INTRA-RELIGIOUS EXPLANATIONS

> 'No longer should it be permitted for historians to write as if philosophies move autonomously in a social vacuum, one idea hitting another, splitting it, growing, decaying and being taken over'.

In Durkheimian fashion, Mary Douglas (1970:119) is objecting to a position I want to defend - namely that the social determination of ideologies is by no means the whole of the story. At a later point in Natural Symbols she is more explicit about what she is rejecting. We are told of those who would 'rather think of beliefs floating free in an autonomous vacuum, developing according to their own internal logic, bumping into other ideas by the chance of historical contact and being modified by new insights', such an approach being 'an inverted materialism'(ibid:140, my emphasis). I am not sure whether I am an 'inverted materialist' but I do believe in the structuralist emphasis on the explanatory significance of logic.

It is in the context of religion that this issue is best illuminated. With only a few notable exceptions it has for long been supposed that there are two ways of explaining religious phenomena. On the one hand the existence of such phenomena has been explained by reference to religious states of affairs (including gods). Since anthropologists cannot accept theological speculations of this type, they have typically adopted the second - and diametrically opposed - explanatory scheme. They have adopted, that is to say, an approach which I shall call 'extra-religious'. Thus in the case of sociological reductionists (Durkheimians) religious phenomena are explained by reference to social states of affairs, whilst mentalist reductionists (such as Freud and, with reservations, Levi-Strauss) seek the grounds of the religious in the operations of the human mind.

What few have done is adopt an intra-religious position, explaining one religious phenomenon by reference to another. As in the case of Douglas, the explanatory capacity of an internal logic or dynamicism is severely limited, if not discarded, by the positing of extra-religious determinants or constraints. Relations between religious phenomena then exist by default; they are treated as epiphenomenal to the configurations of the social or mental. That there is something curious about this procedure can perhaps be seen by drawing an analogy with the study of kinship. Leach's Pul Eliya (1961) serves to indicate that it can be useful to adopt an 'extra-kinship' approach, but as Needham and others have convincingly shown, the 'intra-kinship' option is also very valuable. For example, kinship terminologies can be explained by demonstrating their internal coherence; by relating them to the rules of the various systems themselves. Such systems are often relatively autonomous with respect to extra-kinship phenomena, yet are clearly explanatory.

The same point could be made by drawing analogies with economics (where economic phenomena are often explained by reference to one another) or with other social and psychological sciences. Yet reductionism seems to rule the day in the anthropological study of religion. Why should this be so? Are there logical grounds for assuming that primitive religions cannot be explained in their own right? It seems clear that positivist and empiricist assumptions have persuaded many to adopt the view that the religious can only be explained by reference to the non-religious. Gods do not exist as part of the scientifically acceptable world, so it has seemed to many that the religious must be caused by processes in social or psychological spheres. Putting this slightly differently, the religious cannot be taken as a 'given', therefore it must be explained by reference to things which demonstrably do exist - namely the two domains we have just mentioned.

However, these and related arguments do not suffice to rule out the possibility of intra-religious explanations. True, they seem to have the force to persuade us that some reductionism is required if the religious is not to be treated as a 'given', but this is not the same as saying that one must indulge in the more or less total reductionism of the scope advocated (amongst many others) by Douglas. So what I now want to examine is whether we can develop a non-reductionistic and yet non-theological way of explaining religious phenomena.

Of those interested in the study of religion, Ninian Smart has done more than most in discussing what is involved in developing intra-religious explanations (see especially 1973(a), 1973(b)).[1] He has been especially concerned with explanations of the 'if A then B' variety, when the B component is causally dependent on the occurrence of A. Applying this to the religious sphere, Smart favours filling in the A component (the independent variable) with various types of religious experiences, the dependent variable taking the form of various belief systems. Simplifying matters considerably, a numinous type of religious experience will give rise to belief systems expressing the attributes of the numinous (such as majesty, awefulness and transcendence), whereas a contemplative experience will engender beliefs conceptualising the ultimate as an undifferentiated unity or as a void.

On first sight this type of explanation seems to have much to commend it. Many authorities - including the marvellous William James - have placed experience at the very heart of the religious, and if we allow that our sense of beauty can result in works of art, why should we not allow the same in the context of religion? But however plausible it might be to maintain that many religious phenomena are the consequence of attempts to express experience of ultimate realities, there are, I think, good reasons for not adopting Smart's scheme.

First, the approach is implicitly theological : the experiences are held to be of a religious nature (for otherwise the explanations would not be intra-religious in style). However, this objection is not in itself especially convincing. I say this because it seems that just as we have a sense of beauty (without believing in Beauty itself) so we could have a sense of the religious.

But our second objection is more powerful. To apply the 'if A then B' causal model one must be able to separately identify the two components. One can say 'A causes B' if B is distinct from A. One cannot say 'A causes B' if B is already involved in the constitution of A. Yet this latter is exactly what could be the case with respect to Smart's appeal to religious experience as the independent variable factor. In other words, it could be the case that various types of belief systems have helped constitute the nature of associated religious experiences, this meaning that these same experiences cannot be said to explain the occurrence of the belief systems. That this is quite feasible, I should add, can be seen from the fact that experimental psychologists such as Schachter (1971) and Mandler(1975) have convincingly shown that a number of emotive experiences owe much of their nature to cultural factors. Such evidence suggests that Catholics do not see Krishna and Hindus do not experience the Virgin Mary because their cultural assessments direct and largely constitute their experiences. This is the opposite to Smart's argument that concordances between experiences and beliefs are due to the determinative force of the first variable.

My third and final objection has to do with the phenomenological status of religious experiences. Clearly, the correlational-cum-causal enterprise of the type advocated by Smart can only get off the ground if one can accurately establish and identify different types of religious experience. But can this be done? I have recently argued - Huxley, Zaehner, Stace and others notwithstanding - that it is impossible to say that one religious experience is either the same as or different from another such experience (1977(a)). The basis of my argument is that none of the three types of criteria available for comparing experiences (namely physiological, behavioural and verbal) are sufficiently specific to be useful in the context of the religious. Thus I would argue that Smart cannot identify eg. a numinous type of experience and then contrast it with others.

It is interesting to note in this connexion that one of the most brilliant attempts to develop a fully-developed intra-religious explanation - namely that made by Evans-Pritchard in Nuer Religion - comes to the same conclusion:

> 'One cannot speak of any specifically religious emotion for the Nuer. One can only judge by overt behaviour on occasions of religious

> activity and, as I have noted, on such occasions Nuer may be afraid, anxious, joyful, indifferent, or in other states, according to the situation and the degree to which they are involved in it' (1956:312).

Evans-Pritchard quite rightly concludes that those theories which derive the religious from emotions are inadmissable. Yet to a certain extent his intra-religious account has things in common with Smart's position and can be criticised on the same grounds. For example, in his discussion of the one (Kwoth) or many (spirits) issue Evans-Pritchard states that the varying scales of conceptualisation are 'different ways of thinking of the numinous at different levels of experience'(ibid:316). How, we must ask, can it be the case that 'there is nothing constant that we can say is characteristic of the religious life, which is rather to be defined in terms of disposition than of emotion' (ibid:313) when appeal is made to the numinous? Surely the numinous is not a disposition?

The intra-religious nature of Nuer Religion is most clearly brought out when Evans-Pritchard writes:

> 'In this sense of the totality of Nuer religious beliefs and practices forming a pattern which excludes conflicting elements and subordinates each part to the harmony of the whole, we may speak of their religious system'(ibid:318).

An example of exclusion is provided by the argument that witchcraft and magic are unimportant because they do not fit a theocentric philosophy(ibid:316). And an example of the way in which those elements which do fit the whole are coloured ('subordinated') by more overriding features is provided in the lines:

> 'We can say that these characteristics (eg. complete absence of ritual), both negative and positive, of Nuer religion indicate a distinctive kind of piety which is dominated by a strong sense of dependence on God and confidence in him rather than in any human powers or endeavours... this sense of dependence...is an intimate, personal, relationship between man and God. This is apparent in Nuer ideas of sin, in their expressions of guilt, in their confessions, and in the dominant piacular theme of their sacrifices'(ibid:317, my emphasis).

Appeal to the numinous aside, Evans-Pritchard is thus drawing our attention to a still largely neglected way of explaining the religious. As I understand it, Evans-Pritchard is saying: get to the core beliefs of a particular religious system, trace the logic of the constitutive and regulative rules embedded in such beliefs; show that this rationale logically excludes some phenomena but so to speak encourages the appearance of others; and finally show how the basic rationale colours the various components of the system. In case this seems

an unlikely program, I will briefly elaborate on some of the examples we have taken from Evans-Pritchard's analysis. First, the claim that witchcraft and magic are unimportant because they do not fit the rules of this particular game. I would argue that besides being excluded by the principle of theocentricity (which means that since fortune and misfortune come from God they cannot be derived from human powers) they are also excluded by the strong sense of dependence mentioned above. In other words, we are applying the general principle that 'the more powerful the ultimate religious state the more dependent is man on the powers above him and the less likely man is to conceptualise or articulate his own powers'.

As a second elaboration we can consider the claim that elements such as sacrifice take certain forms because they are coloured by overriding principles. At the simplest possible level it is clear why sacrifice is so often of a piacular nature: dependent on such a powerful God Nuer must take great care to atone for his many sins (many because of his feeble position). It would be an extremely interesting conceptual enquiry to broaden this discussion by comparing Nuer and Dinka sacrifice. I mention this because both the Nuer and the Dinka seem to conceptualise their relationship with external phenomena in terms of being acted on by such phenomena rather than acting positively from the ego onto the world. This, it goes without saying, is something of a generalisation. But a comparison of Godfrey Lienhardt's discussion of the notion passiones (1961:151) with Evans-Pritchard's analysis of the extent to which the Nuer adopt a passive attitude to Kwoth suggests that there is some substance to the generalisation. One is therefore entitled to proceed with the attempt of establishing whether or not what we might call the passiones-principle exercises some degree of control over how sacrifice is conceptualised in the two cultures. It is certain that such a comparative, conceptual, intra-religious enquiry would show that how sacrifice is construed is at least partly a function of such more fundamental cultural principles as that we have termed the passiones-principle.

Before going any further I should meet two objections to the procedure I am advocating. The first objection has to do with the fact that we have mentioned a 'strong sense of dependence' and the passiones-principle (which presumably involves a sense of being under the control of, or passively responding to, the external world). Do not such references take us back to that type of criticism we directed against Smart's style of intra-religious explanation? I think not, this because although emotions might be playing a role in how the sense of dependence etc, functions as a determinant, this is not the whole of the story. For what also matters is that the Nuer believe that they are dependent on their God, and it is this belief which colours and constrains much of their religious life.

Another objection which might be raised concerns the distinction between the notions of intra and extra-religious. Where, especially in a primitive society or in such contexts as Buddhism, does the religious end and the

secular begin? And if such a distinction cannot be drawn why make a fuss about maintaining intra-religious explanations? The easiest way to reply to such objections is that there are not many cases in which anthropologists would dispute an ethnographer's application of the term 'religious'. By some quirk of human nature we seem to recognise the religious - in a general sense, that is - when it is present. However, since this reply might not suffice, it might be worth going on to say that what matters from the point of view of intra-religious explanations is not where the religious ends and the secular begins but where 'religious' explanations end and reductionistic explanations begin. As we shall see in a later example, it is sometimes possible to illuminate the nature of religious life by reference to psychological concepts. To an extent, such explanations move from the intra to the extra-religious. But we can still call them intra-religious in style because they are non-reductionistic. Reductionistic explanations, when the religious is explained by the non-religious, can generally be distinguished from intra-religious explanations in that states of affairs are introduced which do not belong to those conceptual configurations present in ethnographies. Since we can generally spot such states of affairs, we can generally distinguish intra-religious explanations from those of an extra-religious variety.

Evans-Pritchard, I have suggested, can be regarded as an important figure in the development of intra-religious explanations. He clearly shows how one religious phenomena (eg.sense of dependence) can be used to explain others (eg.nature of sacrifice). I now want to discuss some of the more general aspects of the approach. To begin with, it should be apparent that the approach belongs to that more general approach known as structuralism. As I understand it structuralism is concerned with <u>conceptual</u> rather than with <u>causal</u> relations; with the notion of following rules rather than obeying laws; with questions of rationality, rationales and coherence rather than relations of cause and effect. This is only to be expected in that structuralist approaches often (in my opinion always) concern themselves with relations between ideas - and at least since Hume philosophers have never tired of pointing out that such relations cannot be of a causal order.[2]

It is not difficult to see why we consider intra-religious explanations to belong to the more general category of structuralism. As we have seen in our criticism of Smart's position, the conceptual/semantic way in which religious beliefs and experiences are related makes it difficult to see how a causal (and thus non-structural) approach can be applied. A related consideration is that it would seem that the only way to move beyond conceptual links, and thus beyond the domain of structure, is by reduction to the extra-religious. Thus Douglas and other Durkheimians can work with a causal-correlatory model precisely because they are positing determinants <u>which are not implied</u> by participant beliefs. But to do

this is to move from the intra to the extra-religious approach.

One consequence of the conceptual nature of the structuralism we are discussing is that it is not easy to see in what sense one can make predictions. The issue is complicated, but it appears that predictions are not easy to make. Thus to revert back to an earlier example, it would take a rash person to assert that magic and witchcraft will always be unimportant in theocentric environments. For as Evans-Pritchard himself points out, ideas and beliefs - especially when they are religious - are often related according to such weak logical relations as implication or metaphorical concordance(see op cit:318). Belief systems, pace Douglas, do 'develop according to their own internal logic' - but this logic is not necessarily very rigorous. And to make prediction more difficult we must bear in mind that such developments do not occur in a total vacuum. Historical and social contingencies & processes can affect these developments as when, for example, witchcraft beliefs appear in the 'wrong' belief environment because of extra-religious factors.

As a final point, since conceptual relations do not operate according to the causal 'if A then B' formula the very basis for prediction seems to be taken away. True, it appears that given the meaning of the first two statements of a syllogism, or of a mathematical equation, one can apparently 'predict' the conclusion, but such 'predictions' are already entailed by the initial meanings. In causal predictions, on the other hand, nothing is entailed by the A component. In short, prediction involves inductive procedures, and conceptual relations are not established inductively (see also below).

However, the apparent inability of intra-religious structural approaches to make predictions need not really bother us. For granted the complexity of the variables which have to be taken into account in attempts to make predictions within the causal paradigm , anthropologists can rarely make genuine predictions of any type.

A second consequence of the conceptual nature of our intra-religious is much harder to pinpoint but, being of such great importance, requires some comment. Conceptual relations, as Winch(1958) amongst others reminds us, are a priori. By that he means that conceptual relations are given by the meanings of the terms involved (rather than being derived from experience). In this context such relations are of a necessary rather than a contingent variety. Contingent relations, when they have been established via inductive generalising, are known as causal laws. They are contingent because, to give a simple example, it cannot be necessarily the case that water freezes at thirty-two degrees centigrade. If this was necessarily the case we would have no need to engage in induction and would be unable to falsify the proposition. But it is necessarily the

case that all unmarried men are bachelors. Equally, it is necessarily the case that our concept of soul is related to that of immanence: it is part of the meaning of 'soul' that God is believed to dwell within us.

Having elaborated somewhat on this crucial(but often neglected) distinction between conceptual (a priori and necessary) and causal (contingent) relations, I shall now state the problem as best I can: assuming that the intra-religionist structuralist wants to give explanations, and bearing in mind that these cannot be of a causal order, he must somehow find necessary relations. Yet how can necessary relations be found in the shifting sands of social and cultural contingency? Lévi-Straus more than hints at this problem in the following crucial but, again, oft-neglected passage:

> 'There is certainly something paradoxical about the idea of a logic whose terms consist of odds and ends left over from psychological or historical processes and are, like these, devoid of necessity. Logic consists in the establishment of necessary connections and how, we may ask, could such relations be established between terms in no way designed to fulfil this function? Propositions cannot be rigorously connected unless the terms they contain have first been unequivocally defined. It might seem as if in the preceding pages we have undertaken the impossible task of discovering the conditions of an a posteriori necessity'(1966:35, my emphasis).

The problem can now be put more succinctly: are we also trying to do the impossible by seeking the necessary within the ethnographic, or is the impossible not impossible at all? Let us approach this question by means of an example. Bearing in mind that necessary relations are of a strictly logical order, the relational series being deduced from an initial proposition, how might this help answer the question, why are ultimate religious realities so often held to be ineffable? The logical answer might run : initial proposition - the Gods are all-powerful; deductive explanation - to be all-powerful the Gods must exist beyond the constraints of this world, therefore they must be transcendental, therefore they cannot be spoken of in languages taken from this world, but since these are the only languages we have, to use them to talk of the Gods is to attempt to express the inexpressible. It will be seen that this explanation is largely within the domains of the a priori; within the realms of logic. But what actually goes on in socio-cultural life is obviously at least partly a matter of contingency, chance, accident - and thus, as Lévi-Strauss later points out, has to be established a posteriori:

> 'The truth of the matter is that the principle underlying a classification can never be postulated in advance. It can only be discovered a posteriori by ethnographic investigation, that is, by experience' (ibid:58).

In his examples, it is a contingent matter that certain phenomena are accorded certain symbolic significances (see ibid: 59.) But, and I am not sure whether Lévi-Strauss is clear on this, it is surely not a contingent matter that given these symbolic roles the phenomena in question cannot enter into the symbolic code in contingent fashion. It is at this level that some degree of necessity reasserts itself (assuming, that is, that the system is rational).

I mention that I am not sure whether Lévi-Strauss is clear on this because in the last quotation he seems to be worrying about something else - something which has to do, I think, with a misunderstanding of the word a posteriori. In his sense of the term, there is no problem in finding necessary relations by a posteriori investigation. For in this sense of the term a priori relations of the type discussed by Winch have also to be found a posteriori (that is, for example, by looking them up in a dictionary). Not distinguishing between learning meanings and establishing connexions via inductions results in Levi-Strauss concentrating on a false problem. That is to say he falsely conceptualises what it is to establish an a posteriori necessity. He does not seem to realise that all necessities are a posteriori in the sense that he sometimes uses the term.

Concentrating as he does on a false problem and using a shifting terminology Lévi-Strauss can help us understand our problem but ultimately does not get to the crux of the matter. In short, how can we relate logical explanations of the type given for ineffability to the partly contingently constituted nature of social and cultural life?

To bring this discussion back down to earth, all we are talking about is the interplay between the necessary and the contingent; between what logically or conceptually has to be the case and what happens to be the case in the world of contingent events. To refer back to some of the contingent factors we have already mentioned we can think of such things as the fact that man is not always rational; that history and the emotions can disrupt the logical processes at work within ideational domains. Thus witches could appear - and indeed sometimes do appear - in theocentric religious settings.

But, as Lévi-Strauss' work testifies (most clearly in his discussion of totemism) the existence of the contingent does not always disrupt the explanatory powers of the necessary. Thus in terms of the type of structuralism we are here elaborating, the creation of logical explanatory models is of value. For instance, applying my explanation of ineffability to Nuer religion helps us understand why Kwoth as all-powerful fits the passiones-like Nuer world view and their emphasis on the ineffability of Kwoth.

I am arguing that the intra-religious structuralist aims to devise logical, necessary explanations which function as models which have to be at a remove from ethnegraphic reality. I am also arguing

that although they have to be at such a remove (because the ethnographic is partly constituted by the contingent, the arbitrary) they are still of explanatory value. To elaborate on this last point I should like briefly to analyse some of these constraints on how utopias are conceptualised. I first thought along these lines when I was struck by a passage in the Book of Genesis:

> 'And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: (3:22).

This passage attracted my attention because its meaning runs contrary to what we might call the surface meaning of the myth. The surface meaning clearly has to do with punishment; that God punishes Adam and Eve by expelling them from Paradise. Why then, I wondered, should the Lord say 'Behold, the man is become as one of us'?

Without going into details, I came to the conclusion that there are two contrary levels of meaning in the myth, one bearing on punishment, the other bearing on the impossibility of utopia for us. This is perhaps putting it rather strongly, but turning to the logic of utopias it would appear that there are logical constraints on what utopias (insofar as they can exist) have to be in order to be utopias for us. For example, does it make sense to say that people exist - as people - in paradises where there is no such thing as pain or suffering? Logically speaking, people as we know them could not exist in such a world. This is because many of the attributes which we take to be constitutive of people necessarily depend on the occurrence of pain and suffering. Imagine exercising compassion, strength of will, dignity, and so forth, without having to face pain or suffering.

Now, such logical or conceptual considerations are clearly at some remove from how utopias are actually construed in various cultures. The conceptual impossibility of having the notion 'loving forgiveness', in the absence of pain or suffering does not mean that people can break this rule in their formulations of utopias. For, as we have already pointed out, the contingent (in this case the irrational) can disrupt the necessary. Nevertheless, is it too far fetched to suggest that logical necessities of the type we have mentioned are somehow operative in the construction of utopias? That people have implicitly (perhaps explicitly) realised that for utopias to be meaningful for them they must be constrained by conceptual, a priori principles of the type I have suggested?

My hope - and it is little more than a hope at the moment - is that we might be able to develop logical explanations positing what has to be the case for utopias and so forth to be meaningful for us, then

showing that actual utopias are to an extent constrained by such considerations. The Genesis story of the expulsion from 'paradise' certainly seems to bear out the value of this approach. For close textual analysis shows that Adam and Eve are not really people in 'paradise'; that their salvation is to be expelled; that 'paradise' is not really for us at all. The important thing is that such an analysis, whilst utilising textual evidence, is informed by a model based on logical necessities. It is true that those who construct utopias do not have to heed the constraint that people are only people in a world of pain and suffering, but knowing that pain and suffering are necessary conditions for being a person helps us analyse the myth - and it does this because the necessity is somehow realised by the myth.

There is clearly much more to be said about the possibility and scope of intra-religious explanations. However, since I have already become rather speculative I shall conclude by summarising some of the varieties of intra-religious explanations, some of the problems which require attention, and, as a final note, I shall direct the discussion back to the problem of whether to introduce extra-religious determinants.

Provisionally, we can think of different aspects (not types) of the general intra-religious procedure. Before summarising these aspects I should emphasise first that this list is not yet fully worked out and second that the basic model I am using is by no means original. As should be apparent, the model owes much to the fashionable analogy of likening these structures which lie behind socio-cultural life to the structured rules of chess.

a) CAUSAL. I mention this type of intra-religious explanation because it is the variety favoured by Smart. Since I agree with Winch that relations between meanings cannot be causal in nature, I do not think that intra-religious explanations can take this form.

b) SEMANTIC. In this loosely defined catego y I include explanations of how, for example, religious language works when it is being stretched. Granted the ineffability of many ultimate religious realities we can ask - how is the inexpressible expressed in various religious traditions? Explanations would direct our attention to the capacities of such devices as analogy, metaphor, silence (the Quakers), paradox, the via negationis, and so forth. The subject is fascinating - especially when one asks why degree of ineffability varies so much cross-culturally - but with a few exceptions (including, yet again, Nuer Religion) is ignored by anthropologists.

c) EXCLUSION. This approach concentrates on showing that the presence of one (normally religious) item tends to exclude other items. We have mentioned the inverse relationship between theocentricity and witchcraft/magic. We can also mention Godfrey Lienhardt's innovatory analysis of what happens to conceptual configurations and content in a culture lacking the notion of mind (1961:147-170; see also Heelas 1974).

It is interesting to note that to an extent necessity absolutely pervades the Dinka material. For example lacking a notion of mind 'as mediating and, as it were, storing up the experiences of the self'(ibid:149) means that the Dinka cannot have the same concept of memory as we do. This is because our concept of memory logically depends on the notion of something (mind) to store them in. On the other hand, necessity is not absolute: lacking the notion of mind does not mean that the Dinka have to conceptualise memory in a certain way.

d) INCLUSION. The emphasis is new on what goes with what and on what encourages what. To revert to an earlier example, the more powerful a deity might be, the more likely it is (in practise) that the deity will be ineffable. To give a new example, I think that it is possible to argue that degree of ritualisation in part depends on degree of literalism. Thus the more one knows about one's deities the more likely it is that one will engage in ritual. If one knows little about one's deities it is difficult to know what to give them; if one has knowledge of their nature and their requests, ritual can flourish. Compare, in this respect, Quakers (pronounced ineffability and little ritual) with the Sherpas (pronounced literalism and much ritual). As a final example of inclusion we can mention the apparent logical fit between emphasising the notion mind and emphasising the general attitude of acting on the world. This is the opposite of the Dinka assocation between lacking our notion of mind and a passiones world-view. In both cases it is not difficult to see the logical grounds for ethnographically expressed associations. Thus in our own culture we conceptualise our dominantly active attitude to the world in such mind-dependent terms as 'act of will' or 'free-choice' whereas the Dinka clearly have no need for such notions within their passiones environment.

e) SUBORDINATION. I am thinking here of the role of what I have called overriding principles in specifying more exactly the nature of previously existing cultural elements. In other words, a phenomenon (eg. Nuer sacrifice) takes a certain form because of conceptual implications vis-à-vis more general rules (eg. theocentricity).

So much more could be said and (tentatively) illustrated about intra-religious explanations. But instead of giving more examples I want to return to one or two of the problems that are met when one attempts to find the necessary in the social (or, as Levi-Strauss puts it, when one attempts to find 'the conditions of an a posteriori necessity'). I suppose the major problem hinges on the fact that to the best of my knowledge no anthropologists or philosophers have analysed the notions'necessary', 'contingent' and 'arbitrary', and what is involved in finding the necessary within the socio-cultural. I should qualify this somewhat in view of Winch's The Idea of a Social Science, but the fact remains there is remarkably little discussion of the major anthropological attempt to develop the notion of the necessary - namely that made by Lévi-Strauss. Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss is hopelessly confused with the philosophical terminology he uses.

Thus we are told that science aims to establish 'necessary relations' when, as his mention of 'the impossible task of discovering the conditions of an a posteriori necessity indicates, Lévi-Strauss is also aware that causal relations must be contingent in nature. (1966:15,35 emphasis).

To attempt something positive, I want to suggest that a useful way to regard the relationship between the necessary and the contingent (using this word in the non-humean sense of arbitrary) in the context of social life is to think in terms of the varying degrees to which necessity can be broken. At one extreme we can think of conceptual relations which cannot meaningfully be broken. For utopia to be utopia certain things (such as the things which go on in hell) cannot be allowed to happen - so to that extent at least ideas of utopia are constrained by necessities. It would be meaningless, in any culture, for utopias to include certain things. Another example of such strong necessity is afforded by one of our Dinka examples: from what we have said it should be clear that there is no way in which the Dinka could have the same concept of memory as ourselves.

Turning to some weaker necessities, we are now in the domain when things might be logically necessary but need not necessarily be the case in the domains of socio-cultural contingency. For example, it is possible, I suppose, that an all-powerful God can be treated literally. Or, to give a new example, even though it is logically the case that morality requires freedom of choice which in turn implies the existence of an irreducible world of the mental, participants in social life are not philosophers. Not always realising the logical point, they can maintain morality without its necessary accompaniments. But, as I have tried to argue, such logical necessities often do inform what goes on within the socio-cultural. The primitive, I have always felt, is more of a philosopher, conceptual analyst, than we have sometimes supposed. And case studies demonstrating, for example, that ritual flourishes in the context of literalism could well help me back up my claims for logical connexions.

Turning to the related problem of prediction, I would suggest that bearing in mind the problems of applying that term at all, the weaker the necessity the harder it is to predict how it will constrain socio-cultural phenomena. This sounds like little more than a tautology, but in practice is of some value: our spectrum can now be regarded as ranging from situations of total 'prediction' (to be utopia certain things have to be the case) to progressively weaker forms (eg. 'predicting' what cannot be the case as when the absence of the notion mind rules out certain other notions). As a final point about 'prediction' I would rather speak of expectation than of hard and fast prediction. It might be the case that hard and fast predictions can sometimes be made, but, as the following example indicates, this is not typically the case within the sphere of the symbolic. My example concerns the rather neglected topic

of the motivation of symbols (although it should be said in this context that Sperber's Rethinking Symbolism has done much to rectify this situation). Consider the fact that the eye is one of the most favoured ways of conceptualising ('symbolising') the transmission of both good and evil. Now consider the fascinating question - why the eye? Why not the nose or the mouth or whatever? One is then led to ask what makes the eye peculiarly suited for its culturally assigned task. For example, one is led to consider what, if anything, social psychologists have said about the eye which explains our own beliefs in the powers of staring(see Heelas 1977(c)).

Now, we cannot really predict under which circumstances the eye will be accorded a role in witchcraft. But we can show how the selection of this 'symbol' has been motivated by the peculiar appropriateness of the eye in the context of its witchcraft functions. Similar points can be made, I think, with respect to those structuralists who have attempted to answer questions of the type, 'Why is the Cassowary not a Bird?' (Bulmer 1967). Who have attempted, in other words, to establish the existence of a predictable rationale within the symbolic; a rationale with predictive powers.

It is time that we returned to Douglas' rejection of intra-ideological (or, to use a terminology with which I am not so familiar, 'superstructural') explanations. What I find so surprising is that despite the lead given by Evans-Pritchard, Lienhardt and a few others, together with the clues in the non-mentalistic features of Levi-Strauss' work, so little has been done to develop this aspect of a semantic anthropology. I find it especially curious that Douglas and like-minded Durkheimian's still theorise as though relatively non-specific social structures-cum-experiences (eg. group/grid) can generate in vertical fashion the specificities of cosmological systems. At the very least there is surely a case to be made for looking at the conceptual relations which bind together the items of religious systems: that is, to repeat Evans-Pritchard's programatic statement, to treat any given cosmological system as 'a pattern which excludes conflicting elements and subordinates each part to the harmony of the whole...'. Far from simply being an 'inverted materialism' it might even be the case that such an approach could complement structural-marxist styles of explanation; could provide a complementary way of studying superstructures. In other words, we might have an approach which could treat the ideological as irreducible - before, if needs be, some of the ideological has to be reductively treated with respect to non-religious intra-structural constraints and determinants.

One last point. The type of explanation I have been advocating boils down to that whose foundations were laid by Winch in his The Idea of a Social Science (1958). But although such philosophers can help us analyse notions like 'necessary' I do not think that we should judge our programs solely in terms of philosophical criteria. Practice speaks larger than theorising, and although I have

given as many examples as I can (and sometimes rather crudely I am afraid) I am well aware that I have not presented an entirely convincing example. So I shall close with an outline of what I would do if I were to write on the topic of utopias. I would begin by suggesting what has to be the case for utopia to be utopia - including the fact that the more wonderful the utopia the greater the impossibility of people ever being people in it. I would then analyse various myths (hopefully not just Genesis) to show that they are aware of and are attempting to resolve this problem. Ideally, one would like to show that although utopias have to be plausible for us (which involves, for example, no pain or suffering), such developments from the necessary logic of utopias are not entirely unconstrained by that necessary logic. Thus it might be possible to relate how utopias have to be conceptualised and how they are actually conceptualised. Finally, I would attempt to show that how they are actually conceptualised is at least in part to be explained by other conceptual systems. Could it be the case that utopias cannot exist in certain cultural environments? (the obvious answer is, of course, yes, but there might be more interesting, less obvious, answers as well).

One can speculate like this. Let us hope that these speculations can be put into practice.

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NOTES

1. I should also make it clear that he has established the term 'intra-religious'.
2. Ryan (1970) provides a good commentary on Winch's important contribution to these and related topics. I have also tried to trace some of the implications of the distinction between causal and conceptual relations, especially as they bear on the notion of a semantic anthropology (1977(b)).

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