas.' (1960, pp. 113-114)

Barth suggests that societies of the caste type lie in an intermediate
position between homogenous societies, and 'complex systems in which different
statuses can be freely combined... This type of system is found associated
with the use of a monetary medium which facilitates the division of labour'
(ibid. p. 145). In a recent article which I had the privilege of reading
before publication, Barth develops this typology and its implications,
recommending with great lucidity an emphasis upon the 'system-oriented,
rather than ego-oriented' application of such concepts as status, and the
use of the behavioural vocabulary of Erving Goffman. The concept of the
person as a whole and independent agent becomes subordinate to the system:

...We can visualize any society of which we are members as
follows. Each of us is a compound person, the encumbent of many
statuses. When we come into each other's presence we do so in a
physical environment - one which we perceive selectively and classify
culturally as a potential scene for certain, and only certain, kinds
of activities. We add to these constraints, or modify them, by
communicating with each other as to who we are and what we intend
to do, and thereby we arrive at an agreed definition of the situation,
which implies which status out of our total repertoire we shall regard
as relevant, and what use we shall put it to... Behind this creation
of organized encounters, we can identify the interests and goals that
set social life in motion: we can recognize social statuses as
assets, and situations as occasions for realizing them by enactment...
I thus see encounters, structured by such agreements, as the
stuff of society... (n.d., pp. 5-6)

The mode of arrangements and combination of statuses in person provides a
framework for a fourfold typology, with western society at one extreme,
as in the earlier typology. The nature of Barth's sociological defini-
tion of what freedom consists in becomes explicit; for it consists in the
kind of manipulation of statuses and switching of roles which is possible
in western society (or supposedly so); whereas in the smaller scale
society there is scarcely any option. An interesting corollary seems to
be that it is not the whole person at all who is considered as a free
agent; it is some inner kernel, underneath the apparel of status and role.
In western industrial society, wide networks of interaction can be set

up on minimal status information;

> The realization of this potential is further enhanced by the
> remarkable freedom of each individual person to accumulate infor-
> mation and act upon it by diversifying social relations and in-
> volving himself in deeper commitments with a particular alter
> based on this information... (ibid., p. 22).

However this kind of freedom is impossible in other social systems:

> ... The very concept of 'status' in these different social systems
> refers to rather different kinds of things. In the simpler societies
> status refers to a sum of multiplex capacities vis-a-vis alters
> with comprehensive previous information about a person. In involute
> systems it refers to a – perhaps compromising – component of a
> stereotyped cluster of capacities. In modern contract society it
> may refer merely to the ability to demonstrate vis-a-vis strangers
> the command of a very limited and specific asset. In other words
> it varies between being a total social identity, a compelling
> straight-jacket, and an incidental option. The difference may be
> highlighted by the realization that a concept like that of role
> distance, based on the distinction between subjective self and
> objective status (cf. Goffman...) which seems very useful ai 1
> fundamental to an understanding of status in our society, becomes
> totally inapplicable in a social system of elementary type, based
> on only a very few status sets (ibid., pp. 24-25).

This passage is very helpful for perceiving what Barth has in mind: the
inner, subjective self which 'utilizes' various attributes such as status,
and because of this can be said to operate with a certain 'freedom', exists
in itself merely as a consequence of a certain configuration of the 'outer'
society. In other configurations, where total identity is obligatory, the
existence of a subjective self cannot be distinguished, and there is there-
fore no freedom for it to manipulate the 'objective' aspects of the self.
What has happened to the free agent from whose independent action and
decision the form of society flows? He has given way to a compound person,
whose composition is consequent upon the form of the external soci by; and
whose subjective self and freedom is defined in such narrow socilogical
terms, that it does not exist at all in large parts of the world though
it is important in 'western industrial' society. The premise that 'status'
is a categorical attribute relevant for behaviour in personal interaction
perhaps necessarily leads to this kind of conclusion, in studies which take
as their object of investigation that kind of behaviour, in the aggregate.
The general approach is worked out in Barth's Introduction to Ethnic Groups
and Boundaries, where ethnicity is treated as a status in this sen j, though
it is recognised that in some circumstances it may indicate a primary
identity, or "imperative status" (1969, Introduction).

The 'compound' person also appears in Barth's various discussions and
applications of role-theory. The main point of present interest is that a
person may play two or more different roles, which are incompatible, and
therefore when they clash in certain social situations, his behaviour has
to be modified. He may have to choose behaviour appropriate to one role
and suppress the other role; or the dilemma may be insoluble since neither
role is dominant, and he may avoid the situation altogether, by absenting
himself or severely modifying his behaviour. This is the topic treated
in Barth's Role Dilemmas..., where the case examined is that of the con-
flict between the kind of behaviour expected in the Middle East between
a man and his son, and between husband and wife; the latter is suppressed,

for example, when a man's father comes to visit him and his wife. Because it takes priority, the father-son relation can be described as dominant. It is of fundamental importance, and must not be compromised; other relationships, and role-play appropriate to them, must take a subordinate place. The solution to a conflict of roles of this kind may be more extreme; the Swat Pathan bridegroom even avoids his own wedding, which Barth suggests arises from the profound role dilemma he experiences in a situation where otherwise he would have to acknowledge and play out publicly his role as son, and as husband.

The concept of individual freedom seems to recede further from view in this analysis of behaviour as a negative reaction to situations where the categorical obligations of the various roles one is supposed to play become confused. The person appears a somewhat passive creature, permeated by the external encounters and situations in which he finds himself. He copes with a dilemma by suppression or avoidance; he seems to have little 'choice' in this field. His freedom seems limited not because of any external framework of rules, but because of his uncontrollable internal reaction to the stimuli of spontaneous encounters. However, as Barth has accepted the concept of 'imperative' statuses, and therefore implied a heirarchy of statuses, it is of great interest that he accepts also a heirarchy of social or kinship relations, in the sense that some are of primary importance and others are worn more lightly. For by attaching such weight to certain aspects of organisation and giving them a deeper significance, his arguments surely appeal to something other than a principle of utility in behaviour. Mill's heirarchy of 'pleasures', some higher and some lower, was constructed to give some real form to a social morality and real standards to the individual in the face of the shifting and infinitely reducible morality of the extreme utilitarian scheme; and Williams' argument that there must be 'deeper' commitments which block the utilitarian calculation of individual interests is also recalled by Barth's acceptance of a hierarchy of statuses and roles from the individual's viewpoint.

Barth's summary of the argument on role dilemmas reads in part as follows:

> I believe that the empirical substance of Hsu's thesis of dominance in some kinship systems is valid and can be demonstrated. But I think that the pattern he has observed does not need to be cast in the descriptive and analytical mold that he has chosen. For the kind of data I have at my disposal, an explanatory model based on role theory appears to be both adequate and economical. It starts with the view that the distribution of rights on different statuses is never entirely integrated and harmonious. Where status sets and relevant social situations are clearly differentiated, this disharmony matters little to the actors, who can then pursue discrepant roles and project variant social personalities in different social situations. Routinized social life will in part be shaped by these considerations. Persons will seek the situations where successful role play can be consummated and avoid the situations where serious dilemmas keep arising - to the extent of grooms in Swat avoiding their own weddings. In general, difficulties can be resolved by avoiding simultaneous encounters with the parties to whom one has discrepant relations - by patterns such as the seclusion of women, for example... (1971, p. 94).

Barth goes too far in suggesting that seclusion of women is actually 'explained' by role theory, and the desire by men to avoid embarrassment

through the confusion of their public and private roles. His 'explanation'
in terms of the dominant character of relations between man and man in
the public sphere cannot stand on its own; appeal must surely be made
to some external structure of an economic, political or ideological kind
to justify the classification of some roles as dominant and others as
recessive. It is difficult to see how behavioural interaction, in itself,
could produce such categorical distinctions.

Barth's acceptance of 'dominant' relations represents something of
a concession to the idea of there being permanent and stable features of
society, as does his concept of the imperative quality of some statuses.
But these are points at which his arguments resist the full implications
of the utilitarian position he has taken up. Apart from these concessions
(and I point out another below), the person dissolves into the ever-
changing patterns of encounter and behavioural modification. Underneath
the bundle of items of social personality and role requirements, there is
an individual will; but its integrity and autonomy has been sadly eroded.
There remains the inner being which utilizes the social statuses and
other assets it controls, and provides the motivation of the person. The
inner being, almost by definition, is itself impermeable to experience;
for the social aspects of a person are those which can be assumed, discarded,
projected, modified or suppressed at will, as an actor dons or doffs his
clothes, and his stage character. The inner person is asocial in itself;
it is motivated by the rational aim of maximising whatever values and
satisfactions are offered in the culture in which it grew up; there is a
predictability about its motivation which seems of a mechanical kind, al-
though ironically Barth's work is devoted to the criticism of the mechanical
quality of some structural-functional explanation.

The second set of questions which relate to the problem of choice
in Barth's social anthropology concern the external activities of persons
rather than their inner nature. The essence of freedom and choice, it is
suggested, lies in the careers of innovators and entrepreneurs. They are
not different in kind from the rest of the people, who also exercise
choice, but merely in degree; they are more devoted to maximizing one kind
of value (profit) and make more rational and extensive calculations.
Their activity can lead to major changes in society, as they initiate new
kinds of transaction, organization, and even value. But, as the analysis
proceeds, the entrepreneur looks less and less a creative and original
person; both within himself and in relation to the opportunities around
him, he appears increasingly as a creature of his situation, his behaviour
as more predictable, and his decisions as more pre-structured. Barth
makes it clear in his theoretical analysis of 1963 that the entrepreneur
must not be thought of in a naive sense to begin with:

> It is essential to realize that "the entrepreneur" is not a person
> in any strict sociological sense (Radcliffe-Brown 1940) though
> inevitably the word will be used, also in the present essays, in a
> way that may foster this impression. Nor does it seem appropriate
> to treat entrepreneurship as a status or even a role, implying as
> it would a discreteness and routinization which may be lacking in the
> materials we wish to analyse. Rather, its strict use should be for
> an aspect of a role: it relates to actions and activities, and not
> rights and duties, furthermore it characterizes a certain quality or
> orientation in this activity which may be present to greater or less
> extent in the different institutionalized roles found in the com-
> munity. To the extent that persons take the initiative, and in the
> pursuit of profit in some discernible form manipulate other persons
> and resources, they are acting as entrepreneurs. It is with the
> factors encouraging and channeling, or inhibiting such activity, that
> we shall be concerned. (1963, p. 6.)

Insofar as these factors which encourage or inhibit entrepreneurs are the object of study, rather than the exercise of choice and originality by the entrepreneur himself, the free individual fades from the centre of the picture. The controlling factors obviously include environmental conditions in the ordinary sense; but also social conditions, which are represented as being in the nature of an environment to the individual. Because of this metaphor, it is possible to chart the opportunities for an entrepreneur inherent in a given social milieu.

> The central theme to which we have chosen to address ourselves is the entrepreneurial career as a process, as a chain of transactions between the entrepreneur and his environment; and so we need to describe the social aspects of that environment in terms which emphasize the reciprocity of those transactions. In other words, we need to see the rest of the community as composed of actors who also make choices and pursue strategies... (ibid., p. 7)

Through the network of social transactions linking people, which are the substance of society, the entrepreneur finds his way and perceives how new links can be made. His actions are usually represented as a bringing together of previously separate people, previously incommensurable values or spheres of exchange, and integrating society further as a consequence. A given economic structure presents certain clear possibilities for such entreprenuerial activity, and to that extent the activity is predictable. Barth's analysis of the economy of the mountain Fur, of the Sudan, analyses its structure from this point of view. What is perhaps not predictable is the reaction of the Fur people to non-Fur entrepreneurs who make enormous profits on selling tomatoes by exploiting the traditional reciprocal labour system (see 1967, esp. pp. 171-2). However the language used by Barth in his theoretical analysis of entrepreneurs is closely linked to the language of the natural sciences, with all the suggestions of natural process and predictability that they evoke:

> The point at which an entrepreneur seeks to exploit the environment may be described as his niche: the position which he occupies in relation to resources, competitors, and clients. I have in mind a structural analysis of the environment like that made by an animal ecologist or human geographer: resources in the form of codfish on a bank provide a niche for cod-fishermen, while their activity in delivering to a port again provides resources in unprocessed and untransmitted catch, which may be exploited by actors in a niche as fish-buyers... (1963, p. 9).

> The purely economic enterprise can be used as a model for other kinds of social activity, and in particular politics, viewed as a competitive game. Barth states clearly in his analysis of entrepreneurial activity that it is based on a view of social life of which the 'logically most stringent expression is the Theory of Games'.

He has demonstrated elsewhere the application of formal game theory to Swat politics (1959b). The game metaphor, which I shall not discuss as such, fits in well with the range of metaphors used by Barth - actors, role-playing, impression management, and so forth. When these terms are used in a technical sense, they lead to real difficulties, as I am trying to show with respect to the concept of the individual; when their normal language use is recalled, the sense that all social life is unreal, artificial and optional, is unavoidable. The puzzle remains as to what would be left if all the layers of artifice and induced behaviour were dissolved; would the naked individual underneath have some social being,

some irreducible social identity, which would give him a 'real' place in
society which itself formed the basis of his individuality? Or must the
basis of individuality remain a particular layered assortment of
ascribed statuses, aspects of roles, incurred and consequential obligations,
and managed impressions? Is the residue, which resists social explanation,
merely a bundle of raw psychological motivations, of instinct and animal
need? If this were the case, how would it be possible to speak of individual
freedom and choice? The dilemma closely parallels, to my mind, the problem
of Bernard Williams, in locating the sources of the integrity of an
individual person in a utilitarian scheme of ethics. Can a sociological
scheme treat only of the external aspects of people, the bargains, inputs
and outputs between them, while leaving untouched the inner motivations
and self-consciousness of individuals? If that inner being is defined
as asocial, then by definition it is left out of the picture, and one
cannot speak of freedom; if on the other hand the inner being of a person
is itself social in nature, then one can speak of the question of his
freedom, for the idea of freedom is a social concept and applicable only
in a social context. It is bound to lead to difficulties if one speaks
of freedom in the context of 'scientific' behaviour study, where the opinions,
personality and activity of individuals are treated as so much external
paraphernalia, subject to manipulation by some inner psychological automaton.

Barth's treatment of the place of 'values' in culture follows clearly
and consistently the principles he has laid down elsewhere for the study
of social organization, and I believe some of the same difficulties recur.
The most concise expression of his approach to this question is contai̇ d
in the second part of his 1966 paper on Models of Social Organization.
'Values' are an integral part of society; but they are not given in any
final sense. They are subject to modification through social experience,
and in particular to the patterns of interaction in a given society. For
the only values relevant to a study of society are those which find material
expression through acts. Actions are performed in the light of specif;
values, which may be modified by patterns of interaction, and form bas
contrasts between different societies. A value does not exist in a vacuum;
it grows from, and is subject to, the experience of encounter and communica-
tion with others. The predominant metaphor for a value is that of price.
As with prices, a scheme of values may be modified by actual transactions.
The process of social interaction Barth considers to be the basis for the
reaching of any agreed values in a population, and the achievement of
consistency and integration in culture. Barth does admit that there are
'some such processes' as 'contemplation or introspection through which
disparate values are compared in the direction of consistency'; but 'they
are only to a slight degree available for observation by a social anthro-
pologist; nor do they seem to explain the patent inconsistencies in various
respects which characterize the views or values of many people' (1966,
pp. 12-13). Here is the recurrent image of the person who contains some
inner inconsistency, which Barth views as divisive to his personality;
the person himself is unable to overcome the contradiction and become a
source of wholeness in human experience. The contradiction is imprinted
on him by the form of 'interaction' in a society; and only the revision
of this form of interaction through time, in the direction of greater
consistency, can be a source of such wholeness. 'As a process generating
consistency in values, social transactions would seem to be more effective
and compelling than any contemplative need for logical or conceptual con-
sistency in the minds of primitive philosophers' (ibid., p. 14). The
values of an individual are therefore partial, meaningful only as part
of the wider society. The metaphor of the social organism, which Barth
has so firmly rejected elsewhere, is uncomfortably close. In the process
of value adjustment to shared standards, there does not seem to be much

ground for the individual person to stand on. He seems to have no real
boundaries, to be totally permeable to circumstantial experience, and sub-
ject to such flexible revision of his principles and standards of evaluation
that he could scarcely remain 'the same person' throughout his life.
His personality seems no more than the sum of its parts than the wider
society is more than the sum of its parts. This dissolution of the person,
consequent upon a certain style of analysis, is realised by Barth; and as
he made use of the concepts of imperative status and dominant roles, he
admits the idea that there are relatively stable values, from which a
person does not easily shift. 'I feel it is necessary to distinguish a
person's continually shifting profile or preferences and appetites from
a profile of stable judgments of value to which people also seem to sub-
scribe. These more stable values, by which different situations and
longer-range strategies may be compared, are more basic to an explanation
of social form.' (ibid., p. 13) Does not this concession to relatively
stable values, which cannot so easily be represented as the outcome of
interaction, come remarkably close to Mill's hierarchy of motivations,
and Williams' insistence on 'deeper commitments'? The maintenance of such
distinctions, in the end, leads to the abandonment of the principle of
utility, for it demands an appeal to other standards of relevance. To
save the individual person, a difference in kind is admitted between 'more
stable' and 'shifting' values; but the analysis ought then to take into
account other dimensions of society besides the 'interactional'. In a
consistently utilitarian world, even the entrepreneur has no real freedom
and no real choice; for being ultimately rational, he can calculate the
outcome of various possible actions precisely, and compare their potential
profit; the decision is made for him by the configurations of the world
around him. Real choice is faced where one thing is not reducible to
another; and all humane writers in the utilitarian tradition make concessions
of some kind towards the preservation of real choice and the integrity of
persons.

The alternative to such concessions is fully faced by B. F. Skinner,
in behavioural psychology, and spelled out in the harsh message of his
recent book, Beyond Freedom and Dignity.

<div align="right">Wendy James</div>

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"In the Shadow of the Golden Bough":
in response to Lienhardt

> Chaos is new,
> And has no past or future. Praise the few
> Who built in chaos our bastion and our home.

Such is Edwin Muir's response to the dilemma which faced many English
writers at the turn of the century - the feeling that unity of culture had
been lost in the mechanistic and scientific world, that the increase
in knowledge of other societies led to a breakdown of confidence in one's
own. Lienhardt has shown (1973; p. 61) how the writings of anthropologists
at this time contributed to many creative writers' sense of alienation,
almost of 'anomie'.

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born.

Anthropological writings provided a new framework for experience, a
mode of understanding which attempted to see the world through the eyes
of 'savages' and 'primitives' and in doing so recognised that the savage
might exclude the European from his world view as much as the European had
been accustomed to exclude the savage. The sense of disintegration that
this gave rise to is traced in various directions by Lienhardt. This new
relativism created an excess of knowledge which Nietzsche as early as 1909
called 'dangerous' and 'harmful'. It also gave rise to an excess of
consciousness - of intellectual awareness. D. H. Lawrence in particular
represented this as destructive of finer sensitivities, of spontaneity and
emotional response. Moreover examples of 'primitive' cultures in which
small-scale, community life revolved around a unified centre of common
knowledge and assumptions increased the awareness of what modern industrial
life had lost with its complexity and impersonality. The very thinking on
which anthropological enquiry was based contributed to this sense of dis-
unity - the attempt to participate in another, alien way of life and yet
remain within one's own cultural framework, seemed to lead only to dis-
ruption. Eliot, writes Lienhardt (ibid. 65) 'seems to suggest that
somewhere a halt must be called to sympathy, or empathy, lest the person,
no longer belonging to any society, disintegrate.'

This fear of disintegration was in keeping with the growing sense
of the creative writer as isolated from his society, that derived from
other trains of thought than just anthropological ones. But anthropology
contributed:

> with the imaginative attempt to enter into the experience of other
> lives and times, there goes the isolation of the thinking individual
> which is such a characteristic theme of this country's thought and
> writing. (Ibid. 65)

In these various ways, then, anthropological writings and theory at
the turn of the century contributed to that characteristic sense of dis-
integration and alienation.

But the emphasis was not all in this negative direction. Lienhardt
notes one way in which anthropological thinking provided a model for
unifying experience:

Now I think we may see a parallel between this conscious effort of
Tylor to think and experience, at once, the thoughts and experiences
of foreign cultures and of his own, thus unifying and relating them,
and the efforts made by the writers of this century to find some
way of integrating their sympathies and experience, which has been
so much a subject of critical thought.

Unfortunately, Lienhardt leaves it there and returns to those currents
of uncertainty which flowed in anthropological and literary writings alike
and which anthropological enquiry helped to swell into something of a flood.
It is the purpose of this article to point out the other, more positive
contributions of anthropology to the mainstream of English literary life –
the sources of unity that at least some writers found in the very material
and ideas that had, apparently, caused so much disintegration. The dis-
coveries of anthropologists made no small contribution to the work of those
few who 'built in chaos our bastion and our home'. If they helped to
increase the prevailing sense of chaos, the anthropologists also provided
a unifying scheme for coping with it.

Hoffman (1967; 5) in a study of Yeats' use of myth, notes this fact
and from the standpoint of a literary critic, acknowledges the significance
of anthropology at that time;

> But if the natural and social scientists seemed to deny the absolute
> authority of Christian doctrine or the truth of mystical experience
> these iconoclasts proved saviours in disguise for the de-faithed
> poets of the turn of the century and since. All whom I have men-
> tioned (Pound, Wallace Stevens, Whitman, T. S. Eliot) write
> necessarily in the shadow of the golden bough, but for Yeats,
> Graves and Muir the discoveries of the Cambridge anthropologists
> and of similar researchers into pagan antiquity were to have
> special importance.

What was this importance and in what way did"The Golden Bough"provide
a source of unity to some, even while others saw it as a source of dis-
integration? I shall cite W. B. Yeats and D. H. Lawrence as particular
examples of the way in which 'researches into pagan antiquity' could be
used by creative writers in the building of such a "home".

Yeats, in his concern with redeeming "the soul from its subjugation
to a mechanistic world', turned to myth and folk lore. The 18th century
had been barren of myth, according to Douglas Bush, because of "the
dominance of rationalism and realism". The early 19th century poets had
reacted against this and returned to myth; "the fundamental impulse of
the mythological renascence was contained in the romantic protest against
a mechanical world and mechanical verse stripped, as it seemed, of imagin-
ation and emotion, of beauty and mystery." The early romantics had turned
to Greek and Roman myths, but these became debased in overuse and the
"Last Romantics", as Yeats called himself and his contemporaries, searched
for new sources of mythological power. "Although no mythologist or poet
could avoid his classical heritage, or would want to, Yeats and Graves
had a given advantage of working also from within an unfamiliar though
analagous mythical tradition, that of Celtic pagandom." One reason why
the myth, folklore and legend of Ireland was available to Yeats at the
time when he deemed such material vital to his purpose,lay in the stimulus
and respectability given to studies of 'pagan antiquity' by anthropologists.
Local folk lore and legend became a source of imaginative power to many
writers at this time, their bastion against the chaos of science and of
excess learning. Much of this material was available because of such
learning and science?

The 'discovery' of local dialects, the investigations of antiquities
of custom and belief and the detailed recording by the 'folklorists' of
myth and legend, provided a vast new source of material and of ideas.
The folklorists worked within the framework of anthropological ideas,
notably including concern with origins and social evolution. Primitive
peoples and, indeed, European peasants it was posited, represented
survivals of various stages of development through which the modern,
sophisticated European had passed many ages before. Consequently, an
investigation of contemporary folk-lore and legend among primitives and
peasants might tell something of the origins of modern literature.
Deriving from Tylor's analysis of such 'Survivals', two schools of thought
arose in folk studies:

> "One of these was represented by those who found the source of
> literary expression in the invention of the individual artist,
> the minstrel and the trappings of chivalry. The other had, as its
> exponents, those who followed Herder and Grimm back to the unlettered
> peasant and ascribed poetry in the ballad form to the poet aggregate
> called 'folk'" (Hodgen 1936, 126)

Andrew Lang, one of the most influential anthropologists enquiring
into European folk lore, subscribed to the theory of communal composition;

> Ballads ... flit from age to age, from lip to lip of shepherds,
> peasants, nurses, all that class which continues nearest to the
> state of natural man. (Lang: 1878)

Here, then, was a source of inspiration and a source of 'unity' for
writers who saw the mechanistic world disintegrating; the ballad form
provided not only a framework for writing poetry but a cluster of associ-
ations which fitted well with the poet's own ideas.

> In that ancient and communal poetic form they found a sense of
> solidarity with a community and a means of experiencing and expressing
> archetypal, often atavistic, emotion. (Hoffman; viii.) (It is
> interesting to note Hoffman's obvious debt to Lang here, 89 years
> later.)

For Yeats, at least, this identity with a community is not just a
convenient intellectual idea; he was actually brought up in a peasant
community in West Ireland and in his later writing he still preserves
his sense of a genuine identity with the countryside and people. He
writes of those other writers from Ireland - Swift, Goldsmith, Berkely
and Burke - that their

> ... bloody, arrogant power
> Rose out of the race
> Uttering, mastering it,
> Rose like those walls from these
> Storm-beaten cottages. ('Blood and the Moon')

Hoffman relates this to Yeats' search for an overriding 'unity';
"unity of spirit can be achieved as well by men who live in 'storm-beaten
cottages' as by those in the tower, and much better than by any who drift
in the undirected masterless society of our time" (op. cit. p. 32). There
are more than political considerations alone behind the 'Celtic Revival'
of the turn of the century and anthropological ideas play their part in
Yeats' formulation of his ideas. The searches into pagan customs provide
the ethnological content for romantic ideas of "the soil".

Yeats, writing of himself, Synge and Lady Gregory, refers to their source
of inspiration:

> All that we did, all that we said or sang
> Must come from contact with the soil, from that
> Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.
> We three alone in modern times had brought
> Everything to that sole test again,
> Dream of the noble and the beggar-man.　('The Municipal Gallery
> Revisited')

Apart from this direct concern with the cultural unity that (some-
what idealistically) places the noble and the beggar-man in the same flow
of tradition, Yeats also derived some of his own deepest religious beliefs
from that peasant background. The beliefs of Celtic peasants gave Yeats
an initial experience of spiritual reality which was denied by the
mechanistic world of industrial London and Europe. Again the work of
anthropologists into 'primitive' religion contributed to Yeats' being
able to use it in his poetry. Apart from the respectability such interests
had acquired through academic patronage, they had been brought before a
wider public and so could provide a common term of reference for many
romantic primitivists who had read Tylor and Lang or the enquiries of
Sir Samuel Ferguson and Standish O'Grady into Irish antiquity and legend.

Moreover, the search of some poets for a means of expressing a sense
for 'unity' could be partly satisfied by the architectonic framework of the
myths being recorded by anthropologists.

> Robert Graves and Edwin Muir are in no sense Yeats' followers, yet
> they resemble him in their need to root imagination in an 'a priori'
> structure of experience, a frame of archetypes or myth which each
> poet worked out for himself independently... All three share an
> identification with the primitive and folk cultures of the outlands
> of Britain which offered them alternative casts of feeling and
> contrasting associations to those of the modern industrial culture
> they abhorred. Romantic primitivism was expressed through reliance
> on myths... (Hoffman: viii.)

Writing specifically of Yeats, Hoffman claims

> In his eclectic fashion he would fuse his later researches into magic
> and spiritism, together with his own experience of folk belief and
> join to these his readings in Irish epic literature and mythological
> studies of Irish pagandom" (Ibid: 24)

Here, then, we find the writings of 'anthropologists', those 'mythological
studies of pagandom' cited as providing a poet with a source of unity rather
than creating the sense of disorientation that Lienhardt notes of Eliot.
The very folk material provided a source of unity both in its concrete
detail and in its archetypal pattern; moreover, the direct experience of
spiritual reality evident in pagan myth and peasant life, was a source
of personal inspiration to Yeats and others; descriptions of peasant life
emphasised the sense of community that many urban dwellers in Industrial
England felt was lost; concern with origins and social evolution led to
a study of folk lore as a communal art, carrying through ancient traditions
in a common culture - the poet could thus identify himself with the common
traditions of 'noble and beggar-man' in a way he could not in middle class
Europe where the writer was conceived romantically as isolated and one;
and, finally, the attempts to move between two such different ways of life
and thought led some at least to discover deeper levels of affinity between

them. Yeats particularly experienced two societies, that of peasant
Ireland and middle class London, as anthropologists like Tylor were
attempting to do. Where such experience led Eliot to talk of limits to
empathy and Lawrence to write 'Whitman wasn't an Eskimo', Yeats looked
for unity at a deeper level. The writings of contemporary anthropologists
and the climate of anthropological thought, by influencing such enquiries,
made a positive contribution to the search for order in a world that
others were accusing anthropologists of helping to disintegrate.

D.H. Lawrence, too, used anthropological writings in this positive
way. However aware of the problems that moving between different cultures
gives rise to, he used anthropology as an ally in his running conflict
with the evil influences of contemporary science and technology. The
work of anthropologists provided him, as it did Yeats and others, with a
source of both material and ideas on which to build a coherent, unified
structure in a disoriented world. He came to much of this anthropology
in later life, while in Mexico, though we can trace the influence of gen-
eral anthropological ideas in his earlier work. In The Plumed Serpent,
written in 1926, we find one of the most remarkable examples of how
closely anthropological ideas have affected a creative writer.

In The Plumed Serpent Lawrence expresses his own ideas of the con-
trast between modern, industrial life and the life of a former Utopian
state in terms of a revived Aztec cult in Mexico, which attempts to return
to the earlier values through the medium of symbols and rituals that had
almost died out. Lawrence starts where most primitivists start; he is
disillusioned with the values of modern life in the advanced industrial
state, which he finds decadent and materialistic, having lost its aware-
ness of the heart and the sense - 'the blood', and put too much emphasis
on intellectual achievement - the mind. In this, Lawrence's work is in
the main stream of primitivistic writing and many of the stock formulae
of the genre are evident in his use of Aztec material. But Lawrence
brings something new to the tradition. He is one of the earliest writers
to take advantage of the new scientific study of primitive peoples, and
as a result both the material he uses and his attitude to it differ from
those of his predecessors. Even though he shares many of their pre-
conceptions, his primitivism is grounded in much more ethnographic detail.

From the idea that modern society is corrupt he develops the notion
that primitive peoples are superior because of a closer and different kind
of communion with the universe. This is not merely because the primitive
lives closer to nature and is more directly dependant on it; that idea,
too, may be found in the literary treatment of the traditional 'noble
savage'. But for Lawrence the relationship of primitive man with the
universe is a mystical one, like that ideal communion between individual
human beings which his earlier novels continually explore, where the
true consummation for men is a relationship with another person or thing
in which their two natures become fused, their 'polarity' is centralised.

Searching for this ideal he eventually found it in anthropological
accounts of primitive life and ritual. These, at the time, were concerned
with man's attempt to establish a relationship with nature, to achieve
the fertility necessary for life to continue. Frazer in "The Golden Bough"
interpreted ritual and symbol as attempts to achieve this fertility, arising
from observation of natural phenomena by primitive minds. Lawrence saw
this as true communion with the universe and thought that it was to be
found in man's primeval past when he was nearer to his instinctual origins;

and, since primitive man today is nearer than 'civilised' man to this primeval past, the quality of that communion is to be more readily observed in him. Like Yeats, Lawrence writes within the framework of ideas developed by Tylor in his theory of 'Survivals'. Lawrence's search for the 'true values' in earlier forms of life, not a particularly new idea, was given new form and significance by contemporary anthropological theory.

But not all primitive life had, for Lawrence, this quality he was seeking. His journeys to Italy, Sardinia, Ceylon, India and Australia were a series of disillusioning discoveries of the repulsiveness and dirtiness of much savage life. The reality did not live up to his ideals. But when he was invited by Mabel Dodge Luhan to her farm in Mexico, where she hoped that 'her' Indians would provide him with the examples he wanted, he did indeed find for a while something approaching his ideal. After an initial disappointment at the hideousness of post-Aztec culture and the 'musical-comedy' aspect of New Mexico, he suddenly discovered that Indian religion expressed some of his own central ideas.

The landscape, he says, was the first 'revelation' (1936: 143), and the second was the realisation that the 'old human race experience' was to be found in Indian ritual, that the religion was living in a sense the others he had witnessed were not. Lawrence himself does not attempt to explain this radical change in his awareness, nor the reason for the 'revelation'. We find, on enquiry, however, that the reason for this change lies in his reading of anthropological works while in Mexico. The intrisic qualities of the Mexican Indians are not alone sufficient explanation for Lawrence's concern with Mexico and the importance he attributes to The Plumed Serpent (he calls it 'my best book'). I have argued elsewhere (Street: 1970) in more detail the reasons why we must look to Lawrence's reading in anthropology at that time for an explanation. For present purposes it is sufficient to show the extent to which a writer of this time was influenced by anthropological writings and the fact that he used them 'positively' to create an ordered view of the world rather than seeing them as destructive.

Browsing in Zelia Nuttall's library in Mexico and reading her book The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Religions (1901), Lawrence found   interpretations of Aztec and pre-Aztec culture that coincided remarkably with his own ideas and ideals of primitive values. Nuttall's main theme is that a common basic structure can be found in societies in many parts of the world, as her title suggests. She starts her analysis of these principles with the religion of the Mexican plateau, both Aztec and pre-Aztec. In a manner typical of early 20th century anthropology she attempts to relate all Aztec symbols and ritual to a scheme based on natural observation, in this case of the Polar Star. The position of this star and of Ursa Major, a group of seven stars with Polaris in the centre, she adduces as the origin of the whole Aztec conception of the cosmos, expressed in all their symbols and rites.

In The Plumed Serpent Lawrence employs her approach to the material and also attempts to explain the whole complex of beliefs and rituals in his imagined post-Aztec culture in terms of a single overriding unity. But he differs slightly from Nuttall in introducing current theories drawn from Theosophy into his explanation of Mexican religion. The theory that the occult mysteries of Atlantis had been lost in the Flood but were still retained by a few cultures that had escaped to the high places of the earth, was one of many attempts at the time to explain the remarkable similarity in the myths and symbols of diverse cultures being discovered

and brought together by the new discipline of anthropology. Frazer and Tylor accounted for the similarity on grounds of common experience of natural phenomena; others put it down to culture contact and diffusion through migrations; Max Müller saw myths as distortions of language and thereby explained their similarity; theosophists believed that all men were once part of one culture and similarities in diverse parts of the world were due to the retention of elements of this culture by people who had been divided by the Flood.

Lawrence was attracted by this idea; his reading in anthropology had clearly suggested that many primitive peoples represented survivals of an earlier state and he believed that modern society had lost intuitions of the 'blood' which older cultures retained. He could thus condemn the faults of his own society, in the traditional primitivistic way, by pointing in primitive societies to the values it had lost.

Not all primitive societies, however, has retained the Atlantean mysteries and his journeys to Ceylon and Australia had failed to reveal what he was looking for. Likewise his first sight of Indian ritual in Mexico was a disappointment. But in Nuttall he discovered that those symbols the theosophists believed to derive from Atlantis were retained by the Aztecs of Mexico. And when she showed that the same fundamental principles were to be found in some Asian cultures the 'revelation' was complete. By reviving in novel form the symbols and rites of the Aztecs he could suggest the real meaning of the Atlantean religion whose values he believed 'advanced' societies had lost and he could link it with the ancient tribes of Europe, with the Celts and the Druids, the holders of the mysteries on his own continent.

The Plumed Serpent, then, is an attempt to work out these ideas imaginatively. A group of modern Mexican visionaries attempt to recapture the old values by re-enacting the rites and recalling the symbols of the Aztecs. Lawrence's vision of the world is worked out in close concrete detail. And these details are derived, to a very large extent, from Nuttall and from other anthropological writings on the subject (see list at end). Moreover the ideas that lie behind these details are also derived, in large measure, from current anthropological theory. A close analysis of The Plumed Serpent and of Lawrence's other Mexican writings such as The Woman Who Rode Away reveals a remarkable similarity, sometimes almost word for word or idea for idea with the work of Nuttall and certain anthropologists. The central symbol of the book, the plumed serpent or Quetzal-coatl, is described in careful detail as are the colours used in ritual, clothing and decoration, the association of numbers, of points of the compass, specific symbols like stars, birds and geometrical shapes. With the practice of contemporary anthropologists to support him and the example of Nuttall's meticulous scholarship, Lawrence relates every action, look and gesture of the culture he describes back to his personal scheme. The Plumed Serpent is a dense and complex book that cannot be fully understood without some knowledge of anthropological writings of the time. It represents one of the most vital attempts by a creative writer to use anthropological discoveries and theories to build a coherent and unified imaginative scheme, to build 'in chaos our bastion and our home'.

The emphasis in "contemporary" writers' use of anthropological data and theory is at least as much on the positive contribution they can make to building a world order as on the contribution, highlighted by Lienhardt, to destroying that order.

<div align="right">Brian V. Street</div>

Note

  Much of the information regarding Lawrence's reading and movements
  is taken from Tindal, W. Y. (1939) and from the writer's doctoral
  thesis (Oxford: 1970).

Appendix: A selection of D. H. Lawrence's reading, as suggested by
  Tindall (1939).

Blavatsky, Mme Helena P.	The Secret Doctrine, 1888.
	Isis Unveiled. 1910.
Darwin, C.	Origin of Species, 1858.
	The Descent of Man, 1871.
Frazer, Sir James	The Golden Bough, 1890.
Harrison, Jane	Ancient Art and Ritual, 1911.
Jung, Carl Gustav	Psychology of the Unconscious, 1912 (trans. 1916)
Maspero, Gaston.	The Dawn of Civilisation, 1875 (trans 1894)
Murray, Prof. George	Greek and English Tragedy, 1912.
	The Rise of the Greek Epic, 1907.
Nuttal, Zelia	The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Religions, 1901.
Prescott, W. H.	The Conquest of Mexico, 1843.
Saint-Pierre, J. H. B. de	Studies of Nature, 1784.
	The Indian Cottage, 1791.
Spence, Lewis	Gods of Mexico, 1923.
Tylor, E. B.	Primitive Culture, 1865.

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Frazer, Sir James	The Golden Bough, 1890.
Hodgen, M.	The Doctrine of Survivals, London 1936.
Hoffman, D.	Barbarous Knowledge – myth in the poetry of Yeats, Graves and Muir. O.U.P. 1967.
Lang, A.	'The Ballad' in Encyclopedia Brittanica 1878.
Lawrence, D. H.	The Plumed Serpent, 1926.
	The Woman Who Rode Away. 1928
	Phoenix, 1936.
Lawrence, Frieda	Not I – But the Wind, 1934
Leavis, F. R.	D. H. Lawrence – Novelist, 1955.
Luhan, Mabel Dodge	Lorenzo in Taos, 1932.
Nuttal, Zelia	The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Religions. Harvard 1901.
Street, B. V.	Some Aspects of Anthropological Themes in English Literature. D. Phil. Oxford 1970.
Tindall, W. Y.	D. H. Lawrence and Susan his Cow, 1939.
Tylor, E.	Primitive Culture, 1865.
Yeats, W. B.	Selected Poetry ed. Norman Jeffares. 1964.

Some Reflections on the Decennial A.S.A. Conference

It will be a good many months before the proceedings of the 1973
A.S.A. conference held at Oxford are published, so it has seemed a useful
function to provoke some interim discussion. My remarks are almost entirely
critical, and it may be wondered why such points were not made during the
conference itself. But it would have been an outrageous rudeness to in-
terrupt what for many of the audience appeared to be a rather festive break
from academic pursuits with a string of hostile comments, especially from
one not a member of the Association. The more so as some evidently felt
thatdelicate stage in the domestic cycle of our academic community called
for eulogy rather than honesty.

The proceedings were concluded by four speakers giving their 'over-
views'. Fortes made his speech as retiring president of the A.S.A. He was
followed by Firth, and he by Salisbury. Grillo spoke for the youngest
generation of members, and ended by expressing the view that the retiring
'giants' would long be worshipped by their successors. Although declaring
that he represented nothing, Grillo's words were actually very representative
indeed. Firth cheerfully declared that the seniors no longer had the power,
but the sentiments generated by this ritual occasion seemed to suggest that
the intellectual structure of the community remains more or less the same
despite their retirement. As Ardener wrote of Kuper's Anthropologists and
Anthropology, 'the final scene is a crowded tableau of familiar and, no
doubt, well-loved faces with the older generation nodding approval in the
wings. Cheers drown any distant sound of dissidence'. Very accurate, save
that the 'giants' were doing their nodding from the very centre of the stage.

No doubt it was appropriate that the summing up should be restricted
to members of the A.S.A., but this did mean that the voice of the youngest
generation of anthropologists, those not yet members, was not heard. Yet
obviously some of those new students will be teaching anthropology long
after many of the present A.S.A. members have ceased to do so, and it would
have been useful to have heard their verdict on proceedings which presumably
had something to do with the future of the discipline. After all, the ap-
pearance over the past few years of a number of student anthropology journals
suggests a considerable amount of enthusiasm among those now learning the
subject. Perhaps one may suggest that this display of energy has not a
little to do with the rather evident scarcity of critical and theoretically
interesting work in our more well-known periodicals. Below, then, are
recorded some of the reactions of just one student onlooker, to attempt to
rectify a gap in the conference proceedings.

The general title of the eleven sessions was 'New Directions', and
this, as many of the speakers in the last session pointed out, was something
of a misnomer. Whatever the contents of the conference had been, such a
'déja vu' line was almost inevitable; any new departure by being shown to be
'old hat' could be converted into a tribute to the prescience of the departing
seniors. What was disturbing was the legitimacy of the 'déjà vu' feeling,
for, in fact, little that was new was presented. One might even suggest
that the first series of conferences in 1963 were more forward-looking;
irrespective of the actual value of the papers in the volumes on 'models',
the 'distribution of power', 'religion', and 'complex societies', these
subjects would appear to offer more scope to innovation than sessions on
'transactionalism', 'fieldwork', 'African development', and the like. Many
commented on this lack of novelty, but none expressed the view that it
augured badly for the development of the discipline. Andsuchnew ventures as
there were, for instance, Pocock's 'personal anthropology', or Ardener's
paper on 'events', were regarded as poetic (by Stirling), and indeed,

Ardener's as mystical (by Leach). Signs of new directions were thus generally
treated as not-well-formed utterances. But if innovation was rare, we should
recall that most of those whom we associate with the pioneering movements
of the last decade (many having developed out of Lévi-Strauss' work) were
not giving papers. Leach and Douglas were vocal only from the floor;
Needham was in America; and our most senior innovator, Evans-Pritchard, after
'opening' the proceedings one day late, kept as far away from the conference
as possible. He told me when it was over that he had been very disappointed
with most of the papers that he had received.

A painful aspect of the proceedings was the treatment dished out to
Lévi-Strauss. After a very ably presented paper by Terry Turner, for instance,
an atmosphere of hilarity descended on the occasion. With the benefit of field-
work, Turner offered a reanalysis of a myth which Lévi-Strauss had dealt
with in the Mythologiques, and pointed to a number of errors in his handling
of the material. This induced a considerable amount of sniggering, which
was especially odd in that Turner's own basic approach did not seem to be
terribly different. Turner denied this saying that all he had gained from
Lévi-Strauss was the general idea of the 'logic of the concrete'. But this,
surely, was tantamount to admitting that he could not have made his analysis
had Lévi-Strauss not opened up the field in such a provocative fashion. One
was grateful to Douglas for pointing out the fact that all Turner had done
was to 'add wheels to Lévi-Strauss' bicycle'.

In a different tone, Ardener concluded his paper on some outstanding
problems in the analysis of events with the reflection that the terminology
of structuralism might now impede our progress. He was, in short, trying
to sketch the lineaments of a post-structural epoch. But, although some
may now be thinking their way beyond Lévi-Strauss, there are dangers in
suggesting that the discipline as a whole is now post-structural. After
all, many anthropologists have not yet even reached the structural phase,
and it is inconceivable that those who are still happy to announce themselves
as unregenerate functionalists or as structural-functionals should have any
idea of what 'neo-' anthropology is without a prior and genuine encounter
with structuralism. It may well be therefore, that post-structural declara-
tions at the moment will cause events to happen at a velocity which will be
tactically unwise. And in this respect the rudeness of some of the rebuttals
of Lévi-Strauss in recent writings by the few most influenced by him may
harmfully reinforce the prejudice of the more conservative that they were
right never to have shown any interest in his work. Neo-anthropological
trends are anthropophagous; post-structuralism is obviously an anthropology
which has consumed Lévi-Strauss. However we evaluate Lévi-Strauss' work
in the future, it is undeniable that his genius and energy has made possible
the transformation of social anthropology in this country. If some regard
him as 'good to eat' then it should not be forgotten that it is because he
has been so 'good to think with' that we now possess the strength to go
beyond him. So if the time has come to depart from Lévi-Strauss, we shall
have to do so remembering his vital historical role for the development of
our subject. It is with a sense of gratitude, and not in a carnival spirit,
that these moves must be made.

Fortes, one of those willing to declare himself an unregenerate
functionalist, observed in his final address that we now had a unified dis-
cipline, no longer British anthropology, French anthropology and American
anthropology. Which particular experiences during the conference induced
such a view was not obvious. It seemed fairly clear that the differences
between these traditions remained as great as ever, and it is in no way
regrettable that it should continue to be so, provided the naivety which
some have advocated we adopt with respect to other disciplines is not ex-
tended to other schools of our own. Unfortunately, this latter type of

insularity has also been very characteristic of the British tradition, and it is likely to be crucial for our future development that some are able to foster links with anthropological work being done in other countries, or at least, able to translate their advances into terms from which we can benefit. Evans-Pritchard has been the means by which we have gained greatly from the rich tradition of the Année Sociologique, but many of our short-comings revealed in the course of the conference will only be made good if we broaden our scope still further. The 'closed system' mentality which has been the conventional wisdom for the last generation has taken a heavy toll, and we can only hope that it will pass into our history as our seniors leave the stage. For the fact is that the structural-functional era has left the British community with such a level of education and scientific illiteracy that most are hardly qualified to criticize intelligently, let alone make a positive contribution to such fields as 'mathematical anthropology' or 'ethology'. Needham's 'radical' anthropology, seeking for universals and investigating elementary experiences, obviously makes us highly dependent on other fields of scholarship. As he said in Percussion and Transition' our position is that we hardly know even how to state the problems. Likewise, to the extent that ethologists are after universals by examining the 'nature'/'culture' distinction, their work is of great potential value, no matter the quality of that already published. Yet the number of British anthropologists who possess the requisite back-ground in the biological sciences is very small and reaction to their work too often tends to be either uncritical enthusiasm or an ill-informed dis-missal of such beastly innovators.

In these fields, and in others, we shall thus need to cultivate some of the skills of other anthropological traditions. For instance, the absence of a distinguished Marxist tradition in this country will make us dependent upon that group of French scholars, represented at the conference by Godelier and Terray, if we are to assist in constructing a science of 'social formations'. For 'oral literature', too, we are not particularly well equipped to make much progress. Such interests in this country seem to have died more or less at the time Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown became dominant, and were virtually absent until the mid '60's. We may welcome this renewed interest, but it is possible that we shall first have to familiarise ourselves with the immense American contribution to the field before we can ourselves go ahead confidently. It may, in fact, be that these recent developments and the deficiencies which they expose will forge new links with American anthropology, for the survival there of the general cultural framework equips its members with a range of competences which we, for the most part, lack but which are perhaps becoming vital. The field of mathematics might here be mentioned since there was one conference session devoted to mathematical approaches. It seems that for many this still means 'advanced statistics', but this is to take what may be a very unproductive view. As Leach said in his Malinowski lecture, and Lévi-Strauss even earlier in 1954 in his paper 'The Mathematics of Man', it is more likely that we shall gain more by aiming at qualitative exactitude, for quantitative approaches to social phenomena may let everything of significance escape. Thus, as Lévi-Strauss has said, we should be misguided to mimic the mathematics of the natural sciences, and should go straight to bolder forms of mathematical thought which can handle non-metrical precision. The transformational sets of the Mythologiques may be seen, in part, as a demonstration of this view. Clearly, then, before setting out on mathematical approaches, we must first decide which sort of mathematics it is that we want. One suspects that mere increased use of statistical tests of significance and suchlike in writing up field material will prove to be simply a distracting game.

This commentary has obviously been mainly concerned with the future of the discipline, but it is not out of place to end with some reflections

on our past. One of the things which is perhaps most regrettable about the career of Evans-Pritchard is that his good manners prevented his sufficiently making clear those deep differences of outlook which separated him from his colleagues. Certainly, history is not the biography of great men, but we now run the risk of seeing him reduced to the level of his contemporaries by those unsympathetic to the movements which he lead,who may now take on the role of writing the intellectual history of our discipline. For the Times obituarist (14th Sept.) Evans-Pritchard rose to his peak with the publication of African Political Systems in 1940, surely one of the least exciting books with which he was ever associated. And for Kuper in Anthropologists and Anthropology he was just an 'Oxford structuralist' like Gluckman and Fortes. It is clear that not only our future but also our past are still in the balance.

Evans-Pritchard was never one to force his views on others, but some of his distinguished colleagues seem less willing to admit that the times are changing. One has heard it often said that he used to teach theology, and that some of us now indulge in philosophical bunk and airy metaphysics. No doubt when Gluckman complains (T.L.S. 3rd Aug.) that those chosen to represent the state of anthropology-Evans-Pritchard, Douglas, Needham and Leach (T.L.S. 6th July) - being mainly concerned with underlying intellectual patterns, do not really represent the subject, a show of hands would probably show him to be correct. Very probably the views of Gluckman himself would command more assent. Most, like him, would be irritated by that endless worry by some about what we can 'know' of other cultures (Gluckman brackets verstehen after 'know' possibly not understanding what the word means) and prefer just to get on with the job instead. But the point, of course, is just what sort of a 'job' anthropology is. Social scientists presumably feel little attracted by the version of anthropology which makes worries about the nature of the act of translation and understanding basic. The legacy of Evans-Pritchard must be preserved and his position in our history safeguarded. Hopefully our retiring seniors will not add their authority to the forces which would sap the strength of such new departures as we have already seen. If they decide to lead such reactionary movements rather than hand over gracefully, a considerable number of their colleagues are likely to applaud. And in that event, it is to be hoped that there will be a sufficient number of dissidents to swamp their enthusiasm.

Malcolm Crick.

<u>REVIEW ARTICLE</u>

<u>Modes of Thought</u>, edited by Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan.
Faber & Faber; £8.50. 1973.

Although this collection of papers is dedicated to Evans-Pritchard,
the editors admit several of their contributors run 'counter to the spirit
of his work'.These contributors, presumably Gellner, Barnes, Lukes, Horton
and Wolfram, are clearly more interested in examining the interpretative
schemata which necessarily belong to our own culture than in 'testing'
this apparatus in the context of ethnographic material. This is unfortunate,
simply because whatever the value of abstract analysis, there is nothing
quite like that fruitful juxtaposition of ethnography and interpretative
models to which Evans-Pritchard directed our attention. The danger of
settling for abstract analysis of interpretative schemata is obvious:
instead of seeking those ethnographic clues which might enable one to test
their worth, or even modify, the models, our contributors almost inevitably
lapse into dogmatism. Intellectualists, such as Horton, are so fascinated
by their selection of scientific modes of thought as their interpretative
schemata that they do not bother to begin with ethnography to see what
that might tell them. So pleased with their discovery that interpretation
has to be in terms of something, they concentrate on the 'something', not
on interpretation itself. Their facts might suggest religion should be
likened to science, but one wonders how readily this can be maintained
in face of the complexities of primitive life.

Neither does it do our contributors much good to argue, in simplistic
fashion, that anthropologists must analyse their own cultures modes of
thought as closely as those of more alien forms of life. True, we have to
study our own culture, but owing to the time lag which links anthropology
with   such sister disciplines as philosophy and theology, we find that
much analysis has already been done for us. Evans-Pritchard did not sit
back and write little pieces about the nature of western religion. Instead,
he relied on the time lag, seeking one of his interpretative schemata in
Rudolf Otto's <u>The Idea of the Holy</u>. It comes as no surprise to find that
the most profitable contribution to <u>Modes of Thought</u> also involves an
appeal to an established interpretative framework: Tambiah is able to sug-
gest a new dimension of magic by rejecting the rather sterile oppositions
inherited from the turn of the century, appealing instead to Austin's
examination of speech acts.

Tambiah's article, 'Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View',
does not, however, quite live up to its promise. For despite his commendable
references to ethnographic material, Tambiah is not as careful as he might
have been in confronting magic with performatives. For instance, he does
not show exactly how performatives of the type 'I do take this woman to be
my lawful wedded wife' fall into the same category of events as magical
acts of the type 'I cause you to die by sticking this pin into this image'.
In the first case we can easily understand how a speech act can change the
state of affairs existing in the world (for the change which occurs when
one is married is essentially a <u>conceptual</u> one), but in the second example
words are supposedly effecting a <u>physical</u> change which properly must be
done by physical means. Tambiah could, perhaps, avoid this difficulty,
but only at the expense of assuming that the participant does not really
expect to kill his victim. The disadvantage of this is that it seems to
deny the reality apparently attributed by many magicians to their acts,
and that it raises the awkward question of what performatives have to do
with analogy or the metaphor/literal distinction. Is Tambiah really justi-
fied in extending the notion of performatives from Austin's usage (where

we can understand how the world can be made to conform to words) to the
context of magic where our problem has always been to understand the (apparent)
belief that words and acts do more than we dare credit them with achieving?
Tambiah obscures the oddity of magic, and clearly does not feel all that
happy with his theory of performatives. Thus he has no qualms in describing
those rituals which install chiefs as performatives. So far, so good, but
such rituals are not necessarily magical. When he turns to magic proper,
however, we find that all the long-standing tensions re-emerge: he seems
to make an exception of those magical activities which are essentially
designed to achieve practical results, and even with respect to more
obviously analogical rites (especially those which aim at metaphorical
transfer) there are signs that his performatives collapse into Beattian-
like expressive utterances.

Even Tambiah, we begin to realise, is so enamoured of his inter-
pretative schema that he seizes upon _one_ such model to conclude that
there must be _one_ theory of magic. If he had limited himself to the more
reasonable hypothesis that performatives help elucidate only those magical
acts which seem to involve 'an operation done on an object-_symbol_ to make
an imperative and _realistic_ transfer of its properties to the recipient',
we might be less inclined to raise counter examples. If, that is to say,
Tambiah had paid more attention to those ethnographic clues which might
help us decide if the magician 'really' expects his rites to change the
state of the empirical world, or whether he is merely making statements
about his social or existential situation, he might have found it easier
to locate the logic of performatives. He would also have found it much
more difficult to avoid the conclusion that since performatives, properly
speaking, _do_ things to the world, magic cannot be interpreted symbolically
(or analogically?) Yet if magic is read literally (or 'realistically' in
Tambiah's language), such performatives are doing things which lie beyond
the scope of Austin's usage.

The Gellner/Wolfram group of contributors are frequently clever, if
not witty, but so far as I can see they add virtually nothing to the arguments
which have already been bandied around in the rationality debate and other
such contexts. As in Tambiah's article, the dominant theme is to specify,
as exactly as possible, the differences or similarities between religion
(sometimes magic) and science. Barnes, overstating his case in the process,
argues that science is more like religion than has been commonly supposed.
Horton and Lukes prefer to stress the verificationist principle, emphasise
the scientific nature of science, and accordingly draw religion into science
rather than the other way round. Whatever the emphasis, such comparisons
all smack of Lévy-Bruhl: refusing to liken religion to anything but science,
these contributors have no doubt been persuaded by the force of the argument
that since science is our own supreme cognitive activity it must also be
our supreme interpretative model. What is the use, they seem to imply,
of comparing religion with religion?

It is at this point that Evans-Pritchard's spirit is really laid to
rest. Maybe religion can be equated, to some extent or another, with science,
but it first must be understood, and that requires prior phenomenological
analysis where it does little good to commit the Lévy-Bruhlian fallacy. By
insisting, from their own interpretative stance, that religion is a sub-
species of science, the contributors in question have to commit all sorts
of mental gymnastics with those ethnographic details they deign to discuss.
By comparing religion and science they unavoidably find themselves
emphasising the differences between these modes of 'thought', which is
rather awkward when one's original intention is to prove the basic uni-
formity of all modes of thought. Hence their gymnastics: Barnes makes the

commitment of the scientist to his paradigm sound rather like the bond which ties a worshipper to his God, and Horton and Lukes, with their more traditional view of science, have to neglect entirely such religious aspects of religion as prayer, the possibility of their existing symbolic discourse, and, needless to add, worship itself.

In order to understand why these contributors feel obliged to equate science and religion, we might notice how they seem to ignore the difference between using the comparative method to establish contrasts, and using it to establish cross-cultural similarities. All seem to be agreed that the first step in the study of modes of thought is to apply some universal logical criteria with the power to expose contrasts between different types of belief systems. The favourite candidate, as Lukes cogently reminds us, is the verificationist principle: even Tambiah, who favours the in-commensurability thesis (holding that magical acts cannot be judged by the same criteria as scientific findings), exposes the distinctive nature of magic partly by showing what magic is not. Only by applying the veri-ficationist principle can one show what cannot be verified, thereby providing oneself with a certain amount of _prima facie_ evidence that the phenomena in question is not meant to be verified. Barnes, we might add, favours another way of exposing contrast, namely the criterion of degree of anomaly present in any belief system. I wonder why the intellectualists do not take this up, because whereas the verificationist principle, for them, has the unpleasant effect of opposing science and religion, the anomaly criterion, in its supposedly Kuhnian guise, permits much closer identification.

No-one but the most die-hard Winchian would deny the role of such criteria in suggesting possibly significant contrasts between different ways of conceptualising the world. But Horton, Lukes and Barnes continue with the additional claim that one must also compare the substance of religion with the substance of science. Lukes spells out what is involved in this. He is not satisfied with using verificationist and other criteria to expose the uniqueness of religion; he also wants to claim that religious beliefs, odd as they might appear, are 'parasitic' upon those 'universal and fundamental' criteria with which we must begin. By this, Lukes seems to mean that the 'odd' beliefs must be assumed to belong to the same order of things as the beliefs in terms of which they are being judged. Hence the two sets of beliefs are fundamentally commensurable: science constitutes the reality of religion. Hence also the conclusion that religion is fund-amentally in error, the job of the sociologist being to explain, in best nineteenth-century fashion, the origins and continued existence of the great illusion. To make another side reference to Barnes, it should be mentioned that he minimises this emphasis upon a sociology of error.

Lukes and Horton can have no idea of the different 'points of' or 'realities', possibly involved in magic and religion. They rule out those philosophers and theologians who insist that although religious discourse might ultimately be logically parasitical upon more orthodox forms of intelligibility (which after all, is the case of any metaphor or analogy), its meaning and reality 'takes off' to communicate relatively independently of verificationist criteria. Moral judgments, which so pervade most religions, are in error when judged against science, but who is to deny that they have a reality of their own which can be interpreted, to all intents and purposes, in its own right?

Lukes is even worse than the logical positivists: at least the latter allowed religion an autonomous existence, arguing that it should not be understood in the same way as scientific procedures. Lukes, on the other hand, feels that only by assuming the basically scientific nature of

religion can one avoid the 'temptation... of explain(ing) away false or
inadequate attempts at explaining the world and reasoning about it as
'really' emotive, or expressive, or symbolic utterances, and thereby removed
from the sphere of application of non-context-dependent criteria of truth
and logic'. By his own argument, purely symbolic systems cannot exist;
the domain of science is assured. So too is his type of sociology, a
species which works with the curious logic of creating its own, frequently
unnecessary, problems. For example, Lukes asks why the Azande do not per-
ceive the futility of their magic. Part of his answer involves the idea
that they build up 'secondary elaborations' to protect their beliefs
'against predictive failure and falsification'. This might be a correct
interpretation, but what if we follow Tambiah and say that the beliefs
simply do not relate to the world in the same way as those of science?
Perhaps the Azande do not perceive the futility of their magic because it
is not in the nature of their magic to fail by verificationist criteria?

It appears that Lukes might be creating his own errors and therefore
his own sociology. He certainly does not allow much scope for turning to
the richness of native life. He is even less inclined to seek out 'separate
realites' because, like Horton, he is prepared to speak of the 'immensely
superior cognitive powers' of science: whereas Tambiah is unsure of the
nature of magic and has therefore to turn to ethnographic clues and various
interpretative schemata, Lukes has no doubts about the nature of 'odd' beliefs.
Basic similarities must lie along one stratum. And as for Horton, he is so
satisfied with his picture of religion that he is content to brush away
the Beattian challenge with, 'Misdescription...is...evident in the classi-
fication of statements about spiritual beings as symbolic rather than ex-
planatory. Failure to account for the data is evident in all versions'.
This is absurd: he elsewhere agrees with the fundamentals of Evans-
Pritchard's symbolist analysis of Nuer Religion, and who is he to say that
a given piece of discourse might not show both symbolic and explanatory
aspects?

The articles by Gellner and Wolfram are both, in their different
ways, of some interest. Gellner raises an important topic when he discusses
the way in which primitive thought combines various aspects which we, in
our divided lives, endeavour to keep analytically distinct, and Wolfram,
with strong undertones of Pareto, sides with Tambiah over the reality of
'non-scientific' modes of thought. As for the remaining articles, those
by Colby and Cole, Nagashima, Finnegan, Whiteley, Ita, and Jenkins, the
emphasis swings towards the fruitful juxtaposition of interpretative
schemata and ethnographic detail. Unfortunately, the quality of these
contributions is very uneven, and are if anything, too descriptive. Worst of all,
none of them attempt to compare primitive religion with western theological,
philosophical, or religious traditions. Almost as bad, the editors have
not deemed it necessary to introduce an appreciation of Lévi-Strauss'
contributions to the general subject under discussion. Their own introductory
remarks on the matter completely miss Lévi-Strauss' basic point, namely that
normal semantic criteria cannot capture the meaning of myth. On the credit
side, however, one might mention Finnegan's exhortations directing us to
the primitive's universe of discourse, and Whiteley's exacting analysis
of Gusii colour-words and colour-values.

As for Horton and Finnegan's Introduction, one can only say that it
accurately reflects the general tone of the book. Their appreciation of
Evans-Pritchard is well timed, but one wishes that the rest of the Introduction
had aimed at some of the more pressing problems raised by the stance adopted
by the more interesting of their contributors. Why, they should have asked,

is there so much pronouncement and so little ethnographic application?
Why are not some the issues decided where they should be, that is, in the
context of ethnographic material? Why do so many commit the _pars pro toto_
fallacy? Why this faith in one theory for whatever type of discourse is
supposedly under discussion? Why such a faith in science as constitutive
of religion? Why do so many contributors analyse science, not the various
ways in which God can be related to the world? And why do not the editors
emphasise the crucial problems - such as the metaphor/literal distinction
and the different types of relationships which can exist between realities
and different modes of discourse - which must be elaborated if we are to
break with the Tylorian and Durkheimian schemata? Above all, why have so
many contributors failed to heed Evans-Pritchard's advice?: just possibly,
grand comparative questions might better be tackled if we had more sensitive
case studies of particular ethnographic phenomena. Just because only a few
anthropologists interest themselves in modes of thought is no excuse for
premature generalisation.

Paul Heelas.

BOOK REVIEWS

Elementary Structures Reconsidered: Lévi-Strauss on Kinship

Francis Korn.   Tavistock Publications, 1973.   £2.90.

There has been a need for a book like this. It is unlike other works which have appeared on the Lévi-Straussian bandwagon that the publishers have gleefully been trundling along. It is not one of those highly sycophantic or mildly disapproving commentaries in which the author gives his version of what he thinks Lévi-Strauss means. This is a profound criticism of the empirical and logical foundations of Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté. A book of extreme technical complexity, it has possibly had more words written about it by people who have never read it than any work in literary history. This state of affairs has not been improved by the relatively recent publication (1969) of an English translation because the translation is not of the original (1949) version. In the interim Lévi-Strauss changed his mind about what he was talking about and the resulting confusion has been enormous. In France this situation has been happily resolved by seating him among Les Immortels and thus elevating him beyond criticism. This fine Gallic solution carries little weight with the crude Anglo-Saxon empricist who still wants to know what   Lévi-Strauss said and meant, if anything.

Dr. Korn does not give much attention to this particular difficulty although she does devote a brief chapter to showing how Lévi-Strauss's later pronouncements concerning the distinction between 'prescription' and 'preference' makes a nonsense of his earlier argument. She follows this up with a brilliant analysis of the Iatmül, people who do not figure in The Elementary Structures but who provide an excellent test case for an examination of Lévi-Strauss's distinction or lack of distinction between prescription and preference.

Wisely, however, Dr. Korn has chosen to deal mainly with the original version of Les Structures élémentaires and her book is mainly composed of the most detailed re-examination of aspects of that work. She begins right at the beginning with Lévi-Strauss's claim that incest prohibitions belong to the domains of both nature and culture and demonstrates how meaningless such a proposition is. This chapter is a little laboured and one of the weaker parts of the work, but this is speedily rectified by Chapter Two in which the purported relationships between types of exchange, residence rules and regimes come in for a close inspection. An analysis of the Aranda case, the one employed by Lévi-Strauss himself, shows that no necessary relationships exist and that the Frenchman's argument is tautologous. This is one of the best chapters. In later chapters Dr. Korn submits both the Dieri and the Mara to a re-analysis and in both cases arrives at different conclusions from Lévi-Strauss, let alone more convincing ones. In a final chapter, not including the brief conclusions, is assessed the claim that an algebraic treatment of marriage rules has some definite advantages: Dr. Korn is unable to find them.

This book first came together between two covers as a doctoral thesis (at Oxford) but before that four of the seven chapters (once again excluding the conclusions) had appeared in various publications. This is just discernible in the tendency for certain lines and quotations to re-appear rather too often. This, however, is a minor fault compared with the book's virtues. One cannot fail to be impressed by the author's great analytical skill and attention to detail as over and over again she shows up Lévi-Strauss's analytical in-

competence and what would appear to be his wilful disregard for the facts.
She is totally unrelenting in her criticisms - too much so in my opinion
since she was, and perhaps still is, quite unwilling even to acknowledge
that her work only saw the light of day because it followed Lévi-Strauss's
efforts. But it is a useful and salutary work since it brings nearer the
day when Les Structures élémentaires can be struck off reading lists and
become an historical curiosity for specialists in the development of social
anthropological thought.

                                                              Peter Rivière

Habu: The Innovation of Meaning in Daribi Religion. Roy Wagner.
Chicago University Press, London. 1973. £5.40p.

        Roy Wagner's new work is as stimulating, original, and wide-ranging
as his first, The Curse of Souw: Principles of Daribi Clan Definition and
Alliance in New Guinea (1967, Chicago University Press). Like the latter,
Habu offers us a general sociological or anthropological theory worked out
and presented in the Daribi context. This fine balance between theory and
example, between anthropology and ethnography, and the interpenetration of
each by the other, is in the tradition of the great works of our subject.
Naven, Nuer Religion, and Nupe Religion spring to mind as examples of the
successful use of this interpenetration.

        And there is no doubt that in Wagner's case the technique has added
to his ethnography a rare degree of liveliness and significance. For this
reason the two books on the Daribi interest and illuminate the reader to an
extent not usually associated with 'factual case-studies', or 'mere reporting';
and for the same reason the Daribi seem infinitely more real and human than
the vast majority of anthropological tribes.

        But while one can extol the effect of Wagner's general theories on his
exposition of the Daribi material, the general theories themselves are dis-
appointingly limited and often simplistic. This may well be because the author
has not abstracted enough from the Daribi case, but rather has simply found
significant-sounding English labels for Daribi categories - a fault unfortunately
all too common among returned fieldworkers.

        Habu is, in classical terms, the religious ethnography to follow the
social structure of The Curse of Souw. But one of the advantages of Wagner's
theoretical approach is that he has broken clear of these restrictive categories,
and Habu treats of a pleasantly wide range of phenomena: from Papuan 'hero
tales' to Daribi naming processes; from the relations between men and spirits
to the relations between men and women.

        The theory of cultural meaning which it is the book's main aim to
create revolves round a set of key concepts: metaphor, innovation, im-
personation, dialectic, ideology. Only the last of these, however, is used
at all constructively and carefully, and this because he defines it explicitly
in a somewhat technical or restrictive sense. So that even 'ideology' loses
a good deal of the power available in it.

        'Metaphor' and 'metaphorization' are used where most people would be
content with 'symbol' and 'symbolization' (indeed, at times they are used
even more extensively than those usefully broad terms). The philosophical
ramifications of the concept of 'metaphor' are never properly considered,

and the same is true of 'dialectic' and even 'innovation'. This leads Wagner to the view that cultural meaning in symbols (all action being meaningful insofar as it is symbolic) derives from their metaphoric quality. And the essence of this quality is that it partakes of similarity and contrast at the same time. Thus far the argument is unobjectionable, if a little unsophisticated and unoriginal (for it dates back at least as far as Aristotle's Poetics).

But at this point the argument starts to go astray. Wagner assumes that this co-presence of opposites creates a tension from which the power of 'metaphors' derives. This may be so, but as a mere assumption it is unwarrantable. The next step is to assume that this tension is a dialectic, presumably because the two elements are opposites. But this opposition alone does not justify the application of what is a carefully delineated philosophical concept, especially when he extends the application of the term to cover the relationship between the symbol and the signified, as well as the metaphoric process itself. Had the author operated with the terms generally associated with 'dialectic' this would immediately have become apparent; but Wagner chooses to offer us a dialectic without theses, antithesis, or synthesis (for these terms are never used).

'Metaphor' and 'dialectic' have at this stage already lost much of their conceptual power and significance; this is even more the case when Wagner allies them to 'innovation' in his conceptual tool-box. For him societies' rules are ideologies, within which individuals operate to assert their personalities and identities. This they do by 'metaphorizing upon' those ideologies, and this is the process of innovation. What Wagner forgets is that a very part of those ideologies is the idioms from which the individuals draw their metaphors; in other words, he is so intent on the fact that individuals are operating <u>upon</u> the system that he forgets that they are also operating <u>within</u> it, indeed that the operation itself is a part of that very system. This failure to acknowledge the distinction between creativity within the rules, and a breach or alteration of the rules, is the major error of the conceptual framework the author so lovingly erects; and it is an extremely telling one, for it turns what attempts to be original theory of cultural signification into mere pomposity and a slavish addiction to terms rather than concepts.

It would be unjust, however, to end on a note of criticism, for any failings the book has result from over-ambition. It is only because the author is dealing with such important matters that it is possible to say so much about the work. And for the most part it is characterised by a lucidity of expression and a skillful use of material which make it appealing as well as enlightening reading.

Martin Cantor

In the Life of a Romany Gypsy. Manfri Frederick Wood.
Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1973. £2.50.

The popular image of the Gypsy lies suspended between pole and
tropic, between that of the dirty, thieving, irresponsible vagabond, and
the romantic myth of the carefree wanderer of hill and dale inspired by
the writings of such notables as Borrow, Hugo, Merimée and Baudelaire.
It is only recently that this romantic myth has been forced to admit, in
serious publications, that here and now on the edge of our towns and our
culture, Gypsies do exist. There has been little written in this country
on traditional Romany culture and Fred Wood's book is an attempt to fill
this gap while at the same time attempting to demolish the popular Gorgio
image of the Gypsy.

Fred Wood is a Romany born and bred, and proud of it. The book is
largely autobiographical, the material ranging through his own family
history, traditional occupations, religious beliefs and mythology, through
herbal folklore to marriage ceremonies and funeral rites. Though he
attempts no analysis, he presents some fascinating data for further study.
What makes this book so alive is the author's commitment to his aims, but
these seem too disparate, and in pursuing them all he fails to present a
convincing picture of the true Romany and merely creates another myth.
Thus he upholds the merits of traditional Romany culture while making
it 'respectable' to the reading public. His father becomes the 'ideal
Romany' - hardworking, a brilliant craftsman, hard but honest. Wood
emphasizes the cleanliness and integrity of the true Romanies, contrasting
them with the Pikies (Travellers exiled from a Romany tribe for breaking
its codes) and the Tinkers. But he has to admit that now the Romany way
has degenerated through an increased dependence on and persecution by the
state system. So with these escape clauses he can maintain his idealised
myth of the traditional Romany. At the same time he emphasizes the
strictness of the Romany tradition and the lack of personal freedom
allowed within such a society.

Fred Wood's own position shows the same disparate themes. Though a
Romany by blood, he rejected, and was rejected by, the Romany system when
he chose to marry against his father's will. He is painfully aware of
the repressive aspect of the system, and yet in his self-styled role as
'King of the Gypsies' he continues to idealise the Romany way, and he
serves to protect its image as an official of the Gypsy Council.

In spite of the rather confused ideology underlying this book, there
is plenty of material which could valuably yield to anthropological analysis.
As several foreign anthropologists have discovered, Romany is a particu-
larly rich and complex culture, reflecting the processes of incorporation,
elaboration and adaptation of cultural elements as the Gypsy peoples have
wandered across Asia and Europe. Perhaps in this country anthropologists
have been wary of tampering with something so close at hand lest it should
reveal too many problems of a practical rather than academic nature.

John Hill

<u>Gypsies</u> by Jeremy Sandford

1973. Secker & Warburg, London. £3.00

A housed Gypsy tells Jeremy Sandford:

"If you went to a Traveller's house and asked somebody
to sing they wouldn't do it. And they're very good
singers too you know, so they'll get round a fire at
night and get one person to sing and they'll all sing.
That's the only way you can get them to sing."

Sandford's democratic intention is to give the Gypsies a chance to
'indicate some of their own decisions, to speak for themselves'. Their
camping grounds are being increasingly closed and the government's policy
of site provision has the unstated aim of assimilation. Sandford has
gone on a nationwide tour to elicit the Gypsies' views. This he does by
interviewing them one-to-one with a microphone - thus unwittingly restricting.
Often he records simply the first encounter. Only three women are briefly heard.
The content of his interviews is sparse and subdued - verbiage which Gypsies
need so often to rehearse with their inquisitors. Those more willing to
give specific answers in this setting tend to be active members of the
London-based pressure groups and housedwelling Gypsies. A number of
interesting things are said but these are generally lost in the padding.
Otherwise the reader learns that Gypsies eat hedgehogs, handle horses,
sometimes sleep in tents and can speak like us. Perhaps Sandford deliberate-
ly connives with their elusiveness, protecting their vigorous society from
invasion by the reader.

Fred Wood's ·In the Life of a Romany Gypsy· has an alternative to
bland evasion. He gives the outsider an exotic ideal, undiluted. A
striking contrast to both of these is the Irish Traveller, Johnny Connors'
brilliant autobiography written in prison. The unconfiscated portion,
Sandford has incorporated as a major section of his book. In a mode of
unsolicited story-telling, Connors conveys the hardship of his travelling
life, offset by wit, resiliance and cunning.

Sandford also gives summaries of government reports and statements
by voluntary organisations. One statement, presented without criticism,
reiterates the myth that Gypsies are locked in a golden age of horse
breeding and rural crafts, with no alternative but wage labour and
sedentarisation. But Gypsies have always adapted to the host economy.
Now motorised, they work with scrap iron, antiques and tarmacadam. The
suspect nostalgia is reinforced in Sandford's Introduction: 'They
represent our remote past in human form'.

But when leaning on the N.C.C.L. and Gypsy Council, his political
recommendations are excellent. The majority of Gypsies have no difficulty
in earning a living. What they need - and what government policy with its
emphasis on settlement denies them - is legal access to camping land
when travelling. If Sandford's book contributes to a greater realisation
of this then any criticism is subordinate.

Judith Okely

Symbols: Public and Private.—Raymond Firth.

George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1973. £6.60p.

Sir Raymond Firth has been admirably energetic since his retirement.
One would not have guessed, even five years ago, that he would be writing
a book on symbolism. His latest work aims 'to help to give perspective to
the anthropological study of symbolic forms and processes and the functions
of symbolism', and he stresses that in such an endeavour the anthropologist
should be familiar with the contributions of philosophers, psychologists,
theologians, art historians, and others.

The book falls roughly into three sections. Firstly, a discussion
of the term 'symbol' itself, which is unfortunately not very well organised.
Secondly, there are three chapters devoted to the growth of interest in
symbolism in anthropology from the nineteenth century up to the present.
History is not, I think, one of Firth's main interests, and the account is.
very fragmentary. For instance, he speaks of the contribution of Tylor
and Frazer, who have every right to be regarded as 'literalists', and Max
Müller, one of the few persistent 'symbolist' critics of the Victorian
ethnologists,is hardly mentioned at all. Likewise, in this century, Firth
is overgenerous on the parts played in this growing interest by Radcliffe-
Brown and Malinowski, whereas justice is scarcely done to the immensely
important contribution of the Année Sociologique. Structuralism is ad-
mitted to have advanced our understanding of symbolism, but there is no
adequate account of this 'at times ... elitist' tradition. The third
major section is a series of studies of individual topics; the symbolism
of food, hair, flags, greeting and parting, and giving and receiving.

The whole work is very easy to read, and some will find its 'topicality'
attractive. Unfortunately, the volume does not have an argument around
which the evidence can be organized, and the fact that it is a descriptive,
even monographic, book, leading to no particular conclusion and addressed
to no specific problem, very much detracts from its interest. Even the
curious subtitle does not lend it a theme. At least the topics one would
have expected to be tackled under the terms of 'public' and 'private' are
not systematically worked out. But there are, one would have thought,
fairly obvious foci around which the whole work could have been built.
For instance, that nineteenth century division between the symbolists and
literalists has come to the fore again in controversies over 'virgin birth'
and the meaning of 'twins are birds', and these are important matters to
which Firth himself has made a contribution.

Part of this failure to write a well constructed book unquestionably
lies with the fact that it is not the sign of a thorough-going change of
outlook. For Firth, anthropology is still 'comparative, observationalist,
functionalist...' and links symbolism 'to social structures and social
events in specific conditions'. The real value of the anthropological
attention to symbols is to 'grapple as empirically as possible with...
/the/ gap between the overt superficial statement of action and its under-
lying meaning'. One reason, says the author, that a real attention to
problems of symbolism was so delayed was that it was necessary first to
achieve considerable understanding of the formal fields of social structure
such as politics and kinship. For Firth, then, anthropology is not concerned
with a subject matter which is wholly symbolic; rather there is a sociological
reality in connection with which symbols play the very basic roles of
convenience and simplification,' of giving scope for imaginative development,

of providing disguise for painful impact, of facilitating social inter-
action and co-operation.' Such are widely held views in our discipline,
and when Firth asks 'Is modern social anthropology engaged in a retreat
from empirical reality? We are concerned with 'deep structure' rather
than with content; with models rather than with behaviour; with symbols
rather than with customs', clearly the appearance of this work shows
that its author has not parted company with most of his colleagues.

The book is not meant to be a comprehensive coverage of the topic
of symbolism, and this will explain why, despite the impressively large
bibliography, a great many potential sources of ideas go unmentioned.
What is surprising is that along with a willingness to look to other
disciplines, which one would certainly do nothing to discourage, is
coupled an uneasiness with, perhaps even an unfamiliarity with, several
recent movements in our own subject, which are all making a contribution
to that general drift towards meaning, language and symbolism as the central
concerns of anthropology. No doubt Firth views with some alarm these
tendencies in which 'the autonomy, even priority, of the non-empirical
is insisted upon', but if his work on symbolism is even the first faint
glimmer of a sense that the micro-sociology view of the subject is in-
adequate, then it must be welcomed. Unfortunately, it is difficult to
deviate from a line just a little, and the fact that this is what Firth
has attempted to do is largely responsible for what is unsatisfactory
in the book. But if, in retirement, Sir Raymond is beginning to have
second thoughts one can only encourage him in the venture.

Malcolm Crick.

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