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EDITORIAL NOTE

The idea for this collection of essays in anthropology has come from the graduate students of the Sub-Faculty of Anthropology at Oxford: in particular from those of the Institute of Social Anthropology and the Department of Ethnology. Papers given at graduate seminars, and preliminary ideas arising from work for the Diplomas and higher degrees, very often merit wider circulation and discussion, without necessarily being ready for formal publication in professional journals. There is a need for some intermediate form of exchange. The Oxford University Anthropological Society has agreed to act as publisher for this venture and has established a Journal Sub-Committee for the purpose. The Editors are grateful to the Radcliffe-Brown Memorial Fund for a subsidy to help with the initial cost.

It is hoped to produce at least one issue per term. Articles will be welcomed from Diploma, B.Litt. and D. Phil. students in social and other branches of anthropology, and from people in related disciplines interested in social anthropology. Letters, comments, reviews, and similar material, as well as contributions from tutors, will also be welcome. It is hoped that these essays in anthropology will provide a focus for the discussion of work being done at Oxford. It will make it easier for research students to avoid any tendency to become isolated, and for Diploma students to enter into discussion across tutorial boundaries. For the present, it is preferred that the main emphasis should be upon analytical discussion rather than on description or ethnography.

Professor E. Eavns-Pritchard is retiring at the end of this term after a distinguished period of 24 years as Professor at the Institute of Social Anthropology in Oxford. He has kindly allowed us to re-publish his important essay on "Levy Bruhl's Theory of Primitive Mentality", and the extra cost of this has been met by subscription from those students and staff who wish to express their gratitude to E.P. for his help and inspiration over the years.

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There are still a number of copies of Vol. I. No. 1. available and if anyone would like to purchase some would they please write to the editors, enclosing 3/- per copy (to cover post and packing).

FORMAT

Papers should be as short as is necessary to get point over. As a general rule, they should not exceed 4,000 words, but a wide range of shorter contributions will be welcome. For future issues, papers should be submitted following the conventions for citations, notes, and references used in the ASA monographs. Communications should be addressed to the Editors at the Oxford University Institute of Social Anthropology, 51 Banbury Road, Oxford.

LEVY-BRUHL'S THEORY OF PRIMITIVE MENTALITY \*

This essay is a continuation of my paper on "The Intellectualist (English) Interpretation of Magic" in the last number of our Bulletin.<sup>1</sup> In that paper I gave an account, and made a critical analysis of the theories of Tylor and Frazer about primitive thought, especially thought relating to magical practices. These theories were severely criticised from two camps. Marett and a number of subsequent writers attacked them for paying attention exclusively to the cognitive processes of primitive thought and neglecting the affective states which give rise to them. Durkheim and his School attacked them for trying to explain primitive thought in terms of individual psychology and totally neglecting its social character. On its critical side Lévy-Bruhl's theory of primitive mentality is similar to that of the Année Sociologique group of writers but on its constructive side it has a character of its own and has had wide enough influence to merit separate treatment.<sup>2</sup>

In France and Germany Lévy-Bruhl's views have been extensively examined and criticised and it is difficult to understand why they have met with so great neglect and derision among English anthropologists. Their reception is perhaps partly due to the key expressions used by Lévy-Bruhl in his writings, such as "prelogique", "representations collectives", "mystique", "participations", and so forth. Doubtless it is also due in part to the uncritical manner in which Lévy-Bruhl handled his material which was often of a poor quality in any case. But responsibility must be shared by his critics who made little effort to grasp the ideas which lay behind the cumbersome terminology in which they were frequently expressed and who were far too easily contented to pick holes in the detail of his arguments without mastering his main thesis. Too often they merely repeated his views under the impression that they were refuting them. In this essay Lévy-Bruhl's main thesis is examined and is tested in its application to the facts of magic. Its application to other departments of social life, e.g. language and systems of numeration, is not considered.

Like Durkheim Lévy-Bruhl defines social facts by their generality, by their transmission from generation to generation, and by their compulsive character. The English School make the mistake of trying to explain social facts by processes of individual thought, and, worse still, by analogy with their own patterns of thought which are the product of different environmental conditions from those which have moulded the minds which they seek to understand.

"Les 'explications' de l'école anthropologique anglaise, n'étant jamais que vraisemblables, restent toujours affectées d'un coefficient de doute, variable selon les cas. Elles prennent pour accordé que les voies qui nous paraissent, à nous, conduire naturellement à certaines croyances et à certaines pratiques, sont précisément celles par où ont passé les membres des sociétés où se manifestent ces croyances et ces pratiques. Rien de plus hasardeux que ce postulat, qui ne se vérifierait peut-être pas cinq fois sur cent".<sup>3</sup>

The mental content of the individual is derived from, and explained by, the collective representations of his society. An explanation of the social content of thought in terms of individual psychology is disastrous. How can we understand belief in spirits merely by saying, as Tylor does, that they arise from an intellectual need to account for phenomena? Why should there be a need to explain the phenomena of dreams when this need makes itself so little felt about other phenomena? Rather should we try to explain such notions as belief in spirits by stressing the fact that they are collective notions and are imposed on the individual from without and, therefore, are a product in his mind

\* Extract from the Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Vol. II, Part I.

of faith and not of reason.

Levy-Bruhl then develops his own point of view. Collective representations explain individual thought and these collective representations are functions of institutions, so that we may suppose as social structures vary the collective representations will show concomitant variations.

"Les séries de faits sociaux sont solidaires les unes des autres, et elles se conditionnent réciproquement. Un type de société défini, qui a ses institutions et ses moeurs propres, aura donc aussi, nécessairement, sa mentalité propre. A des types sociaux différents correspondront des mentalités différentes, d'autant plus que les institutions et les moeurs mêmes ne sont au fond qu'un certain aspect des représentations collectives, que ces représentations, pour ainsi dire, considérées objectivement. On se trouve ainsi conduit à concevoir que l'étude comparative des différents types de sociétés humaines ne se sépare pas de l'étude comparative des représentations collectives et des liaisons de ces représentations qui dominent dans ces sociétés".<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless it may be said at the outset that Levy-Bruhl in his works does not attempt to correlate the beliefs which he describes with the social structures of the peoples among whom they have been recorded. He makes no effort to prove the determinist assumption set forth in the above quotation nor to explain why we find similar beliefs in two societies with quite different structures. He contents himself with the broad generalization that all primitive peoples present uniform patterns of thought when contrasted with ourselves.

We are logically orientated, or, as one might say, scientifically orientated, in our thought. Normally we seek the causes of phenomena in natural processes and even when we face a phenomenon which we cannot account for scientifically we assume that it appears mysterious to us only because our knowledge is as yet insufficient to explain it. While to primitive minds there is only one world in which causation is normally attributed to mystical influences, even those among us who accept theological teachings distinguish a world subject to sensory impressions from a spiritual world which is invisible and intangible. We either believe entirely in natural laws or if we admit mystical influences we do not think that they interfere in the workings of an ordered universe.

"Ainsi, la nature au milieu de laquelle nous vivons est, pour ainsi dire, intellectualisée d'avance. Elle est ordre et raison, comme l'esprit qui la pense et qui s'y ment. Notre activité quotidienne, jusque dans ses plus humbles détails, implique une tranquille et parfaite confiance dans l'invariabilité des lois naturelles".<sup>5</sup>

Primitive peoples on the other hand are mystically orientated in their thought, that is to say their thought is orientated towards the supernatural. They normally seek the causes of phenomena in supernatural processes and they refer any new or unusual occurrence to one or other of their supernatural categories.

"Bien différente (from ours) est l'attitude de l'esprit du primitif. La nature au milieu de laquelle il vit se présente à lui sous un tout autre aspect. Tous les objets et tous les êtres y sont impliqués dans un réseau de participations et d'exclusions mystiques: c'est elles qui en font la texture et l'ordre. C'est donc elles qui s'imposeront d'abord à son attention et qui, seules, le retiendront. S'il est intéressé par un phénomène, s'il ne se borne pas à le percevoir, pour ainsi dire passivement et sans réagir, il songera aussitôt, comme par une sorte de réflexe mental, à une puissance occulte et invisible dont ce phénomène est la manifestation".<sup>6</sup>

Levy-Bruhl asks why primitive peoples do not inquire into causal connections which are not self-evident. In his opinion it is useless to reply that it is because they do not take the trouble to inquire into

them for we are left with the further question, why they do not take this trouble. The correct answer is that savages are prevented from pursuing enquiries into the workings of nature by their collective representations. These formalised patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour, inhibit any cognitive, affective, or motor, activities which conflict with them. For example, when a savage is killed by a buffalo, he often enough refers the occurrence to supernatural causes, normally to the action of witchcraft. In his society death is due to witchcraft and witchcraft is proved by death. There is obviously no opening for a purely scientific explanation of how death has occurred for it is excluded by social doctrines. This does not mean that the savage is incapable of rational observation. He is well aware that the dead man was killed by a buffalo but he believes that the buffalo would not have killed him unless supernatural forces had also operated.

Lévy-Bruhl's point of view is perhaps best set forth by giving a couple of examples from his works of the type of thought which he characterises as primitive and prelogical. Thus he quotes Miss Kingsley about the belief of West African Negroes that they will sustain an injury if they lost their shadows. Miss Kingsley writes:-

"It strikes one as strange to see men who have been walking, say, through forest or grassland, on a blazing hot morning quite happily, on arrival at a piece of clear ground or a village square, most carefully go round it, not across, and you will soon notice that they only do this at noontime, and learn that they fear losing their shadow. I asked some Bakwire I once came across who were particularly careful in this matter, why they were not anxious about losing their shadows when night came down and they disappeared in the surrounding darkness, and was told that was alright, because at night all shadows lay down in the shadow of the Great God, and so got stronger. Had I not seen how strong and how long a shadow, be it of man or tree or of the great mountain itself, was in the early morning time?"<sup>7</sup>

It is evident from Miss Kingsley's account that the West African idea of a shadow is quite different from ours and that, indeed, it excludes ours since a man cannot both hold our idea of a shadow as a negation of light and at the same time believe that a man so participates in his shadow that if he cannot see it he has lost it and will become ill in consequence. The second example, from New Guinea, illustrates in the same manner the incompatibility of our view of the universe with that held by savages:-

"A man returning from hunting or fishing is disappointed at his empty game-bag, or canoe, and turns over in his mind how to discover who would be likely to have bewitched his nets. He perhaps raises his eyes and sees a member of a neighbouring friendly village on his way to pay a visit. It at once occurs to him that this man is the sorcerer, and watching his opportunity, he suddenly attacks him and kills him".<sup>8</sup>

Responsibility for failure is known beforehand and the socially determined cause excludes any endeavour to discover the natural cause of absence of fish or game or inability to catch them.

From many hundreds of examples of the kind just cited emerge the two propositions which together form Lévy-Bruhl's thesis: that there are two distinct types of thought,<sup>9</sup> mystical thought and logical thought; and that of these two types of thought the mystical type is characteristic of primitive societies and the logical type is characteristic of civilized societies. These two propositions are stated by Lévy-Bruhl in his Herbert Spencer Lecture as follows:-

"1. Il existe une 'mentalité primitive', caractérisée par son orientation mystique, par un certain nombre d'habitudes mentales, et spécialement par la loi de participation, qui y coexiste avec les principes logiques. Elle est remarquablement constante dans les sociétés dites inférieures.

2. Elle se distingue nettement de la notre, mais elle n'en est pas séparée par une sorte de fossé. Au contraire, dans les sociétés les plus 'civilisées' on en aperçoit sans peine des traces et plus que des traces. Dans nos campagnes, et jusque dans nos grandes villes, on n'aurait pas à chercher loin pour rencontrer des gens qui pensent, sentent, et même agissent comme des primitifs. Peut-être faut-il aller plus loin encore, et reconnaître que dans tout esprit humain, quel qu'en soit le développement intellectuel, subsiste un fond inderacinable de mentalité primitive ..."10

As often happens when an author has to sift a great mass of material of uneven range and quality, Levy-Bruhl has sometimes handled his material carelessly and he has been much criticised on this score, the works contra Levy-Bruhl being by this time almost as numerous as his own. Insofar as these works<sup>11</sup> are more than mere criticism of detail, they aim at proving that savages have a body of practical knowledge; that they think logically and are capable of sustained interest and effort; that the mystical thought we find in primitive societies can be paralleled in our own; and that many of the ideas regarded by Levy-Bruhl as mystical may not be so lacking in objective foundations as he imagines. In my opinion most of this criticism is very ineffective, disproving what no-one holds to be proved. It seldom touches Levy-Bruhl's main propositions. His theory of primitive mentality may distort savage thought but it would seem better to correct the distortion than to dismiss the theory completely.

I shall not repeat here all the charges which have been brought against Levy-Bruhl but shall draw attention only to the more serious methodological deficiencies of his work. These obvious deficiencies are as follows: firstly, he makes savage thought far more mystical than it is; secondly, he makes civilised thought far more rational than it is; thirdly, he treats all savage cultures as though they were uniform and writes of civilised cultures without regard to their historical development.

(1) Levy-Bruhl relies on biased accounts of primitive mentality. Most of his facts are taken from missionary and travel reports and he uses uncritically inferences of untrained observers. We have to bear in mind that these observers were dominated by the representations collectives of their own culture which often prevented them from seeing the admirable logic of savage critics, thereby attributing to savages impermeability to experience which in some matters might with greater justice be ascribed to themselves. Whom is one to accuse of 'prelogical mentality', the South African missionaries or the Negroes of whom they record that "they only believe what they see" and that "in the midst of the laughter and applause of the populace, the heathen enquirer is heard saying 'Can the God of the white men be seen with our eyes ..... and if Morimo (God) is absolutely invisible how can a reasonable being worship a hidden thing?' "12

Who, in this instance displays "a decided distaste for reasoning?". These Negroes believed in their own invisible beings but considered ridiculous the invisible beings of the missionaries. The missionaries, on their side, believed in the invisible beings of their own culture but rejected with scorn the invisible beings of the Negroes who, they concluded, were impermeable to experience. Both missionaries and Negroes alike were dominated by the collective representations of their cultures. Both were alike critical when their thought was not determined by social doctrines.

It is also necessary to bear in mind, when assessing the value of reports on savage custom and belief, that Europeans are inclined to record the peculiar in savage cultures rather than the commonplace. Missionaries, moreover, naturally show a keener interest in ideas expressed by savages about the supernatural than in their more mundane thoughts and activities, and consequently they have stressed religious and magical belief to the disadvantage of other aspects of social life.

Lévy-Bruhl's thesis is weakened not only by uncritical use of authorities, but also by the comparative method which he used in company with most writers of the period. In my criticism of Frazer I have already shown wherein lies the weakness of this method. Social facts are described adequately only in terms of their interrelations with other social facts and in compilations like the works of Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl they are torn from their network of inter-connections and presented in isolation and therefore shorn of much of their meaning. Nevertheless we ought not to exaggerate the distortion due to the Comparative Method and we must remember that when an author describes social life from a single angle it is not incumbent on him to describe all the social characters of each fact. He expects a margin of error but hopes that it will be minimised by the vast number of phenomena taken into consideration.

The tendency of Lévy-Bruhl's authorities to record mystical practices rather than familiar and empirical occupations, and the method he employed which allowed him to select from hundreds of societies customs associated with mystical beliefs without describing from the same societies the many activities which depend upon observation and experiment, have unduly distorted savage mentality. Out of a vast number of social facts observers have tended to select facts of the mystical type rather than of other types and in Lévy-Bruhl's writings a secondary selection has taken place through which only facts of a mystical type have been recorded, the final result of this double selection being a picture of savages almost continually and exclusively conscious of mystical forces. He presents us with a caricature of primitive mentality.

Most specialists who are also fieldworkers are agreed that primitive peoples are predominantly interested in practical economic pursuits; gardening, hunting, fishing, care of their cattle, and the manufacture of weapons, utensils, and ornaments, and in their social contacts; the life of household and family and kin, relations with friends and neighbours, with superiors and inferiors, dances and feasts, legal disputes, feuds and warfare. Behaviour of a mystical type in the main is restricted to certain situations in social life. Moreover it is generally linked up with practical activities in such a way that to describe it by itself, as Lévy-Bruhl has done, deprives it of the meaning it derives from its social situation and its cultural accretions.

(2) Lévy-Bruhl compares the savage with 'us' and contrasts 'our' mentality with savage mentality. "The discursive operations of thought, of reasoning and reflection" are to 'us' "the natural and almost continuous occupation of the human mind". 'We' live in an intellectualised world and have banished the supernatural to a vague indefinite horizon where it never obscures the landscape of natural order and uniformity. But who are 'we'? Are we students of science or unlettered men, urbanised bourgeoisie or remotely situated peasants? Can we group together Russian peasants, English miners, German shopkeepers, French politicians, and Italian priests, and contrast their logical thought with the mystical thought of Zulu warriors, Malanesian fishermen, Beduin nomads, and Chinese peasants? Is the thought of European peasants so scientifically orientated and the thought of Negro peasants so mystically orientated that we can speak of two mentalities, civilised mentality and primitive mentality?

It is a deficiency in Lévy-Bruhl's writings that whilst insisting on the difference between primitive mentality and civilised mentality and devoting several volumes to a minute description of the former, he entirely neglects to describe the latter with equal care. Lévy-Bruhl tells us about the mentality of our culture:-

"D'autre part, en ce qui concerne la mentalité propre à notre société, qui doit me servir simplement de terme de comparaison, je la considérerai comme assez bien définie par les travaux des philosophes, logiciens et psychologues, anciens et modernes, sans préjuger de ce qu'une analyse sociologique ultérieure pourra modifier dans les résultats obtenus par eux jusqu'à présent".<sup>13</sup>

But, whilst he tells us what missionaries, traders, political officers, and explorers, say about savage thought, he does not inform us what philosophers, logicians, and psychologists, ancient and modern, say about civilised thought. This procedure is inadmissible. Clearly it is necessary to describe the collective representations of Englishmen and Frenchmen with the same impartiality and minuteness with which anthropologists describe the collective representations of Polynesians, Melanesians, and the aborigines of Central and Northern Australia, if we are to make a comparison between the two. Moreover, in describing the thought of Europeans it is desirable to distinguish between social and occupational strata.

If Lévy-Bruhl had stated that when he spoke of civilised mentality he referred to the type of thought found among the better educated classes of Europe in the twentieth century he would have exposed himself less to the criticism that it is possible to produce a parallel belief among European peasants to almost every belief instanced by him as typical of primitive mentality. This criticism would then have been irrelevant because such beliefs are regarded as superstitious by the educated classes. Lévy-Bruhl admits that there are many evidences of primitive mentality in civilised countries, even among educated people, so that my criticism of Frazer for comparing the European scientist with the savage magician instead of comparing ritual with scientific behaviour in the same culture, either savage or civilised, is also pertinent to Lévy-Bruhl's writings. To this point I return later.

(3) Like many other writers Lévy-Bruhl treats all peoples whom we regard as savages or barbarians as though they were culturally uniform. If patterns of thought are functions of institutions, as he himself asserts, we might reasonably demand that a classification of institutional types should precede a study of ideational types. There are grave objections to illustrating primitive mentality by taking examples from Polynesians, Africans, Chinese, and North American Indians and treating these examples as of equivalent significance, for even in contrast with European culture the cultures of these peoples present little uniformity. In the same way he writes of European culture in vague terms as though it also were uniform. I have already mentioned his failure to distinguish between social and occupational strata. Also Europeans peoples have not an identical culture. But from this point of view the most damaging criticism of Lévy-Bruhl is that he makes no effort to distinguish between prevalent modes of thought in Europe at different historical periods. Mystical and scientific thought can best be compared, as suggested above, as normative ideational types in the same society, or their historical development in relation to one another can be traced over a long period of history in a single culture. Lévy-Bruhl argues that mystical thought is distinctive of primitive cultures and scientific thought is distinctive of civilised cultures. If this is correct then it ought to be possible to show how we who at the present time are civilised changed our collective representations on our emergence from barbarism. Do the English of the 12th century exemplify civilised mentality or primitive mentality? This question is not only relevant but it is imperative that we should know Lévy-Bruhl's answer to it if we are to consent to his views. But he neglects the issue.

If we are to regard English thought in the early Middle Ages as *Prélogique*, and it is difficult to see how we can avoid doing so when such peoples as the Chinese furnish Lévy-Bruhl with many of his examples of primitive mentality, then it is desirable to trace the history of the development of scientific thought in England and to investigate the sociological conditions that have allowed its emergence and growth. Moreover, if an author compares civilised with primitive mentality and illustrates these from the cultures of different peoples, one expects a clear definition of 'civilisation' and 'primitiveness' so that one may test his theory historically.

The criticisms of Lévy-Bruhl's theories which I have already mentioned, and I have by no means exhausted the objections to his views, are so obvious and so forcible that only books of exceptional brilliance

and originality could have survived them. Yet each year fresh polemics appear to contest his writings and pay tribute to their vitality. I suggest that the reason for his writings, in spite of their methodological deficiencies, still exercising a powerful influence on anthropological thought is due to the facts that he perceived a scientific problem of cardinal importance and that he approached this problem along sociological lines instead of contenting himself with the usual psychological platitudes.

We must not, therefore, dismiss his writings with contempt, as many anthropologists do, but must try to discover what in them will stand the test of criticism and may at the same time be considered an original contribution to science. We can best undertake this task by asking ourselves the following questions: (a) Are primitive modes of thought so different from modes of thought current among educated Europeans that the need arises to define wherein the difference lies and to explain it? (b) What does Lévy-Bruhl mean when he says that primitive thought is 'prelogical'? (c) What does he mean by 'collective representations'? (d) What does he mean by 'mystical'? (e) What does he mean by 'participations'?

(a) In his writings Lévy-Bruhl cites the observations of dozens of educated Europeans on primitive custom and belief and shows that they frequently found savage ideas incompatible with their way of thinking.

Many of these Europeans were observers who had long experience of savages and were of the highest integrity. Thus no one knew the Maori better than Elsdon Best who wrote of them:

"The mentality of the Maori is of an intensely mystical nature .... We hear of many singular theories about Maori beliefs and Maori thought, but the truth is that we do not understand either, and, what is more, we never shall. We shall never know the inwardness of the native mind. For that would mean retracing our steps for many centuries, back into the dim past, far back to the time when we also possessed the mind of primitive man. And the gates have long closed on that hidden road".<sup>14</sup>

Miss Kingsley is recognised to have been an incomparable observer of the life of the West African Negro of whom she wrote:

"The African mind naturally approaches all things from a spiritual point of view ..... things happen because of the action of spirit upon spirit".<sup>15</sup>

However, in order to meet the possible objection that these Europeans were not trained anthropologists and were unused to strictly scientific methods of investigation, I will quote passages from the recent writings of three anthropologists who have had wide fieldwork experience as further evidence that this incompatibility between savage and civilised modes of thought really exists and was not imagined by Lévy-Bruhl. Prof. and Mrs. Seligman write of the tribes of the Pagan Sudan:

"On this subject (of magic) the black man and the white regard each other with amazement; each considers the behaviour of the other incomprehensible, totally unrelated to everyday experience, and entirely disregarding the known laws of cause and effect".<sup>16</sup>

Mr. Fortune writes of the Dobuans:

"Behind this ritual idiom there stands a most rigid and never-questioned dogma, learnt by every child in infancy, and forced home by countless instances of everyday usage based upon it and meaningless without it or in its despite. This dogma, in general, is that effects are secured by incantation, and that without incantation such effects cannot come to pass ..... In brief, there is no natural theory of yam growth, of the powers of canoe lashings of fish nets, of gift exchange in strange places overseas, of disease and death, of wind and rain, of

love between man and woman. All these things cannot possibly exist in their own right. All are supernaturally created by the ritual of incantation with the help of the appropriate technological processes in agriculture, canoe making, fishing preparation, and with the help of more mundane wooing in overseas gift exchange and in love-making, but without any such extra work in making wind and rain, disease and death or in their counteracting (apart only from the practice of bleeding the patient in some cases of illness). This latter type of unaided incantation expresses truly the attitude of the native towards incantation throughout. It is the really important factor in producing an effect".<sup>17</sup>

(b) These modes of thought which appear so true to the savage and so absurd to the European Lévy-Bruhl calls 'prelogical'. By 'prelogical' he appears to mean something quite different to what many of his critics attribute to him. He asserts simply that primitive beliefs when tested by the rules of thought laid down by logicians are found to contravene these rules. This does not mean that savages are incapable of thinking coherently, a proposition which Lévy-Bruhl would be the last to defend, but it means that if we examine patterns of belief in savage cultures we shall find they often run counter to a scientific view of the universe and contain, moreover, what a logician would call inherent contradictions. Many of Lévy-Bruhl's critics seem to imagine that he implies cerebral inferiority when he speaks of savages as prelogical and think that if they can show that savages perform cognitive processes of a more elaborate type than mere perception of sensations they will have contraverted him.

Of criticisms of this type he writes:

"Mais beaucoup d'entre elles proviennent d'un malentendu, et s'adressent à une théorie dont personne, je pense, ne voudrait prendre la responsabilité, et selon laquelle il y aurait deux espèces d'esprits humains: les uns, les nôtres, pensant conformément aux principes de la logique, et les autres, les esprits des primitifs, d'où ces principes seraient absents. Mais, qui pourrait soutenir sérieusement une pareille thèse? Comment mettre en doute un seul instant, que la structure fondamentale de l'esprit ne soit partout la même. Ceux en qui elle serait autre ne seraient plus des hommes, de même que nous n'appellerions pas non plus de ce nom des êtres qui ne présenteraient pas la même structure anatomique et les mêmes fonctions physiologiques que nous".<sup>18</sup>

Far from suggesting that the savage is intellectually inferior to civilised man, Lévy-Bruhl admits that primitive peoples show great intelligence when their interest is stimulated and that their children show themselves as capable of learning as the children of civilised peoples. Indeed his problem is why peoples who show such great intelligence support beliefs which are so obviously absurd. In view of the opinions so often attributed to Lévy-Bruhl, I may quote a single passage selected from many like passages in his works:

"Ce n'est pas incapacité ou impuissance, puisque ceux mêmes qui nous font connaître cette disposition de la mentalité primitive ajoutent expressément qu'il se trouve là 'des esprits aussi capables des sciences que le sont ceux des Européens', puisque nous voyons les enfants australiens, mélanésiens, etc., apprendre aussi aisément que les enfants français ou anglais ce que le missionnaire leur enseigne. Ce n'est pas non plus la conséquence d'une torpeur intellectuelle profonde, d'un engourdissement et comme d'un sommeil invincible, car ces mêmes primitifs à qui la moindre pensée abstraite semble un effort insupportable, et qui ne paraissent pas se soucier de raisonner jamais, se montrent, au contraire, pénétrants, judicieux, adroits, habiles, subtils même, quand un objet les intéresse, et surtout dès qu'il s'agit d'atteindre une qu'ils désirent ardemment".<sup>19</sup>

In spite of such clear statements Lévy-Bruhl has often been accused of denying to savages the capacity of making observations and inferences. To take a single example from among his critics; my friend Mr. Driberg attributes to Lévy-Bruhl the thesis that the savage is "incapable of reasoning logically, that he is, to use the technical term, prelogical".<sup>20</sup> Mr. Driberg is easily able to refute a thesis so obviously absurd yet,

though he is unaware of it, he brings the full weight of his great African experience not against, but in support of, Lévy-Bruhl's contentions. Mr. Driberg asks what it is which differentiates one culture from another and answers that it is "the categories or assumptions on which belief is based", and he gives an example to explain what he means by categories or assumptions:

"Why, for instance, should a man be afraid to tell a stranger his name? Why should he believe that it would prejudice his life to do so? Because names have an intimate connection with his personality, and knowledge of his name would give the stranger a magical power over him".<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Driberg in the above quotations merely calls categories or assumptions what Lévy-Bruhl calls representations collectives and speaks of intimate connection where Lévy-Bruhl speaks of participation mystique. The sense is the same; only the words differ. Lévy-Bruhl might have written Mr. Driberg's conclusion:

"But between them (savage cultures) and our more developed cultures there is no bridge, because without our more scientific knowledge they cannot share our civilisation or adjust their outlook to ours. They approach the manifestations of our culture through categories which are not able to cope with them".<sup>22</sup>

I have chosen passages from Mr. Driberg's book, because they sum up concisely the usual forms of criticism directed against Lévy-Bruhl. This form of criticism is by no means peculiar to Mr. Driberg.<sup>23</sup>

I have quoted at length from the writings of Lévy-Bruhl and his critics to show to what confusion the use of a word like 'prelogique' can lead. It is a pity that Lévy-Bruhl did not use the expression 'unscientific' or even 'uncritical' for many of his readers are apparently ignorant that when a philosopher speaks of 'logic' he means a scientific discipline and technique<sup>24</sup> whereas they translate the word into some such phrase as 'ability to think clearly'. Lévy-Bruhl is himself mainly responsible for the misunderstanding which had led his critics to judge him so harshly since he nowhere makes a clear statement of what he means by 'prelogique'. In his latest discussion of the subject he says that by 'prelogique' he does not mean:

"que les esprits des primitifs soient étrangers aux principes logiques; conception dont l'absurdité éclate au moment même où on la formule. Prélogique ne veut dire alogique, ni antilogique. Prélogique, appliqué à la mentalité primitive, signifie simplement qu'elle ne s'astreint pas avant tout, comme la nôtre, à éviter la contradiction. Elle n'a pas les mêmes exigences logiques toujours présentes. Ce qui à nos yeux est impossible ou absurde, elle l'admettra parfois sans y voir de difficulté".<sup>25</sup>

Those who discover philosophical subtleties in the above quotation may find it and other passages of the same sort easier to understand if they will remember that by 'logical' Lévy-Bruhl means 'conforming to the system of logic which regulates modern science' and that by 'thought' he means 'the social content of thought which forms part of the cultural heritage which a man acquires from the community into which he is born'. Unless these two points are grasped Lévy-Bruhl's theories will appear nonsensical. The first point forms the subject of the present section and the second point the subject of section (c).

I conclude that when Lévy-Bruhl says primitive thought is prelogical he does not mean it is chaotic, being devoid of all order and system. It would then not be thought at all. One may say that thought is 'logical' in the sense in which this term is employed in everyday speech but not logical in the sense in which a modern logician would use the term, or that thought may have a logic which is not the logic of science. Hence a pattern of thought may be deduced from false premises and for this reason must be regarded as unscientific thought. Lévy-Bruhl

uses the word 'logical' in this sense of 'scientific' and for a clearer presentation of his views I prefer to substitute 'unscientific' for 'prelogical'.

As Lévy-Bruhl has seen, primitive thought is eminently coherent, perhaps over-coherent. One mystical idea follows another in the same way as one scientific idea in our own society engenders another. Beliefs are co-ordinated with other beliefs and with behaviour into an organised system. Hence it happens that when an anthropologist has resided for many months among a savage people he can foresee how they will speak and act in any given situation. I have tested this fact again and again in Central Africa where I found that my questions to the peoples among whom I carried out ethnological research eventually became more and more formalities since I was able to supply the answers to my questions before I asked them, often in almost the identical phraseology in which the replies were afterwards given. For once we have understood wherein lie the interests of a primitive people we can easily guess the direction which their thinking will take, for it presents the same intellectual characters as our own thinking.<sup>26</sup>

(c) Besides misunderstanding what Lévy-Bruhl meant by 'prelogical' his critics have also misrepresented the meaning he attaches to the word 'thought'. According to them Lévy-Bruhl contends that savages think illogically whereas I understand him to say that savage thought is mainly unscientific and also mystical. In my opinion he refers to the content of thought while in their view he is speaking of the psycho-physical functions of thought.<sup>27</sup> The one is mainly a social fact while the other is an individual physiological process. To say that a person thinks scientifically is like saying that his heart beats and his blood circulates scientifically. Lévy-Bruhl on the contrary is speaking of patterns or modes of thought which, after eliminating individual variations, are the same among all members of a primitive community and are what we call their beliefs. These modes or patterns of thought are transmitted from generation to generation either by organised teaching or more usually by participation in their ritual expression, as in initiation ceremonies, etc. Every individual is compelled to adopt these beliefs by pressure of social circumstances.

These 'patterns of thought' are the 'representations collectives' of Lévy-Bruhl's writings. A collective representation is an ideational pattern, which may be associated with emotional states, and which is generally expressed not only by language but also by ritual action. When Lévy-Bruhl says that a representation is collective he means that it is a socially determined mode of thought and is therefore common to all members of a society or of a social segment. It will be readily understood that these 'collective representations' or 'patterns of thought' or 'like ideas' are 'collective' or 'patterns' or 'like' because they are functions of institutions, that is to say, they are constantly associated with uniform modes of behaviour.

If the mystical thought of a savage is socially determined so also is the scientific thought of a civilised person. Therefore, any evaluation between the savage's capacity for 'logical thinking' and the civilised man's capacity for 'logical thinking' is irrelevant to the question at issue which is whether patterns of thought are orientated mystically in primitive societies and orientated scientifically in civilised societies. As a matter of fact Lévy-Bruhl does not introduce notions of value so that there is no need for his critics to defend the savage so vigorously since no-one attacks him.

The fact that we attribute rain to meteorological causes alone while savages believe that Gods or ghosts or magic can influence the rainfall is no evidence that our brains function differently from their brains. It does not show that we 'think more logically' than savages, at least not if this expression suggests some kind of hereditary psychic superiority. It is no sign of superior intelligence on my part that I attribute rain to physical causes. I did not come to this conclusion myself by observation and inference and have, in fact, little knowledge

of the meteorological processes that lead to rain. I merely accept what everybody else in my society accepts, namely that rain is due to natural causes. This particular idea formed part of my culture long before I was born into it and little more was required of me than sufficient linguistic ability to learn it. Likewise a savage who believes that under suitable, natural and ritual conditions the rainfall can be influenced by use of appropriate magic is not on account of this belief to be considered of inferior intelligence. He did not build up this belief from his own observations and inferences but adopted it in the same way as he adopted the rest of his cultural heritage, namely, by being born into it. He and I are both thinking in patterns of thought provided for us by the societies in which we live.

It would be absurd to say that the savage is thinking mystically and that we are thinking scientifically about rainfall. In either case like mental processes are involved and, moreover, the content of thought is similarly derived. But we can say that the social content of our thought about rainfall is scientific, is in accord with objective facts, whereas the social content of savage thought is unscientific since it is not in accord with reality and may also be mystical where it assumes the existence of supra-sensible forces. What we are asked to accept is that a man who is born into a community of savages acquires as a consequence notions about reality which differ remarkably from the notions he would have acquired had he been born into a community of civilised people, and that the difference between these two sets of notions lies partly in the degree of scientific accuracy they express and partly in the importance they attach to mystical causation.

(d) We have seen that Lévy-Bruhl commonly speaks about savage thought as 'mystique'. This is another term which has done much to alienate English anthropologists from his theories. Yet he means no more by this term than is meant by English writers when they speak of belief in the supernatural which they often divide into magic, religion, and mythology. It must be remembered, however, that in Lévy-Bruhl's view there is no 'natural' to the savage and therefore no 'supernatural'.<sup>28</sup> Hence we may say that mystical beliefs are what we would call beliefs in supernatural beings and forces or the endowment of natural objects with supernatural powers and relations with mankind and each other, but that to the savage, who has no notion of the natural as distinct from the supernatural, these beings and forces and powers and relations are merely supra-sensible. In his own words:

"J'emploierai ce terme, faute d'un meilleur, non pas par allusion au mysticisme religieux de nos sociétés, qui est quelque chose d'assez différent, mais dans le sens étroitement défini ou 'mystique' se dit de la croyance à des forces, à des influences, à des actions imperceptibles aux sens, et cependant réelles".<sup>29</sup>

In his discussion of the way in which mystical doctrines combine with the most elementary sensations in forming savage perceptions, Lévy-Bruhl embarks upon psychological speculations which are irrelevant to his main argument. According to Lévy-Bruhl as soon as savage's sensations become conscious perceptions they are combined with the collective representations which they evoke. As far as the sensory processes of perception are concerned the savage sees an object as we see it but when gives conscious attention to it the collective representation of the object has already intruded to dominate the image of its purely objective properties. For collective representations form integral parts of perception and the savage cannot perceive objects apart from their collective representations. The savage perceives the collective representation in the object. Hence a savage does not perceive a shadow and then apply to it the doctrine of his society according to which it is one of his souls. When he is conscious of his shadow he perceives his soul. Lévy-Bruhl's view can be best understood if we say that 'belief' only arises late in the development of human thought when perception and representation have already fallen apart. We can then say that a person 'perceives' his shadow and 'believes' it to be his soul. The question of belief does not arise among savages because

the shadow is the belief and the savage cannot be conscious of his shadow without being conscious of the belief. In the same way a savage does not perceive a leopard and believe that it is his totem-brother. He does not perceive a leopard at all as we perceive it but he perceives his totem-brother. We see the physical qualities of the leopard and our perception of it in the higher cognitive processes is limited to these physical qualities but in savage consciousness these same physical qualities become merely a part of the mystical representation implied by the word 'totem' and are in fact subordinated to it.

The following passages from Les fonctions mentales will show that I have not done Lévy-Bruhl an injustice in my analysis of his theory of mystical perception.

"En d'autres termes, la réalité où se meuvent les primitifs est elle-même mystique. Pas un être, pas un objet, pas un phénomène naturel n'est dans leurs représentations collectives ce qu'il nous paraît être à nous. Presque tout ce que nous y voyons leur échappe, où leur est indifférent. En revanche, ils y voient beaucoup de choses dont nous ne nous doutons pas".<sup>30</sup>

"Quel que soit l'objet qui se présente, à eux, il implique des propriétés mystiques qui en sont inséparables, et l'esprit, du primitif ne les en sépare pas, en effet, quand il le perçoit. Pour lui, il n'y a pas de fait proprement physique, au sens que nous donnons à ce mot".<sup>31</sup>

In committing himself to the statement that primitives do not distinguish between the supra-sensible world and the sensible world and that the former is just as real to them as the latter owing to their inability to perceive objects apart from their mystical values, Lévy-Bruhl has, in my opinion, not been careful enough to define his terms. It is difficult to state his point of view because one is not certain how one ought to interpret such expressions as 'distinguish', 'real', and 'perception'. Nevertheless I will attempt to explain his point of view as I understand it. Lévy-Bruhl is in danger of the accusation that he does precisely what he objects to others doing, namely, using psychological terms where they do not apply. We may leave to the psychologists to determine to what extent perception is influenced by emotional states and by socially standardised representations. Thought becomes data for the sociologist as soon as, and only when, it is expressed in speech and action. We cannot know what people think in any other way than by listening to what they say and observing what they do. Once thought is expressed in words it is socialised. Hence what applies to savage perception in this respect applies also to civilised perception. If the savage expresses in speech and action the mystical qualities of an object so also does civilised man express in speech and action stereotyped representations of objects which, though mystical properties may not be attributed to them, are none the less social or collective representations. The very fact that an object is named shows its social indication.

As James, Rignano<sup>32</sup> and others, have shown, any sound or sight may reach the brain of a person without entering into his consciousness. We may say that he 'hears' or 'sees' it but does not 'notice' it. In a stream of sense impressions only a few become conscious impressions and these are selected on account of their greater affectivity. A man's interests are the selective agents and these are to a great extent socially determined for it is generally the value attached to an object by all members of a social group that directs the attention of an individual towards it.

It is, therefore, a mistake to say that savages perceive mystically or that their perception is mystical. On the other hand we may say that savages pay attention to phenomena on account of the mystical properties with which their society has endowed them, and that often their interest in phenomena is mainly, even exclusively, due to these mystic properties. It is a mistake to say that savages perceive a plant mystically or that their perception of it is mystical, but we may say that a savage's

perception of, in the sense of noticing, or paying attention to, or being interested in, a plant is due to its mystical properties.

In emphasizing that attention is largely determined by collective representations and that it is they which control selective interests, Lévy-Bruhl has stressed a sociological fact of the greatest importance. It is evident that the Bakwiri, mentioned by Miss Kingsley, pay attention to their shadows because in their society shadows have a mystical significance. Educated Europeans, on the other hand, do not notice their shadows unless influenced to do so by desire to discover the points of the compass or by some aesthetic interest. It is not so much that perception of a shadow causes the belief to enter into consciousness but it is rather the belief which causes the savage to pay attention to his shadow. It is the belief which translates purely psychological sensations into conscious images. A shadow is seen by us in the sense that we receive a visual sensation of it but we may not consciously perceive it since we are not interested in shadows. In the same way when a savage sees a beast or a bird or a tree he pays attention to them because they are totems or spirits or possess magical potency. We may also pay attention to them but, if we do so, it is for a different reason. Our interests in phenomena are not the same as savage interests in them because our collective representations differ widely from theirs.

A restatement of Lévy-Bruhl's main contentions about the mystical thought of savages is contained in the two following propositions both of which appear to me to be acceptable:

(1) Attention to phenomena depends upon affective choice and this selective interest is controlled to a very large extent by the values given to phenomena by society and these values are expressed in patterns of thought and behaviour (collective representations).

(2) Since patterns of thought and behaviour differ widely between savages and educated Europeans their selective interests also differ widely and, therefore, the degree of attention they pay to phenomena and the reasons for their attention are also different.

(e) When Lévy-Bruhl speaks of mystical participations he means that things are often connected in savage thought so that what affects one is believed also to affect the others, not objectively but by a mystical action. (The savage, however, does not distinguish between objective action and mystical action). Savages, indeed, are often more concerned about these mystical relations between things than about their objective relations. This mystical dependence of one thing on another, usually a reciprocal dependence between man and something in nature, is best explained by examples. Several good illustrations of mystical participation have already been quoted in this paper. Thus the Bakwiri might be said to participate in their shadows so that what affects their shadows likewise affects them. Hence were a man to lose his shadow it would be a calamity. We have seen also that savages often participate in their names so that if you can discover a man's name you will have not only it but its owner also in your power. Among many savage peoples it is necessary for the parents of an unborn child to observe a whole series of taboos because it is thought that what happens to the father and mother during this period will affect also their child. This participation between child and parents may continue after birth as among the Boronos of Brazil where if the child is ill the father drinks the medicine.<sup>33</sup> In our analysis of Frazer's theory of magic we were examining a typical form of mystical participation under the title of Sympathetic Magic in which things are held to influence one another in a ritual situation in virtue of their similarity or contiguity.

These participations form a network in which the savage lives. The sum total of his participations are his social personality. There is a mystical participation between a man and the land on which he dwells, between a tribe and its chief, between a man and his totem, between a

man and his kin, and so on.

Lévy-Bruhl's exposition of mystical participation is abundantly defined by the examples which he cites in his books and does not stand in need of explanatory comment. What I have said in the preceding section of this essay in criticism of his conception of 'mystical' applies equally to his conception of 'participation'.

This paper attempts to be explanatory rather than critical and any adequate criticism of Lévy-Bruhl's conception of primitive thought would involve a detailed analysis based on my own and other ethnological researches too lengthy for the present communication. In this essay I will do little more than enumerate headings under which criticism can be arranged.

It is not in fact true that the whole of nature and social life is permeated with mystical beliefs. In the greater part of his social contacts and in his exploitation of nature the savage acts and speaks in an empirical manner without attributing to persons and things supernatural powers. An impression is erroneously gained that everything in which savages are interested has always a mystical value for them by presenting a composite and hypothetical primitive culture, as Lévy-Bruhl has done, consisting of a selection of customs from many different cultures. Since it is possible to find among some tribe a belief which attributes mystical significance to almost every phenomenon one may, by selecting examples from a great number of tribes show that in primitive mentality every phenomenon is regarded as a repository of mystical power.

It may be said that in societies where we find such amorphous and ubiquitous notions as those of the witchcraft---sorcery type or those of the mana-wakanda type almost any object may on occasions be associated with mystical thought. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the situations in social life which evoke patterns of mystical thought towards objects which at other times evoke no such ideas.

It is probable that when a savage pays attention to objects which have for him an exclusively mystical value, a pattern of mystical thought is easily evoked since his sole interest in these objects is in their mystical powers. There are many plants in the bush which have no utilitarian value but which, insofar as they are used by man, are used for ritual purposes alone. Such also are the objects which are fashioned to be used as ritual implements and have no other functions, the bull-roarer, the decorated jaw-bone of a dead king, oracular rubbing-boards, and so forth.

But even when objects are essentially ritual objects I have observed that savage attention is directed towards them on occasions by interests quite other than interest in their sacredness. I suppose that all field-workers have been struck by the casual manner in which savages frequently speak of and even handle sacred objects. I have often noticed Azande lean their spears up against, or hang baskets on, the shrines they build for the spirits of their ancestors in the centre of their homesteads, and as far as it is possible to judge from their behaviour, they have no other interest in the shrine than as a convenient post or peg. At religious ceremonies their attitude is very different. Among the Ingassana of the Tabl hills God is the sun and on occasions they pray to it but, as far as I could judge, in ordinary situations they looked upon the sun very much as I did, as a convenient means of telling the time, as the cause of intense heat at midday, and so on. If one were not present at some religious ceremony on a special occasion, one would remain ignorant that the sun is God. Mystical thought is a function of particular situations.

I think that Lévy-Bruhl made a serious error in failing to understand this point. His error is understandable because he was not really comparing what savages think with what Europeans think but the systematized ideology of savage cultures with the content of individual minds in Europe. His authorities had collected all the information they could

get about the mystical beliefs held by a community of savages about some phenomenon and pieced them together into a co-ordinated ideological structure. These beliefs, like the myths which Europeans also record, may have been collected over a long period of time and from dozens of informants. The resulting pattern of belief may be a fiction since it may never be actually present in a man's consciousness at any time and may not even be known to him in its entirety. This fact would have emerged if records of everything a savage does and says throughout a single day were recorded for then we would be able to compare our own thoughts more adequately with the real thoughts of savages instead of with an abstraction pieced together from persistent enquiries conducted in an atmosphere quite unlike that of the savage's ordinary milieu and in which it is the European who evokes the beliefs by his questions rather than the objects with which they are associated. It would also have emerged had Lévy-Bruhl attempted to contrast the formalised beliefs of Europe with those of savages, had he, for instance, attempted to contrast the formal doctrine of Christianity with the formal doctrines of savage religions. What he has done, in fact, is to take the formalised doctrines of savage religions as though they were identical with the actual mental experience of individuals. It is easy to see that it would never do to regard as identical the thoughts of a Christian with Christian thought. Moreover, primitive thought as pieced together in this manner by European observers is full of contradictions which do not arise in real life because the bits of belief are evoked in different situations.

Moreover, these same observers upon whom Lévy-Bruhl relied often neglected to inform their readers whether objects associated with mystical thought do not also figure in other contexts in which they have no mystical values. So Lévy-Bruhl considered, and, as I believe, incorrectly considered, that the sensations produced by an object and the mystical doctrines associated with it were interdependent to such an extent that the object would not be perceived by savages if it were not evoked by mystical interests and that the elementary sensations produced in consciousness by its objective properties are inevitably and always blended with collective representations of a mystical kind.

We have already noticed that this error is likewise to be found in Frazer's writings on magic where he suggests that the mystical relationship between objects which are similar or have once been in contact with one another is invariable. He does not see that they are associated only in particular situations. My observations on this point may, therefore, be compared with those I made on the gold-jaundice association of Greek peasants in the last number of our bulletin. But in Lévy-Bruhl's writings the error goes much deeper and obscures his lengthy discussion of mystical participations. He will not admit that when the elementary sensations produced by the sight of an object reach consciousness any other images can be evoked to combine with them in perception than those of its mystical qualities even if these qualities are irrelevant to a particular situation. It would appear from his thesis that if the object is to be perceived at all these images cannot be excluded.

That different ideas are evoked by objects in different situations can be shown in other ways. It can be shown that many of the most sacred objects of primitive cult only become sacred when man deliberately endows them with mystic powers which they did not possess before. Thus the fetish and idol are repositories of mystical force because man after having made them infuses this force into them by ritual. As we have already seen magic is always man-made. It is the rite itself which gives virtue to materia medica and often only for the duration of the rite.

Or again it can be shown that mystical notions about nature are part of culture and, therefore, have to be acquired by every individual. They are learnt slowly throughout the years. Hence there are periods in the life history of every individual when mystic notions cannot be evoked in perceptions to complete elementary sensations because the mystic notions are unknown to the person who experiences the sensations. Also many objects have a mystical value for some members of a society but not for others. A plant has mystical value for the person who

knows its ritual uses but not for those who ignorant of them. An animal has a totemic relationship with members of a single clan while members of other clans eat it with relish.

From many points of view, therefore, it would be easy to demonstrate that the interests which savages have in objects are not always of a mystical type; that often they are entirely utilitarian and empirical; and that the same objects may at different times or in different situations evoke different ideas. Savage thought has not the fixed inevitable construction that Lévy-Bruhl gives it.

The very contradictions which according to Lévy-Bruhl characterise prelogical thought and distinguish it from our thought, are to be accounted for by the fact that a single elementary sensation may evoke in different situations different images in perception. An object may be perceived in different ways according to different affective interests, interests which in their turn are evoked by different situations. Hence it comes about that a savage can be both himself and a bird, that a shadow can be both a shadow and a soul, that a plant can be both a plant and a magical substance, and so on. As suggested above, the contradiction only becomes glaring when European observers try to piece together ideas evoked in different situations into a consistent ideological structure.

When a particular situation evokes one set of ideas other ideas are inhibited, especially if they contradict those evoked, at any rate as far as speech and action are concerned. But it is a mistake to suppose that because a savage attributes some happening to a mystical cause that he does not also observe the natural cause even if no particular attention is paid to it in formalised belief and traditional behaviour. Thus I have ample evidence from my own research in Central Africa that while death is attributed to witchcraft people are not oblivious to the natural cause of death whether it be the spear of an enemy, the claws or horns of a beast, or disease. They fully recognise these causes but they are socially irrelevant. Their irrelevancy arises from the social action which follows death, namely vengeance. It is evident that of the natural and mystical causes of death the mystical cause is usually the only one which allows any intervention (except when a man is murdered by a fellow-tribesman) and when it is a social rule that death must be avenged it is clearly the only cause towards which social action can be directed. The other cause whilst perfectly well known to the people is socially irrelevant and, therefore, excluded as far as the persons directly involved (the kin) are concerned though it may be more readily admitted by others. The same mixture of sound knowledge with mystical notions is found in primitive ideas of causation in procreation, in disease, etc. As I intend to deal with this subject in a forthcoming publication, I will not discuss it further here.<sup>34</sup> I may add, however, that the selective interest which directs attention to one cause rather than to another, to the mystical cause than to the natural one, may be derived from an individual and psychological situation, e.g. sometimes a savage attributes his misfortune to witchcraft while his neighbours attribute it to incompetence or to some other cause.

Patterns of thought of a mystical kind are never exclusively mystical. They are never fantastic for they are bound by limits imposed by psychological and biological requirements. At the core of mystical thought we find recognition of natural causation and other scientific observations which lie, as it were, dormant, known yet socially inhibited because they are irrelevant to the particular situation which evokes the pattern of thought or because they contradict it. If this were not the case it would be difficult to understand how scientific thought could ever have emerged. Since it is the case, it is easy to understand how social change involving reorientation of interests has directed attention to elements in a chain of causation or to the objective properties of things which had hitherto been known but socially unemphasised.

We may now consider shortly the theories of Lévy-Bruhl and of Tylor and Frazer in relation to each other. If the theories of Frazer and

Taylor about magic have concentrated too exclusively on some qualities of magical ritual but have neglected other qualities of equal, if not greater importance, this distortion should be evident when we compare them with the writings of Lévy-Bruhl whose focus of interest was quite different.

Taylor, Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl, are in agreement that magical practices are typical of primitive societies and tend to disappear and to be regarded as superstitions in societies of higher cultural development. This is most strikingly seen if we compare, as Lévy-Bruhl has done, the thought of savage cultures with ideas current among educated Europeans of the 20th century.

Lévy-Bruhl is totally uninterested in distinctions drawn by scholars between magic and religion and therefore his theories do not bear upon the lengthy arguments devoted by Frazer and so many other writers to devising ritual categories.<sup>25</sup> Lévy-Bruhl seeks to understand the characteristics of mystical thought and to define these qualities and to compare them with the qualities of scientific thought. Since magic and religion, as separated by Frazer, have, from the point of view of Lévy-Bruhl's investigation, the same mystical character, there is no need to maintain this particular distinction, nor, indeed, any distinction, between them. The sharp division which Frazer has insisted on in *The Golden Bough* must appear quite arbitrary, and even futile, to Lévy-Bruhl.

But it is in their analyses of the ideology of magic that the English and French Schools are at greatest variance. To Taylor and Frazer the savage believes in magic because he reasons incorrectly from his perception of similarities and contiguities. To Lévy-Bruhl the savage reasons incorrectly because he believes in magic. Now there can be no doubt that if we study the manner in which any individual acquires a magical belief in a savage society we shall have to admit the accuracy of Lévy-Bruhl's contention. An individual does not note similarities between objects and then come to the conclusion that in consequence of these similarities the objects are mystically connected. He simply learns the pattern of thought in which this mystical connection is socially established. Nevertheless, Lévy-Bruhl has not paid sufficient regard to the fact that collective representations have an intellectual structure and indeed must have for mnemonic reasons. Unless there is a mutual dependence between ideas we cannot speak of thought at all. Thought requires, in order to be thought, notions of similarity and contiguity. For when we speak of thought we mean coherent thought and without these notions magic would be chaotic and could not possibly persist. Taylor and Frazer have shown us the intellectual character of magic. Lévy-Bruhl has shown us its social character.

Looking at magic from this point of view of its ideational or intellectual structure, Taylor and Frazer felt that they were called upon to account for savages not observing that magical rites do not achieve the end they aim at achieving. Since savages reason, observe similarities and contiguities, and make inferences, even if incorrect ones, from their observations how is it that they do not apply these intellectual powers to discovering whether magic really produces the results it is supposed to produce. This was the problem that confronted Taylor and Frazer and in their attempts to solve it they did not sufficiently appreciate the difference between ratiocination and scientific reasoning, between intellectual operations and logic. Men may reason brilliantly in defence of the most absurd theses; their arguments may display great intellectual ability and yet be illogical. To prove this we need not go further than the writings of our metaphysicians. The intellectual operations of the mind are subordinated to affective interests and are above all subservient to collective representations. We know what happens to people whose intellectual operations lead them to conclusions which contradict social doctrines. Lévy-Bruhl therefore saw no need to ask why savages do not observe how baseless are their beliefs and why they do not pay attention to the contradictions they embody, for in his opinion savages are inextricably enmeshed in a network of mystical

participations and completely dominated by collective representations. There is no room for doubt or scepticism. There is not even need to avoid contradictions.

But a representation is not acceptable to the mind merely because it is collective. It must also accord with individual experience<sup>36</sup> and if it does not do so then the representation must contain an explanation of its failure to do so. No doubt in purely transcendental thought contradictions do not matter, as theology amply illustrates, but thought which directs experience must not contradict it. A pattern of thought which decrees that a man may put his hand in the fire with immunity has little chance of persisting. Magical thought which claims that a man who eats certain medicines will never die or that agriculture and hunting can be carried on by magical procedure alone will not prove acceptable to individual minds in any society. Even mystical thought is conditioned by experience and this is the reason for many secondary elaborations of doctrine which account for discrepancies, failures, contradictions, and so on, for mystical thought must, like scientific thought, be intellectually consistent, even if it is not logically consistent. The scientific and mystical notions that are so often found side by side in a pattern of thought must be harmonised either by situational selection or by some explanatory link. Tylor's brilliant analysis of the factors which keep mystical thought in touch with reality or which explain its failure to do so is therefore needed to complete Lévy-Bruhl's description of collective representations.

To sum up: My exposition of Lévy-Bruhl's theories has been a task of great difficulty. His writings are extensive and his thought often tortuous. So vague are many of the terms he uses and so inconstant is the meaning he attaches to them that I have sometimes had to select between several possible interpretations. It may even be charged against me that I have given a sense to his words which others might fail to derive from them. I would answer that a book gains its value not only from the ideas which an author puts into it but also from the ideas to which it gives rise in the mind of the reader. In order to grasp Lévy-Bruhl's views I have had to reformulate them in my own language.

Contrary to the judgment of most English anthropologists I find Lévy-Bruhl's writings a great stimulus to formulation of new problems and I consider the influence he has had not only on anthropological theory but also in directing the attention of fieldworkers to a new set of problems to have been most fruitful. For when in disagreement with his opinions we must acknowledge that they are not the usual facile explanations of social anthropologists which obstruct all thought by their futility and finality and turn out to be no more than a restatement in other terms of the problem to be solved. Lévy-Bruhl does not, in fact, attempt to explain mystical thought. He is content to show its characters of generality and compulsion or, in other words, to demonstrate that individuals act and speak in ways that are socially determined. In stressing the social character of patterns of thought he has performed a great service to social anthropology and in our efforts to understand magic we have to start by recognising the social character of its thought. This is obvious as soon as it is stated but it has first to be stated and then it becomes obvious.

Besides emphasizing the social character of thought Lévy-Bruhl has tried to classify types of thought and to show that their interrelations with one another and with behaviour can be studied. It is true that his two categories of scientific and mystical are defined in the rough and without precise analysis and that he takes no account of thought which lies outside both categories. The immense scope of his work and the voluminous data which he handled made this inevitable and it is left for other students to enquire with more detailed analysis into the gradations and blendings of thought-types and their variations as functions of different situations, if indeed it is found desirable upon closer scrutiny to maintain his classification.

Perhaps Lévy-Bruhl's most important contribution to sociology is to

have shown that ignorance, like knowledge, is often socially determined and that primitive thought is unscientific because it is mystical and not mystical because of an inherent incapacity to reason logically. He demonstrates that the images which are evoked to combine with elementary sensations to complete perception are evoked by selective interests which in their turn are directed by collective representations towards the mystical qualities of things rather than to their objective qualities.

Moreover, contrary to the usual opinion, Lévy-Bruhl's writings show clearly how primitive mystical thought is organized into a coherent system with a logic of its own. He recognises the existential value of mystical thought. No primitive society is able to maintain its equilibrium without the mystical beliefs which link together its activities by ideological bonds. Thus, for example, the belief that witchcraft is the cause of death has existential value in a society in which the kinship group is also a blood-revenge group.

Beyond this he does not, and indeed cannot go, for the method of comparative analysis that he employed imposes effective limits to deeper research. By comparing savage thought with civilised thought Lévy-Bruhl was able to disclose certain general correlations between the degree of technological development and the development of scientific thought. But at this point he was unable to make any further progress as is shown clearly in his later writings which carry his researches into the nature of thought no further than his earliest writings.

A programme of research which will lead us to a more comprehensive and exact knowledge of mystical thought, indeed of all types of thought, must await a later communication.

Professor E.E. Evans-Pritchard.

#### References

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2. Lévy-Bruhl's theory of primitive mentality is complete in his first volume on the subject, Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures, 1st ed. 1910. An authorised translation of this book into English by Lilian A. Clare was published under the title of How Natives Think (London, 1926). All references in this paper are to the 9th ed. (Paris, 1928) under the letters F.M. The page number of the English translation is given in brackets, e.g. F.M., 86-87 (E.T., 84-85). His later publications repeat the argument of Les Fonctions Mentales and adduce voluminous evidences in support of them. The first is La Mentalité Primitive, 1st ed., 1922. 1922. An authorised translation of this book has also appeared in English under the title of Primitive Mentality (London, 1923), Lilian A. Clare again being the translator. All references are to the 2nd ed. (Paris, 1922) and under the letters M.P. No reference is made to the pages of the English translation since this is inaccessible at the time of writing. Lévy-Bruhl's two later works are L'Âme Primitive (Paris, 1927) and Le Surnaturel et la Nature dans la Mentalité Primitive (Paris 1931). They have been very little used in this essay where they are referred to as A.P. and Le Surnaturel. A concise summary of Lévy-Bruhl's view on primitive thought is contained in his Herbert Spencer Lecture delivered in Oxford and published under the title of La Mentalité Primitive (Oxford, 1931). This is referred to as H.S.L.
3. F.M., p. 13 (E.T., 23).

4. F.M., p. 19 (E.T., pp. 27-28).
5. M.P., p. 17.
6. M.P., pp. 17-18.
7. Mary Kingsley, West African Studies, p. 176, quoted in F.M., p. 50 (E.T., p. 54).
8. Guise, Wangela River, New Guinea, J.A.I., xxviii, p. 212, quoted in F.M., p. 73 (E.T., p. 73).
9. Types of thought must not be confused with types of mind classified by some writers as "synthetic" and "analytic", "intuitive" and "logical", "extravert" and "intravert", "romantic" and "classic", and so on.
10. H.S.L., p. 26.
11. The most ambitious critical work on the so-called theory of prelogisme is Olivier Leroy's La Raison primitive, Essai de réfutation de la théorie de Prelogisme, Paris, 1927. Besides other writings mentioned in this paper I may mention the critical but laudatory summary of Lévy-Bruhl's theories in Dr. Goldenweiser's, Early Civilization, 1921, and the not unfriendly criticism contained in G. Van Leeuw's, La Structure de la Mentalité primitive, extrait de La Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse, 1928. The best account of Lévy-Bruhl's theories is by Davy in the 4th part, pp. 193-305, of his Sociologues d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, Paris, 1931. See also: Durkheim, Année sociologique, t. XII, p. 35; and Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse, 1912, pp. 336-342; Mauss, Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie, 1923; Raoul Allier, Les non-civilisés et nous, 1928. D. Essertier Philosophes et Savants français du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, La Sociologie, Paris, 1930.
12. Missions évangéliques, XXIII, 1848, p. 82 (Schrumpp). Quoted in M.P., pp. 3-4.
13. F.M., p. 21 (E.T., 29-30).
14. Elsdon Best, Maori Medical Lore, Journal of the Polynesian Society, XIII, p. 219 (1904). Quoted in F.M., p. 69 (E.T., p. 70).
15. Miss Kingsley, West African Studies, p. 330. Quoted in F.M., p. 65 (E.T., p. 67).
16. Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, by C.G. and B.Z. Seligman, 1932, p. 25.
17. Sorcerers of Dobu, by R.F. Fortune, 1932, pp. 97-98.
18. H.S.L. pp. 10-11.
19. M.P., p. 12.
20. The Savage as he Really is, by J.H. Driberg, London, 1929, p. 4.
21. The Savage as he Really is, by J.H. Driberg, London, 1929, pp. 12-13.
22. Idem, p. 18.
23. Prof. Malinowski writes "Professor Lévy-Bruhl tells us, to put it in a nutshell, that primitive man has no sober moods at all, that he is hopelessly and completely immersed in a mystical frame of mind. Incapable of dispassionate and consistent observation, devoid of the power of abstraction, hampered by a decided aversion towards

reasoning', he is unable to draw any benefit from experience, to construct or comprehend even the most elementary laws of nature", etc. (Magic Science and Religion, published in Science, Religion and Reality, 1925, p. 28). Other authorities could be quoted to the same effect.

24. Or, perhaps, one ought to say that this is what he may mean for philosophers give to the word many different meanings (see Lalande, Vocabulaire technique et critique de la Philosophie, art. "Logique"). It is a great pity, therefore, that Lévy-Bruhl introduces the term without stating precisely the meaning he attaches to it. In this paper I distinguish between scientific logic which is the technique of the sciences and which tests not only inferences and the interdependence between ideas but also the validity of premises, and logic which in no way concerns itself with the validity of premises but only with the coherent structure of thought.
25. H.S.L., p. 21.
26. It is essential to understand that thought which is totally unscientific and even which contradicts experience may yet be entirely coherent in that there is a reciprocal dependence between its ideas. Thus I may instance the writings of mediaeval divines and political controversialists as examples of mystical thought which far from being chaotic suffers from a too rigid application of syllogistic rules. Also the thought of many insane persons (monomaniacs, paranoiacs) presents a perfectly organised system of interdependent ideas. Perhaps the only thought that we can class as incoherent is that of certain types of insanity (mania and Dementia Praecox) and that of dreams but even in these cases it is probably more correct to say that the principle of coherence is unknown to us. Has not Freud shown how very logical and coherent our dreams can be?
27. As a matter of fact Lévy-Bruhl is hardly consistent in his usage of words like 'esprit' and 'mentalité' for he sometimes suggests the psychological process of thinking and at other times the social content of thought. It is largely his own fault that his opinions are misrepresented.
28. "L'homme superstitieux, souvent aussi l'homme religieux de notre société, croit à deux ordres de réalités, les unes visibles et tangibles, soumises aux lois nécessaires du mouvement, les autres invisibles, impalpables, 'spirituelles', formant comme une sphère mystique qui enveloppe les premières. Mais, pour la mentalité des sociétés inférieures, il n'y a pas ainsi deux mondes au contact l'un de l'autre, distincts et solidaires, se pénétrant plus ou moins l'un l'autre. Il n'y en a qu'un. Toute réalité est mystique comme toute action, et par conséquent aussi toute perception". F.M., p. 67 (E.T., p. 68).
29. F.M., p. 30 (E.T., p. 38).
30. F.M., pp. 30-31 (E.T., p. 38).
31. F.M., pp. 37-38 (E.T., p. 43).
32. William James, The principles of psychology, 1901. Eugenio Rignano, The psychology of reasoning, English translation, 1923.
33. K. von Den Steinen, Under den Naturvölkern Zentralbrasiliens, pp. 289-294. Quoted in F.M., p. 300 (E.T., p. 259).
34. I may, however, refer to papers in which I have given special attention to these problems: "Witchcraft (mangu) among the Azande", Sudan Notes and Records, 1929; "Heredity and Gestation as the Azande see them", Sociologus, 1932; "Zande Therapeutics" in Essays presented to C. G. Seligman to appear this year.

35. See what he has to say on this point: F.M., pp. 341-345 (E.T., pp. 293-296).
36. Lévy-Bruhl, it is only fair to say, realises that mystical thought is bound to coincide, at any rate to some extent, with experience for pragmatic reasons. Thus he writes "Toutefois, même pour cette mentalité (primitive mentality), les représentations relatives aux morts, et les pratiques qui s'y rattachent, se distinguent par un caractère prélogique plus marqué. Si mystiques que soient les autres représentations collectives, relatives aux données des sens, si mystiques que soient aussi les pratiques qui s'y rapportent (chasse, pêche, guerre, maladie, divination, etc.), encore faut-il, pour que la fin désirée soit atteinte, pour que l'ennemi soit vaincu, le gibier pris . . . . ., que les représentations coïncident en quelques points essentiels avec la réalité objective, et que les pratiques soient, à un certain moment, effectivement adaptées aux fins poursuivies. Par là se trouve garanti un minimum d'ordre, d'objectivité, et de cohérence dans ces représentations". F.M., pp. 354-355 (E.T., p. 303).

UNDERSTANDING IN PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

This paper is concerned with how we can understand other philosophies. My method is first to offer an analysis of an aspect of African thought. Then I shall use that analysis as a vehicle for discussing some theoretical and methodological problems in the study of other thought systems, especially problems raised by Peter Winch.

I

A puzzling feature of African thought is that general propositions seem seldom to be evaluated in the light of contrary empirical evidence. If events do not proceed according to expectations stemming from general beliefs, Africans do not on this basis question the validity of those beliefs. Instead, they produce "secondary elaborations" (Horton 1967: 167-69): rationalizations accounting for the divergence between events and expectations in particular circumstances while leaving the general belief or assumption which produced the expectation intact.

Horton (1967) treats this phenomenon as a general characteristic of African traditional thought. To list a few examples, Dinka do not ponder the efficacy of sacrifice in general because particular sacrifices are not followed by the desired events. One explanation for failure is that Divinity refused to respond to that particular sacrifice. Another is that the specific Power responsible for the difficulty which the sacrifice aimed to remove was wrongly identified, rendering the sacrifice ineffective because misdirected (Lienhardt 1961: 291). This characteristic of African thought is copiously documented for the Azande. That a man admits he may be a witch although he does not act with malicious intent nor in concert with other witches does not shake his belief that witches do act in these ways. It only leads him to conclude that he is not an ordinary witch (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 119-20). If a witchdoctor fails in his cure the explanation may be that this particular witchdoctor is a fraud, but never that witchdoctors in general have no power (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 193). Failure of oracles may be attributed to causes like corruption of the poison by witchcraft or mere hunger of the termites rather than attendance to the questions put to them; the possibility that oracles in general are futile is never raised (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 337-41).

Our question, then, is: Why do Africans refrain from questioning their general beliefs in the light of contrary evidence? Speaking specifically of the Azande, Evans-Pritchard argues that they do not do so because their thought is a closed system which accounts for its own failures.

Azande see as well as we that the failure of their oracle to prophesy truly calls for explanation, but so entangled are they in mystical notions that they must make use of them to account for the failure. The contradiction between experience and one mystical notion is explained by reference to another mystical notion (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 339).

Again,

The failure of any rite is accounted for in advance by a variety of mystical notions - e.g. witchcraft, sorcery, and taboo. Hence the perception of error in one mystical notion in a particular situation merely proves the correctness of another and equally mystical notion (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 476).

In his book on the Azande Evans-Pritchard takes the position that Zande notions about witchcraft, magic and oracles are "mystical", that they are not in accord with objective reality as this is apprehended by the observations and logic of scientific thought (1937: 12, 476-78, 494). Winch criticizes this approach, maintaining that concepts of reality are themselves given in language and culture, and therefore that no culture-free concept of objective reality can exist. We thus have the options of viewing another system of thought in terms of our concepts of reality or in terms of its own concepts of reality. Winch insists on the latter course, and for that reason finds Evans-Pritchard's later analysis of Nuer religion (1956) preferable to his treatment of Zande thought (Winch 1964: 307-15).

Much of the next section will be devoted to a critique of Winch's ideas. Here, however, I wish to point out what strikes me as an advantage in the approach he advocates. If we do evaluate another philosophy, it is likely that we will find a great deal of error in the alien philosophy. We may then be led to wonder how that philosophy can persist when much of it is wrong, and our analysis may be an attempt to answer this question.<sup>1</sup> Consider Robin Horton's answer to the question raised in this paper. He argues that traditional African thought systems admit no alternatives to their basic theories and postulates. The African either believes that the world is ordered as his received philosophy says it is, or he must believe that the world is not ordered at all. Therefore, the African does not question his basic assumptions in the light of contrary evidence because of his anxiety that, were those assumptions found false, he would be driven to the psychologically unsettling conclusion that the world is chaotic (Horton 1967: 167-69).

One may read Horton's analysis as taking it for granted that to assess general beliefs according to empirical experience is a natural or proper epistemological procedure for all men, and that Africans would employ it if only their lack of alternative theories did not prevent them from doing so with psychological security. Adopting Winch's prescription of viewing a philosophy in its own terms, one's attention would be directed to precisely those things which Horton appears to take for granted. Instead of wondering how the failure to assess general beliefs in the light of contrary evidence can persist in African thought, one would ask what it is about African ontology and epistemology which renders it unnecessary or irrational within that system of thought to evaluate beliefs in this way. The analysis I offer attempts to answer this question.

I think we will be in the best position to understand why Africans do not evaluate their general beliefs in the light of empirical evidence if we first consider why we of the West often do evaluate our beliefs in this way. My point can be made most clearly on the basis of that part of Western thought in which this mode of evaluation is most rigorously developed, so this brief discussion of the West will be limited to natural science. In science, the procedure of evaluating beliefs (or assumptions or theories) according to empirical evidence is the experimental method. This method rests, I think, on two basic postulates of Western metaphysics - postulates seen perhaps most clearly in Comptean Positive philosophy. The first is that empirical events are subject to unseen principles or laws; the second is that these principles or laws operate with mechanical regularity. In our epistemology, the first postulate leads us to think that empirical events are relevant to our knowledge of the unseen principles or laws.

The second postulate assures us that empirical events are a reliable means of evaluating our assumptions or theories about those principles or laws. The postulate that the laws of nature operate with mechanical regularity is essential to the experimental method. It assures us that variables can be controlled in an experiment: that some laws will not operate, or at least will not operate in an unpredictable fashion, in the experiment. And this assurance in turn is necessary if we are to think that the result of an experiment is due to the particular law

whose operation that experiment was designed to reveal. Unless these criteria are met, it is irrational to think that the experimental method could be utilized to evaluate our theories about any law of nature.

With certain modifications, our first Western postulate - that empirical events are subject to unseen principles or laws - would appear to be valid also for African metaphysics. The word "law" is especially inappropriate for African thought. Let us adopt Father Tempels' wording and rephrase the postulate to read "empirical events are subject to unseen forces or powers". Among these forces or powers are what have been termed Spirit and refractions of Spirit for the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1956), Divinity and divinities for the Dinka (Lienhardt 1961), ghosts and witchcraft for the Anuak (Lienhardt 1962), witchcraft, oracles, and magic for the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1937), the Supreme Being, and ancestors, men, and literally all being for the Baluba (Tempels 1945). Certainly there are many differences between these concepts, but they are not important for the very general point I wish to make: that all of these things, in the African view, are forces which may influence events in the world.

But comparing African thought with our second Western postulate we find a sharp difference. Africans do not think that these forces act with mechanical regularity. Many of them are thought to have volition, as is seen in the Dinka idea that Divinity may or may not respond to a particular sacrifice (Lienhardt 1961: 291). In Baluba philosophy the forces are intimately interconnected so that the operation of one force depends on a great many others. On a particular occasion a given force may remain inactive or may act in any of a number of ways and with any of a number of results, depending on the disposition of a multitude of variables (other forces) on that occasion (Tempels 1945: 40-1, 57, 87-89).

Zande oracles (Evans-Pritchard 1937) reveal clearly the idea of the irregular action of forces, and show how Africans use this concept in a positive way. The Azande administer poison to a fowl, asking the poison to kill the fowl if a certain statement (e.g. a prediction of the future or the cause of an illness or death) is true. Then they ask the oracle to confirm its answer by sparing a second fowl if the first one died, or by killing the second if the first survived. Essentially this is an experiment, run twice, with the aim of confirming a "hypothesis" - that hypothesis being the prediction or other statement put to the oracle. The interesting thing is that the Azande accept the hypothesis as proven or disproven only if the experiment has different results each time it is run - if one fowl dies and the other survives. This procedure is completely unintelligible in Western scientific thought, where an experiment is valid for confirming or disproving a hypothesis only if the result is the same each time the experiment is run.

The Azande think that the poison lacks potency in itself, that the potency emerges only when a question is put to the oracle (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 315). It thus appears that the Azande conceive of the poison oracle much as the Baluba conceive of medicinal plants. Their curing power does not operate automatically; it may or may not act depending on the state of a number of forces external to the plants themselves (Tempels 1945: 62-3). For the Zande poison oracle, the main external force which stimulates the poison to kill or to spare is the truth or falsity of the "hypothesis" put to it. Here is a case where Africans utilize their conception of the irregularity of the forces of nature to regulate their lives. They construct an experimental situation where a force is asked to act irregularly (killing one fowl, sparing another) and they endow the particular form of irregularity (which fowl was killed, and which spared?) with meaning. And, of course, given their assumption that the forces of nature do act irregularly and under the influence of many other forces, if an apparently valid oracular prediction fails to materialize, it is logical to suppose that some other force, such as witchcraft, influenced the oracle.

It may appear that the thought I have attributed to Africans is not

fundamentally different from Western science. I have suggested that, for Africans, the forces of nature are not thought to act regularly because the action of any force is influenced by many other forces. But this could be taken to mean simply that Africans consider a great many variables to impinge upon events, and that what I have called their conception of the irregular action of the forces of nature is nothing more than their recognition that they do not fully understand all the variables affecting any particular event. From this point of view one might attribute to them the ideas that the forces of nature do act with mechanical regularity and that they could predict the events resulting from their operation if only they could control all the variables. In this view the Africans emerge as possessing a scientific mentality but without enough knowledge to take it very far.

The problem with this position is that, given our idea that the laws of nature operate with mechanical regularity, when we talk about "controlling variables" we mean the ability to predict if and how variables will act in particular circumstances. Such prediction is, I think, impossible in African thought. The variables we are discussing are the forces of nature, and most of them (the Supreme Being, nature sprites, witches, ghosts, etc.) have volition. Therefore, the African has no way of predicting if they will act in a particular situation. Neither are they conceived with the functional specificity that characterizes variables in the Western view. There are many ways, for example, in which a witch or malevolent ghost can do mischief. Therefore, even if the African conception of variables (forces) would allow them to predict that certain variables will act in a particular situation, that conception renders it impossible to predict how they will act. Therefore, I maintain that the postulate that the forces of nature do not operate with mechanical regularity is validly attributable to African thought.<sup>2</sup> Their ontological character (especially volition and functional diffuseness) is incompatible with any idea of predictable, mechanical regularity of action.

My answer to the question of why Africans do not question their general beliefs on the basis of contrary evidence should now be clear. General beliefs or assumptions can be evaluated in terms of empirical experience only if one is certain that the experience is relevant to the assumption, that no other factors contributed to the course of the experience beyond those embodied in the belief or assumption. The variables affecting the experience must be controlled. But the African postulate that the forces of nature do not operate in a mechanically regular way means that in their view the variables affecting experience cannot be controlled. They cannot rationally attribute a given event to a given force because they cannot be certain if that force in fact operated on that occasion. Nor can they be certain if (and if so, how) the outcome was affected by the action of other forces. Therefore, I suggest that Africans do not question their general beliefs in the light of contrary evidence because, within their system of thought, this is not rational. From their metaphysical point of view such evaluation cannot be a reliable epistemological procedure.

## II

Having offered the preceding analysis of an aspect of African thought, I should now like to view that analysis as data against which we may consider some problems in the study of other philosophies.

Peter Winch would have us understand another culture or historical period in its own terms. As I understand his reasoning in its relevance to anthropology, a people's thought and behaviour are intelligible only in terms of the concepts of reality held by that people. These concepts of reality are given in language and in the "form of life" in general. Since languages and "forms of life" vary, concepts of reality and the resulting modes of apprehending meaning in ideas and behaviour also vary. Further, since there can be no concepts apart from a language and a "form of life", there is no common denominator in terms of which different concepts of reality and modes of intelligibility can be understood.

Each "form of life", with its language, philosophy, and system of social relations is a self-contained entity which can be understood only in its own terms (Winch 1958, see especially pp. 11-15, 22-23, 40-44, 121-133).

I must confess uncertainty as to exactly how far Winch wishes to press the point that a culture must be understood in its own terms. The train of logic summarized above and many of his remarks (e.g. 1958: 129-32) imply that we must strive to approach, as closely as possible, the goal of understanding as the native understands. But MacIntyre (1967) interprets Winch as arguing that understanding from within is just a starting point for analysis, and Winch's statement (1964: 319) that "the sort of understanding we seek requires that we see the Zande category in relation to our own already understood categories" lends credence to this point. Whichever Winch espouses, he has not to my knowledge given close consideration to the problems involved in understanding another culture in its own terms. These are the problems which I propose to discuss here.

My analysis of why Africans do not question their general beliefs on the basis of contrary evidence may appear to qualify as an example of understanding another culture in its own terms. There was no evaluation of the validity of African concepts from a Western point of view. Nor was African thought referred to as a "closed system" or as "lacking alternatives", and both of these characterizations imply an external perspective. Instead, the analysis considered the problem in terms of concepts of reality attributed to the Africans, and concluded that within these concepts such a mode of evaluating beliefs would not be rational. Yet I do not claim that this analysis provides understanding of African thought in its own terms; still less do I claim that in thinking through the conclusions of this analysis we are thinking like Africans think. I doubt that either of these claims is true, for a number of reasons.

First, since concepts of reality and intelligibility are imbedded in language and a "form of life", understanding a philosophy in its own terms presupposes intimate knowledge of the language and culture. Hence the analysis offered above is disqualified at the outset, for I know no African language, have never studied first-hand an African society, am in no sense an Africanist and have never even been to Africa. Doubtless an anthropologist with all these qualifications could devise an analysis of our problem superior to the one I have offered. But one wonders if even his analysis would represent understanding of African philosophy in its own terms. Would not the fact that he of necessity learned that philosophy in terms of his own culture's philosophy while the natives learned it from infancy mean that he must understand it differently than they do? And are there any criteria, beyond intuition, by which he could know that he understands it as the natives do? Even if he could gain such understanding, and could know he has it, surely it is incommunicable to anyone who lacks the language and first-hand contact, since when he tries to explain it in another language and according to different concepts of reality it is clearly not being treated in its own terms.

Secondly, if we are to understand another philosophy entirely in its own terms, we should be limited to thinking only about those problems which arise within that philosophy. This would bar us from asking, among many others, the question raised in this paper. If it does not occur to the African to question his general beliefs on the basis of contrary evidence, it is difficult to imagine him wrestling with the problem of why he does not. Clearly the question emerges when African thought is viewed from the perspective of Western thought. We of the West often do question our general beliefs in this manner, and it is precisely the difference we perceive between ourselves and Africans which leads us to ask this question and to be interested in its answer.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, our analysis concerns not all of African thought but a class of it: the class manifested in cases where general beliefs are not questioned on the basis of contrary evidence. But I have just argued that the observation that general beliefs are not questioned in this way stems from Western thought rather than African thought.

Were we viewing African thought in its own terms, we would not be justified in thinking that those cases form a class at all. There would probably be no common characteristic which relates them and sets them off from other aspects of thought; certainly not the characteristic we have recognized. Thus even before it gets started, at the point of framing the problem, the analysis offered here cannot be a study of African thought in its own terms.

Furthermore, a comparative perspective has characterized my entire analysis. I found it easiest to think about why Africans do not evaluate their assumptions on the basis of empirical evidence by thinking first about why Western scientists do. My analysis proceeded from a pair of postulates which I think are attributable to African philosophy, but these postulates were introduced and discussed in contrast with their opposite numbers from the West. The same method of contrasts was followed in the discussion of how experiments could be run and variables controlled in terms of the Western and African postulates. The very concepts "experiment" and "variable", crucial to my analysis, were of course derived from Western rather than African thought. Considering all this, the analysis I have offered must be very remote from understanding African philosophy in its own terms.

The most important reason I have for why my analysis does not reveal African philosophy in its own terms is that the epistemological structure of that analysis itself is Western rather than African. My aim was to explain why Africans do not evaluate their general beliefs according to contrary evidence, and my method of explanation was to posit two postulates of African philosophy and, by reasoning from those postulates, to argue that it is not rational within African philosophy to evaluate general beliefs in this way. This method itself stems from Western philosophy. It is based on the first Western postulate I offered: that empirical events are subject to unseen principles or laws. In this case the "empirical events" are observations that Africans do not evaluate their general beliefs according to contrary evidence. The "unseen principles or laws" are the two postulates I posited for African philosophy. In Western thought the epistemological correlate to the postulate that empirical events are subject to unseen principles or laws is that empirical events are intelligible in terms of those principles or laws. By explaining African thought in terms of my two postulates of African philosophy, my analysis has followed this directive of Western epistemology; it is Western rather than African in structure.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the notion of intelligibility which underlies my analysis is Western and not African. When I conceived of analyzing our problem in terms of the two postulates I have posited for African philosophy, I evaluated those postulates by asking "Do they work?" In carrying out this evaluation I juxtaposed the postulates against various particular cases where Africans do not question their general beliefs in terms of contrary evidence, and determined whether each of those cases could be understood in terms of the postulates. In such an evaluation, each case which can be so understood constitutes "proof" or supporting evidence for the postulates, while cases which could not be understood in terms of the postulates would disprove them and therefore would necessitate revision or dismissal of the postulates. Furthermore, I think a critic would evaluate my analysis and its postulates of African philosophy in precisely the same way. Although not attaining the rigor found in natural science, this mode of evaluation is essentially the experimental method. It stems from the second Western postulate mentioned earlier: that unseen principles or laws act with mechanical regularity. In my analysis the postulates of African philosophy represent "unseen principles or laws" of African thought. It is rational for us to insist that they render every relevant case intelligible only if we first assume that those principles or laws operate with mechanical regularity. Therefore, the way in which both I and a critic judge whether or not my analysis makes the African thought in question intelligible is a Western way. And especially insofar as this way incorporates experimental thinking, it

is not an African way. For it will be recalled that the very problem we set out to explain is why Africans do not evaluate general beliefs on the basis of contrary evidence, i.e., why do Africans not think experimentally? Since both I and a critic understand my analysis and the African thought it treats according to notions of intelligibility quite alien to African thought, it clearly cannot be said that this analysis provides understanding of African thought in its own terms. And I think that this point holds with equal force for any analysis we make of another philosophy.

To sum up, when we seek to understand another system of thought, not one but two philosophies are in play. There is of course native philosophy, since it is the natives who do the thinking we wish to understand. But our own philosophy is intrinsically involved as well, since it is we who do the understanding. Understanding itself varies among cultures. Northrop has devoted a great deal of hard thought to this point (1946, 1960, 1964), and a few differences between Western and African epistemologies (such as the role of experimental thinking in understanding) have been discussed in this paper. (See also Tempels 1945 for a discussion of African epistemology.) When we understand another philosophy, then, we understand it according to what properly constitutes understanding for us. Very likely this would not qualify as understanding from the native point of view, nor would the native's understanding of his own philosophy count as proper understanding for us.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, I think it is extremely unlikely - if not impossible - that we could ever understand another philosophy in its own terms. This would require operating entirely within the metaphysical and epistemological concepts and procedures of that philosophy, while I maintain that another philosophy, like everything else in the universe, can be intelligible to us only in terms of our own metaphysics and epistemology.

[ (Curiously, my reasoning here is very close to that of Winch, and yet we end up at opposite poles. I agree with his point that a people's ideas and behavior are intelligible only in terms of their concepts of reality. But I think that the logic requires another step: since we are people too, another culture's concepts of reality are intelligible to us only in terms of our own concepts of reality.) ]

From this point of view, any analysis we make must have an "as if" quality about it. I do not mean to suggest in this paper, for example, that Africans subscribe either consciously, unconsciously, implicitly or in any other way to the postulates that empirical events are subject to unseen forces, and that these forces do not act with mechanical regularity. I do suggest, however, that certain puzzling aspects of African thought become intelligible to us if we regard the Africans as if they subscribed to these postulates. This is similar to the procedures of natural science. Horton has pointed out that scientific theories are often constructed on the model of familiar phenomena, as for example the planetary theory of the atom (Horton 1964:98, 1967:67-8). Now the thoughtful scientist would not say that atoms really are constructed like the solar system, but only that a number of things about atoms become intelligible to us when we view them as if they were (see Northrop 1946: 194).

This leads to my final point. Winch argues that understanding in social science is different from understanding in natural science, and that therefore social scientists should not attempt to operate like natural scientists (1958:1-2, 127-28, 132-33). His main points seem to be that intelligibility in natural science depends on theory, that natural phenomena can meaningfully be said to be related only in terms of the theory which posits that relationship. One cannot understand the relationship without first understanding the theory. In contrast, social phenomena are intelligible only in terms of the language and culture in which they exist. Their relationships must be understood from within. Therefore one cannot understand social theories or laws without a prior understanding of the social situations to which they apply (Winch 1958: 133-36).

The burden of this paper has been that we cannot understand social situations (other than those in which we participate as thoughtful natives) from within. In my view, we understand them very much as Winch describes understanding in natural science. Winch argues that in natural science understanding of a theory precedes understanding of the phenomena explained by that theory, while social phenomena must be understood in themselves before we can understand theories purporting to explain them. But consider once again the analysis of African thought offered in this paper. We began with a characteristic of African thought which was unintelligible to us. We explained it in terms of a theory: two postulates and certain deductions from them. Contra Winch, I do not think that one need understand the elements of African thought this theory purports to explain before one can understand the theory. (Indeed, I do not think he can understand those elements of thought apart from the theory, or some other theory). To be sure, I devised the theory while puzzling over those aspects of African thought, just as a natural scientist builds theory not in a vacuum but with reference to problems. But I see no reason why someone else of the West could not grasp the postulates I advanced for African thought and my reasoning from them, even if he had never heard of Dinka sacrifice or Zande oracles or the rest of it.

Another facet of Winch's point is that in natural science connections between phenomena are intelligible only in terms of theory, while connections between social phenomena are given in the social situation in which those phenomena exist. But our analysis advanced a connection between the African practice of not questioning general beliefs on the basis of contrary evidence and Zande thought with reference to the normal and proper operation of oracles (see pp. 5-6 above). Again contra Winch, I submit that this connection is not "given" in the social situation. Rather, as Winch says with reference to intelligibility in natural science, "It is only in terms of the theory that one can speak of the events being thus 'connected' ...; the only way to grasp the connection is to learn the theory" (1958: 134, Winch's emphasis).

Finally, I have argued that we do not understand other cultures in their own terms, but according to what for us constitutes proper understanding. This mode of understanding itself is a theory - a theory of knowledge or an epistemology. I do not think our analyses of social phenomena are likely to be intelligible to anyone who does not have a prior familiarity with that epistemology. Within our epistemology, which Northrop (1964) has termed "logical realism", puzzling observable phenomena are made intelligible by viewing them as if they conform to invariable principles or laws which we devise and label "theories". We then judge a theory experimentally: by determining whether other observable phenomena which fall within the domain of the theory also behave as if they conform to the principles or laws it postulates. Although there are clearly differences in rigor of experimentation, I submit that this means of understanding characterizes the social sciences as much as the natural sciences.

F. Allan Hanson.

#### References

1. MacIntyre (1962:61-65) explicitly advocates this procedure.
2. It is probably quite awkward to attribute to African philosophy the negative postulate that the forces of nature do not act with mechanical regularity. The more elegant way would be to say that the postulate that the forces of nature act with mechanical

regularity cannot be attributed to African philosophy. However I beg leave to continue with the former formulation, as this seems to give me something more tangible to work with as I construct my analysis and (in Section II) as I analyse that analysis.

3. It may be protested that I have phrased the question ethnocentrically, and that it could properly be asked within the context of African philosophy in the neutral form "What is the relation between general propositions and particular events?" I agree that the question is better stated in this form, as the analysis above demonstrates. But I maintain the point that we are led to ask even this question because the relation seems different for Africans than it does for us. When a Zande tells us that his foot is cut because he struck it on a rock we do not spin theories of Zande causation. It is only when he begins to speculate over what witchcraft caused his foot to strike the rock that we become interested. I submit that no matter how carefully and neutrally we frame our questions and pursue our investigations, we always conceive of those questions and investigations from the perspective of our own thought. It is difficult to imagine how we could do otherwise.
4. One might argue that since my first African postulate (that empirical events are subject to unseen powers or forces) is similar to the first Western postulate, the method of explanation adopted in my analysis may not be totally alien to African thought. On the basis of what has been said thus far I agree with this, although quite striking divergences will appear in a moment. At any rate, I would maintain that the method of analysis derives from Western rather than African philosophy, and that any similarity to a possible African method of analysis is due to coincidental resemblances between the two philosophies, not to the possibility that I have been able to analyze African thought in its own terms.
5. This is not to say that we cannot understand what for the native constitutes proper understanding. We can and should study native epistemology. But our understanding of native epistemology will not be the same as the native's understanding of it. To be intelligible to us it must be cast in the concepts of Western epistemology, not native epistemology.

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A DEFENCE OF WINCH

"Everything is what it is and not another thing" - (Butler). Understanding, making intelligible, modes of discourse other than those with which one is familiar (and so which do not have to be 'understood' in quite such the same way) must somehow face this fact. This note attempts to show that the course suggested by Hanson is not the best of the alternatives. This does not mean that I altogether support the Winchian procedure, but that

- (i) Hanson's criticisms of Winch do not stand if
- (ii) it is measured against what I take Winch to be really saying.

In other words, although Winch can perhaps be criticised as by, for example, Nielsen (1967) and MacIntyre (Hick 1964), Hanson's attempts are at least partially invalidated by the fact that they are not properly directed against Winch. Further, I attempt to show that the procedure suggested by Hanson would have to face relatively severe criticism if it is to stand in its present form.

Since I am limiting this discussion to Winch and Hanson, I should like to begin by briefly indicating the broader perspective within which this debate should be viewed. To suggest, that is, how Winch can be located within a broader sphere of academic endeavour.

If we say, following Martin, that the notion 'God' may be used in either of two ways (as a proper name referring to a particular being or as a descriptive term) then it can be shown that using it in both ways at once leads to a contradiction. Hughes replies that this argument to establish the contradictory nature of Christian belief is wrong, for God is not thought of as a particular thing 'on the lips of believers.' (Hughes 1962). Which then is the correct course for meta-theology? To characterise religious belief in terms of the patterns of usage and sense within actual religious discourse? Or to apply such organisational devices as proper names and descriptive phrases, when these have been developed to expose the 'logic' of discourse not of 'God' but of particular things? When there is incommensurability between our criteria of characterisation and the criteria, either explicit or not, of judgment within other modes of discourse, then which stands? Or can a meta-level of mutual relevance be established? "Which of these programmes is preferable is perhaps the most important question for meta-theology (even, mutatis mutandis, for all meta-theorising)" (Hughes 1962).

Theologians and Philosophers of Religion have had to grapple with this problem for what is at stake is the nature of belief in God: the role of reason in religious understanding and in understanding religion. But anthropologists, in the main, appear to be more concerned with retaining, in a lazy fashion, the absolute and immutable relevance of those concepts and organisational devices belonging to their tradition. But what is at stake is as important, at least for the atheist, as those issues which Theologians have written so much about (Gill 1966, Alston, Hepburn 1963, Coburn 1963, Macquame 1967, Ramsey 1959). That is, how to best characterise and so understand other modes of discourse. So, in following through the arguments advocated by Winch and Hanson as to how we can best characterise other modes of thought (in such terms, for example, as - incoherent, meaningless, instrumental, expressive, paradoxical, mystical), it should be borne continually in mind that the more sophisticated arguments and organisational devices (such as, non-assertive, intentional, factual, quasi-attitudinal etc.) have been developed by Theologians and Philosophers of Religion. And that such problems as whether religious language is autonomous, unique and so independent of external, logical analysis (McPherson 1955) or whether we can treat religious language as though it were empirical status (Ramsey 59)

are of precisely the same variety that face Anthropologists in many of the more interesting fields of their work.

Malinowski, according to Leach (Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, pp.339 - 334) "sought to evade the difficulties raised by simple trait comparisons by blandly affirming that every social event is uniquely defined by its total context" and that if this were the case "all cross-cultural comparison would be futile". It seems to me that Hanson is attributing a very similar view to Winch (my emphasis): "Winch would have us understand another culture in its own terms" for "a people's thought and behaviour are intelligible only in terms of the concepts of reality held by that people". Such concepts of reality vary from context to context, and since there are no concepts independent of their context, then various forms of life cannot be equated and so mutually understood through the application of such common denominators:

If this were true, that Winch was really saying that each form of life "is a self-contained entity which can be understood only in its own terms" then Hanson would be justified in continuing to assert that Winch is clearly striving "to approach, as closely as possible, the goal of understanding as the native understands". This in turn would involve Winch in the fatal, neo-Malinowskian either/or situation which Hanson suggests is the case for Winch - "we thus have the options of viewing another system of thought in terms of our concepts of reality or in terms of its own concepts of reality," Winch himself supposedly insisting on the latter course. Elsewhere in his article, Hanson makes this either/or all the more so - their thought now comes to be intelligible either "only in terms of their concepts of reality"(1) or intelligible "only in terms of our concepts of reality." (2)

From this basis Hanson proceeds to suggest that although "Adopting Winch's prescription of viewing a philosophy in its own terms", another logical step is necessary - for their concepts of reality are "intelligible to us only in terms of our own concepts of reality". It can be seen that the phrases "in terms of", "in its own terms" and "only" are not used very consistently. At one stage Hanson is suggesting that we (a) follow Winch when this is position (1) and that (b) we add position (2). This is clearly logically impossible; the second step can only hold if it is taken that what we understand is not only in their own terms.

It would seem that the logic of understanding other modes of discourse is indeed wondrous, and that Winch is even more mysterious. Hanson's own position becomes even more confounded when we follow through his adoption of Winch's prescription (an adoption, which, significantly enough, does not involve the word "only"). For, on completion of his analysis, Hanson qualifies this stance - "My analysis ... may appear to qualify as an example of understanding another culture in its own terms" and then, most importantly "that the analysis considered the problem in terms of concepts of reality attributed to the Africans", or again "I do not claim that this analysis provides understanding of African thought in its own terms; still less do I claim that in thinking through the conclusions of this analysis we are thinking like Africans think".

Can Winch be refuted in this way? First though, the reasons Hanson gives for the refutation of Winch which this last quotation implies, might help us to understand his train of thought. He makes the following points

- (a) that understanding a philosophy in its own terms presupposes an intimate knowledge of their language and culture. Since his own analysis was made without such a knowledge, Hanson suggests that their own terms need not be well known.

- b) that even if their terms were relatively well known, they could never be understood as the natives understand them,
- c) and even if such an understanding could be acquired, "when he tries to explain it in another language and according to different concepts of reality it is clearly not being treated in its own terms".
- d) That if another philosophy is to be understood entirely in its own terms, then such useful questions as those posed by Hanson could not be so asked, and finally, perhaps most importantly,
- e) that at least in terms of the analysis followed by Hanson, African philosophy is not revealed in its own terms. Instead, the procedure must be in terms of our criteria: when we understand another philosophy, we understand it according to what properly constitutes understanding for us.

In each of these arguments, Hanson is rejecting that view which holds that other philosophies should be understood in their own terms. Thus he is contradicting his own adoption of Winch and so is not adding another logical step (which we have seen is impossible, but which Hanson claims to do), but is developing an altogether different procedure. I do not disagree that this "in terms of" procedure is not valid, but it is precisely this procedure which Hanson himself makes invalid by quote (1) when he implies that Winch is saying only in terms of their concepts.

What then are we to make of this? First that Winch is apparently both in favour with "in their own terms" and "in terms of our concepts". This seems unlikely, for Winch would be the first to realise that the two phrases have different meanings ("in terms of" suggests that x is always in terms of something else y, and so involves attributing something to x which is other than x). Secondly, that Hanson's own analysis is both in terms of and in their own terms, the former being divided into either in terms of their concepts or in terms of ours. Thirdly, that Winch is characterised as being an arch-fideist - one who sees a series of self-contained entities each of which are virtually unintelligible outside their own terms.

I now want to attempt to show what Winch is really saying, then to return and suggest that Hanson's five specific criticisms are not only based on logical confusions, but also do not affect Winch. In exploring Winch's argument I hope

- (i) to indicate that Winch is not an arch-fideist in stressing the uniqueness of participant understanding (viz "in their own terms")
- (ii) that this follows from Winch's 'theory' of meaning and
- (iii) that Winch, whilst building a "meta-theory" on which to found cross-cultural intelligibility does not
- (iv) fall back into that science-centric view which appears to dominate MacIntyre and, to a lesser extent, Hanson.

In his book (1958), Winch's basic point is that "the notion of a human society involves a scheme of concepts which is logically incompatible with the kind of explanation offered in the natural sciences" (p.73). Why? Because since the social scientist has to "accept" (p.40) that "a man's social relations with his fellows are permeated with his ideas about reality" (p.23), that "the very categories of meaning etc. are logically dependent for their sense on social interactions between men" (p.44), then it follows (p.73) that the

meaning of social behaviour and ideas cannot be settled by experiment. For example, whereas the temperature at which water freezes can be settled experimentally, such a procedure is not possible when what is to be decided is how many grains of wheat have to be added together before one has a heap" (p.73). It follows that insofar as the social scientist is dealing with meanings, it is misleading to follow the scientific procedure of applying theories which themselves establish connections. Instead, since "all behaviour which is meaningful is ipso-facto rule-governed" (p.52) our concepts of social phenomena or acts must be co-extensive with that of meaningful acts and notions. From knowledge of what it is to follow a rule, analysis can proceed by "examining the nature of the rules according to which judgments of identity are made" (p.83), when "such judgments are intelligible only relatively to a given mode of human behaviour governed by its own rules". (3) In this sense sociological judgments cannot be made in abstract, so to be applied as theories, but depend on, are governed by, the rules of what is being studied.

Since I am not here criticising Winch, I take it for granted that although it is perhaps arguable that Winch is incorrect in his apparent rejection of scientific explanation (I use the word 'apparent' for it could be maintained that all that Winch is saying is that such apparent understanding does not involve scientific explanation), his basic emphasis stands as valuable (MacPherson 1955, for example, shows how useful the notion of meaning in terms of context usage is when he explains why certain beliefs which were only a stumbling block to the Jews became foolishness to the Greeks, to end as nonsense for the logical positivists.) In the article Winch wrote in 1964, he develops, without I think, contradicting much of what he had earlier written, this basic framework into a form of more direct relevance to Anthropology. His 'theory' of meaning is now more clearly presented - if we can learn what it is to follow a rule (which in turn entails that we know what it is not to follow the rule viz. that we can predict what is involved by following the rule) and what the point of the rule is (pp.318 and 321) then we can claim to understand the sense of the discourse. Thus the sociologists' judgments should replicate the native criteria of coherence. I say coherence for on p.312 Winch writes that a partial, but important answer to the question - what criteria have we for saying that something makes sense? is that sense depends on there being a state of non-contradiction (viz. that only in such a case can it be said that rules are being followed). Again, especially on this last point, Winch might be partially mistaken, but the general thesis stands. It has much in common with such a Wittgensteinian position as expressed in Wittgenstein's answer (Philosophical Investigations § 381) to the question - 'Why do you call that "red"?' 'I have learnt English'. It also bears similarities to Evans-Pritchard's comment that he could claim to understand other societies when he could predict what would happen in many social situations.

What then Winch is saying is that understanding should not be equated with full participation, thus making cross-cultural intelligibility all but impossible, but that the social scientist understands as an observer. It might therefore be claimed that this means he is thus not 'fully' understanding. And such comments of Winch's as "The Azande hold beliefs that we cannot possibly share" (p.307) or again "We are not seeking a state in which things appear to us just as they do to members of another society, and perhaps such a state is unattainable anyway" (p.317), do seem to support this view. But, as far as I can see, what Winch is maintaining, only means that, to take one example, 'I believe in God' has an infinite variety of meanings to participants, infinite in that their 'private' meanings depend on individual idiosyncracies etc., whereas understanding, as Winch sees it, is to expose the social logic and point-ness of these phrases; to make explicit the 'grammar' of discourse; to equate

meaning with use (1964 p.316); to, as in the case of Philosophers of Religion, "elucidate" (- make explicit that which is implicit) the peculiar natures of those forms of life called religion (1958 p.41).

Admittedly, it could still be maintained that this 'observer' 'theory' of meaning, which allows reporting back, cannot grasp all that the participant shares - so Winch elsewhere writes "if the judgments of identity of the sociologists of religion rest on criteria taken from religion, then his relation to the performers of religious activity cannot be just of the observer to the observed" and "the sociologist of religion must himself have some religious feeling if he is to make sense of the religious movement he is studying". But the underlined words show that he is still talking about the observer who attempts to gain maximal fideism. In any case, it could be held that to grasp the real nature of religious belief is not really part of the sociologist's job.

What follows from this is that Winch cannot be classed, as Nielson 1967 does, as one who claims that in order to fully understand religious discourse one must have a participant's understanding of a belief and acceptance nature. Instead, his 'theory' of meaning escapes such 'participant's relativism' and allows Winch to do what Hanson suggests he does not - fully face the problem of how "to bring another society's conception of intelligibility (to them) into (intelligible!) relation with our own conception of intelligibility (to us)" (1964 p.317). Or "to present an account of them that will somehow satisfy the criteria of intelligibility demanded by the culture to which he and his readers belong". (1964 p.307).

Where Winch is a relativist is that such a sociological interpretation as constituted by the discerned logic and 'point-of-ness' must involve "extending our conception of intelligibility as to make it possible for us to see what intelligibility amounts to in the life of the society we are investigating". We must extend our 'own' way of looking at things - not impose our boundaries, classifications etc. (p.318). It is for this reason that Leach (Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences) argues along Winchian lines to criticise amongst others, Murdoch's Procedure. (See also Winch p.319). Thus, in a style reminiscent of Waisman, Winch is suggesting that the art of discerning maximal commonality (relativism of this style does not stress uniqueness) might well involve a considerable rethinking and realignment of our traditional categories. (See Winch 1964 p.323 and 1958 p.87 for examples of what is involved.) Only in such a way can 'science-centrism' be avoided - MacIntyre, the logical positivists and Lévy-Bruhl can be included amongst those who have imposed alien criteria so obscuring those judgments that the sociologist should be making (1964 p.320, 321).

Returning to Hanson's five criticisms, bearing in mind that understanding for Winch is equated with the exposure of social logic in terms of relevant/relative organisational devices within, or extended from, our culture, then

- (i) Hanson's either/or formulation does not apply
- (ii) criticism (a) is not relevant - for not only does it rest on an 'in its own terms' Winch, but Winch's own analysis was based on a brilliant ethnography of which he himself did not have deep knowledge. And in any case - all would agree, the deeper the knowledge the better.
- (iii) Criticism (b) fares little better - we have seen that Winch says that such an understanding is impossible (for, in the same sense, I can claim that I can never 'know' what any sentence 'means' for anyone else).

- (iv) Criticism (c) is rendered of dubious value in that Winch is suggesting that although it is inevitable that different concepts are involved, they should, if possible, only be different in so far as translation itself is involved. He would not dispute that since we understand, it cannot be in their terms; what matters is degree of fidesm, which his 'theory' of meaning maximises.
- (v) Point (d) is also misleading, for Winch would stress that we, with our perspective (critical in this sense) should ask as many questions as possible in order to discern which of our many organisational devices are most relevant/relative to the alien mode of thought. Thus Winch (1964 p.319) writes that since "the onus is on us to extend our understanding" we must seek a foothold". (p.310. See also p.320).

Finally, criticism (e) - the argument which is the king-pin of Hanson's paper. Hanson suggests that within our dominant epistemology, at least since Comte, "puzzling observable phenomena are made intelligible by viewing them as if they conform to invariable principals or laws which we devise and label 'theories'. So, in order to make intelligible other modes of discourse (and so their 'internal' intelligibility) Hanson says that they must be treated "as if" such principals or laws operate within them. This "as if" application of the theory in Hanson's own analysis is claimed to refute Winch in that relationships are established as in the natural sciences, and that intelligibility only follows on this establishment.

I do not think that because we cannot understand (and report back) merely from within, that (a) when we participate, as field workers, we understand as a scientist does and (b) that organisational devices are applied in such an experimental way. I do not think that Hanson could possibly have done what he claims to have. - How, to meet the strong objections raised by Winch in his "heap" analogy, does Hanson verify and falsify (procedures of the essence of the experimental approach) his theory? If he does not effect these operations, how can it be called a theory? Another objection (perhaps not so strong) - how can it be applied unless something is first understood? MacIntyre 1964 p.118 shows that this argument can be used to refute Lévy-Bruhl and the more extreme logical positivists in their form of understanding religious discourse. Finally, such comments as - we understand other societies "according to what for us constitutes proper understanding" when this mode of understanding is limited to the theories of logical realism, has all the ear-marks of that arbitrariness and a priorism that once characterised such rigid theories of meaning as logical positivism. A narrowness Winch meets with "the notion of intelligibility is systematically ambiguous".

What then has Hanson really done? And how is it that he answers his puzzle successfully one thinks, whilst claiming to follow this course? I suggest that he has appealed to rest his analysis on those universal criteria of intelligibility on which Winch, as we have already indicated, rests his case. To repeat my point that I am not attempting to put Winch into a critical perspective, I do not ask how far Winch's universal criteria avoid category mistakes. Perhaps, in fact, this is Winch's Achilles heel, for although he has attempted to develop a meta-level of organisational devices which are of universal applicability and so only articulate what is already there into observer language, I am not sure whether, for example, the paradox's of mystics (sentences which both have a use and are contradictory) could successfully be handled by Winch. But I do not think that to say - he is treating other modes of discourse in an 'as if' form, is to refute Winch on the grounds that his devices cannot be spoken of, in such terms, by the participants. For the criteria of intelligibility on which he rests his case are implicit in all (?) discourse, viz. they

are necessary conditions for communication, and even though they might be conceptualised differently, they are, in a sense, universally the same.

For example, Levi Strauss (1966 p.10 11) says that we can "most easily begin to understand forms of thought which seem very strange to us" by appealing to the fact that they are all founded on this demand for order". Clarke (Hick p.136) writes "although there is no common expressible formula for intelligibility among all men, there is at least a common basic exigency of rationality in a wider sense". Winch, besides making similar assertions (including quoting R. Rhees to the effect that language games are not self-contained) suggests that universal intelligibility could also be based on such 'limiting concepts' as death, war, sex etc, and on the necessary real/unreal, true/false conditions.

That these criteria are implicit (as if) in alien expression can readily be demonstrated - Fletcher (See Levi Strauss 1966 p.10) "All sacred things must have their place" - native informant. Or can we, for example, imagine myths which do not, in some sense or another, express existential 'limiting' notions? It is interesting in this context to see how close Winch is to such theologians as Bultmann, theologians with a considerable vested interest in retaining 'the meaning' but also in making it intelligible in terms of other rules of intelligibility, other language games .

So, returning to Hanson's analysis, what he has really done is to appeal to such criteria. Thus his answer involves only exposing what is entailed by the rules of African beliefs. It does not seem to me that he has appealed to any of the fullest expressions of logical realism but only to logical realism, in the very weak sense that it can be said to be our particular expression of order (for the Azande can predict [in his sound-sense sphere] and many advanced physical scientists no longer base intelligibility on such prediction). If Hanson had appealed to the more sophisticated criteria of logical realism, he could easily have ended up as MacIntyre does (See Winch 1964 p.320) and as it is, Hanson is led, unnecessarily I feel, into a position where he has to say the Zande thought is not of a pseudo-scientific nature.

Perhaps logical positivism is just around the corner. But as it is, Hanson really only engages in the art of hindsight of relativism (why else would he adopt Father Tempel's formulation). At all costs a priorism's should not be applied to what is essentially an art - an art of argument, not of experiment - "the sociologists who misinterpret alien cultures are like philosophers getting into difficulties over the use of their own concepts (1958 p.114)."

Whether or not, for example, Winch is correct that we cannot criticise alien rules without knowing their meaning (which we presumably have already grasped in order to criticise them) injustice is another matter - a matter which rests on that most elusive of all organisational devices - contradiction. But the notion of the 'science of understanding' appears to rest on the weakest of grounds.

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REPLY TO HEELAS

F. Allan Hanson

First let me counter a few statements in Heelas' critique. He lists as one of my points "that understanding a philosophy in its own terms presupposes an intimate knowledge of their language and culture. Since his own analysis was made without such a knowledge, Hanson suggests that their own terms need not be well known". But this is by no means my suggestion. It is rather that since I lack intimate first-hand acquaintance with African cultures, the analysis I offered cannot be expected to reveal African thought in its own terms. As for his question of how my theory is to be verified or falsified, see the ninth paragraph of Part II and the paper's last paragraph.

Heelas also objects to the logic of the paper, apparently thinking that I do such confusing or contradictory things as both adopting and rejecting Winch, and urging understanding of another philosophy only in its own terms and also only in our terms. I agree that my use of the word "only" was occasionally lax, and I regret any obscurity this may have caused. I suggest, however, that what Heelas takes as logical confusion or contradiction is really the progression of argument. In Part I some advantages which would accrue from understanding another philosophy in its own terms were mentioned, and I offered what might appear to be this kind of analysis of an aspect of African thought. Part II asked whether the analysis of Part I really does provide understanding of African thought in its own terms, and a series of arguments were offered that it does not. Extending this, one conclusion of the paper was that we cannot expect to understand alien modes of thought in their own terms. Therefore the reasoning of the paper ended with the unequivocal assertions that we understand alien modes of thought in our terms, and that Winch (who in the paper was taken as advocating that we understand them in their own terms) is wrong.

Probably Heelas' main objection is that my paper misrepresents the position of Winch. I agree with Heelas on this point, am grateful to him for pointing out my error and glad for this opportunity to recant. I now agree with Heelas that Winch would have us "extend our 'own' way of looking at things", or "develop a meta-level of organisational devices which are of universal applicability" rather than understand native thought in its own terms. More will be said of Winch, as I now understand him, in a moment.

By now the issues at stake in all this must be badly obscured, and certainly I have added to the confusion through my misrepresentation of Winch. I think these issues are important, so in the hope of clarifying them I shall attempt to set out the essence of what I currently understand this whole discussion to be about.

It all begins with a train of thought which I am here abstracting from Nielsen, and which he says derives ultimately from Wittgenstein and/or his disciples (Nielsen 1967:192-193). For present purposes the following points are enough: the meaning of words is found in their usage in a given mode of discourse (religious mode of discourse, scientific mode of discourse, etc.). A mode of discourse contains its own concepts of reality, rationality and intelligibility. One should therefore understand the meaning of a word in terms of the concepts of rationality, reality and intelligibility of the mode of discourse in which that word is used, not according to such concepts drawn from some other mode of discourse. Finally, we must be content simply with identifying the concepts of rationality, reality and intelligibility of a mode of discourse. Since there simply are no other, "higher-order" concepts against which these concepts can be assessed, here the process of understanding in terms of something else must cease.

Now, assume that the words and their meanings which we wish to understand belong to a mode of discourse in a language and culture other than our own. The reasoning summarized above might be taken to direct us to identify the concepts of rationality, reality and intelligibility intrinsic to that alien mode of discourse and to understand the words and meanings in question in terms of those concepts. I take this to mean understanding the alien mode of discourse in its own terms. The argument in Part II of my paper was that we do not and probably cannot achieve that kind of understanding. I still assert that argument.

But that argument does not refute Winch, for he does not ask that we understand an alien mode of discourse in its own terms. Let me try to explain Winch's position as I now understand it. Consider again the last point of the "Wittgensteinian" reasoning summarized above-- that there are no "higher-order" concepts in terms of which the concepts of reality, rationality and intelligibility of a given mode of discourse can be assessed. This may be taken to imply that each mode of discourse is hermetically sealed, that there is no way of relating one mode of discourse to another. Nielsen calls this the "compartmentalization thesis" and he attributes it to Winch (Nielsen 1967:201, 207). Mistakenly, I think, for Winch writes (approvingly):

Mr. Rush Rhees points out that to try to account for the meaningfulness of language solely in terms of isolated language games is to omit the important fact that ways of speaking are not insulated from each other in mutually exclusive systems of rules. What can be said in one context by the use of a certain expression depends for its sense on the uses of that expression in other contexts (different language games) (Winch 1964:321).

So Winch clearly recognises that meanings in different modes of discourse can be related. And this holds even when the modes of discourse stem from different languages and cultures: "Certainly the sort

of understanding we seek requires that we see the Zande category in relation to our own already understood categories" (Winch 1964:319). But this relation is not to be achieved simply by fitting our categories into theirs, nor theirs into ours.

We are not seeking a state in which things will appear to us just as they do to members of S another society, and perhaps such a state is unattainable anyway. But we are seeking a way of looking at things which goes beyond our previous way in that it has in some way taken account of and incorporated the other way that members of S have of looking at things. Seriously to study another way of life is necessarily to extend our own--not simply to bring the other way within the already existing boundaries of our own, because the point about the latter in their present form, is that they ex hypothesi exclude that other (Winch 1964:317-318, see also Winch 1958:89-90).

So I now understand Winch to argue that we should understand another system of thought in terms of a new mode of discourse or "way of looking at things", an extension of ours which in-corporates native concepts of rationality, reality and intelligibility as well as our own.

I am in far greater agreement with this position than with that I thought Winch held when I wrote my paper. However, I think his "new" position (new to me!) requires certain qualifications. It will be seen that these stem from the same line of thinking as I worked out in Part II of my paper.

Presumably the new, extended mode of discourse we construct for understanding another culture, like any mode of discourse, has its own concepts of reality, rationality and intelligibility. Consider just its concept of intelligibility. Is this simply a given? Are there no other concepts of intelligibility against which we can assess it, rendering it impossible for us to criticize the way in which the extended mode of discourse makes another culture intelligible? I do not know how Winch would answer this.<sup>1</sup> But when Winch tries to make Zande magical rites intelligible by relating them to "a sense of the significance of human life" (1964:320-321), or when I try to make them (and certain other aspects of African thought and ~~behaviour~~) intelligible in terms of two metaphysical postulates, we shall probably want to reserve the right of criticism. Therefore, whether or not Winch would think we legitimately can criticize the intelligibility of a mode of discourse advanced for understanding another culture, it seems clear that we constantly do make such criticisms. And I think we make them legitimately.

When we encounter alternative "ways of looking at things" or modes of discourse which provide different ways of making the same elements of language usage and patterned behavior intelligible, we often compare them critically to determine which way of making these things intelligible is preferable. We could not do this if each mode of discourse had its own primitive, unassailable concept of intelligibility, for there would be no external criteria in terms of which to make a judgment of preferability. But there obviously are such external criteria and we do make use of them. One criterion is parsimony: which of the alternative modes of discourse makes the phenomena in question intelligible in the simplest and most economical way? Furthermore, to repeat a point made in my paper, since it is we who make judgments between different ways of looking at the same things, I submit that we do it in terms of our own concepts of what constitutes proper understanding or intelligibility, for example, in terms of a logically realistic epistemology. I do not know how much of this Winch would accept, but I want to be clear on my own position. It is that the concepts of intelligibility imbedded in an extended mode of

discourse which we advance for understanding another culture are not simply "given" and beyond criticism. They are ultimately subject to our own concepts of intelligibility.

I continue to disagree with Winch that understanding in social science is radically different from understanding in natural science. My argument remains as set out in my paper, so here I shall just rephrase one part of it. For Winch, in natural science a theory "establishes" connections between events: "It is only in terms of the theory that one can speak of the events being thus 'connected' (as opposed to a simple spatio-temporal connection); the only way to grasp the connection is to learn the theory" (Winch 1958:134, Winch's emphasis). Social phenomena, on the other hand, are related internally. "Social relations fall into the same logical category as do relations between ideas", and "each system of ideas, its component elements being interrelated internally, has to be understood in and for itself" (Winch 1958:133). Sociological laws may be useful for bringing out features which might otherwise have been overlooked, but the nature of the relations between the phenomena in question is in the phenomena themselves, not in the law or theory (Winch 1958:135-136).

Winch says that we should understand other cultures in terms of an extended mode of discourse or way of looking at things. As I have said above, alternative ways of looking at the same things can be advanced. One of the differences between such alternative ways is that they may lead us to see different kinds of connections between the things in question. (Consider the various ways of looking at totemism, or at the relation between Protestantism and capitalism.) Therefore it seems clear that the connections we see between social phenomena are not necessarily intrinsic to the phenomena themselves. As in natural science, at least some of those connections are functions of our theories or ways of looking at things.

To sum up, I agree with Winch that we should understand another culture in terms of an extended mode of discourse or way of looking at things. But I think that such a mode of discourse is ultimately subject to concepts of intelligibility which derive from our own culture, and that this way of understanding is not fundamentally different from that of natural science.

#### Note

1. One might think he would reply affirmatively, on the basis of passages like "the notion of intelligibility is systematically ambiguous (in Professor Ryle's sense of the phrase) in its use in those contexts: that is, its sense varies systematically according to the particular context in which it is being used" (Winch 1958:18) and "criteria of logic...are only intelligible in the context of ways of living or modes of social life. It follows that one cannot apply criteria of logic to modes of social life as such. For instance, science is one such mode and religion is another; and each has criteria of intelligibility peculiar to itself" (Winch 1958:100). On the other hand, one might imagine him replying negatively if one reasons from a statement already quoted: "what can be said in one context by the use of a certain expression depends for its sense on the use of that expression in other contexts (different language games)" (Winch 1964:321).

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ARE "PRIMITIVES" NECESSARY?

There have been several recent attempts to draw anthropological material into the wider discourse of comparative religion and philosophy, and to formulate general terms of discussion in this field. For example, Burridge (1969) uses "traditional" material to develop a general framework for dealing with millennial movements; Turner (1969) ranges from the Ndembu to St. Francis and Bob Dylan in his exploration of the possibilities of liminality, "communitas" and anti-structure as general terms of comparison; and Leach, in the Introduction to the Cambridge volume of essays on "practical religion" (1968) states explicitly his formula for the integration of tribal material with comparative religion:

"At one time anthropologists studied savages in contrast to civilized men; we now find ourselves studying the thought processes of practical, ordinary people as distinct from those of technical professionals. Among 'civilized' practical people the distinction between primitive and sophisticated largely disappears ... the similarities are more remarkable than the contrasts".

... "The kind of cross-linkage which this collection establishes between so-called 'higher religions' and so-called 'primitive religions' marks a fundamental step forward in the study of comparative religion".

Whether or not one agrees with the particular methods of these authors, most people welcome their efforts to overcome the primitive/modern dichotomy, and to break through the parochial boundaries of anthropology.

It is, therefore, curious that in Mary Douglas' recent and highly influential Purity and Danger (1966), a central chapter is devoted to a re-instatement of the concept "primitive" in relation to systems of thought (Ch. 5). Those who avoid the term are accused of "squeamishness" and secret convictions of superiority. Mary Douglas maintains that our difficulty in understanding, for example, the notion of cosmic pollution is due partly to our "long tradition of playing down the difference between our own point of vantage and that of primitive cultures. The very real differences between 'us' and 'them' are made little of, and even the word 'primitive' is rarely used." She concludes that we "must attempt to phrase an objective, verifiable distinction between the two types of culture, primitive and modern", and proceeds to do so in terms closely related to those of Levy-Bruhl. She sees progress as "differentiation", and in relation to thought, the relevant differentiation is that "based on the Kantian principle that thought can only advance by freeing itself of its own subjective conditions". The primitive world is therefore a pre-Copernican world, a subjective personal world in which the universe is turned in upon man, and which lacks "self-awareness and conscious reaching for objectivity". She asks, "What is the objection to saying that a personal, anthropocentric, undifferentiated world-view characterizes a primitive culture?"

I will not attempt to give a full answer to this ethnocentric question here, except to suggest that it would include a rejection of the holistic concept of "a culture", of the assumption that "modern culture" is not in many ways personal and anthropocentric, and of the assumption that objectivity and differentiation are not found beyond the industrial world; and also a rejection of the accompanying theory that in "primitive cultures" thought is socially determined: "The primitive world-view ... has evolved as an appanage of social institutions ... it is produced indirectly".

What I would like to suggest in this short note is that the rather extreme position held in the fifth chapter of Purity and Danger is an isolated statement, not only in relation to other contemporary writings in social anthropology, but also in relation to the bulk of Mary Douglas' own work. It is not even consistent with the main argument of the book in which it appears, which is after all an attempt to elucidate certain universal principles of symbolic association. In a recent article in New Society (1970a) Dr. Douglas appears to undermine her own defence of the "primitive":

"If it be accepted that tribal societies display as much variety as we in their religious propensities, the really interesting questions arise ... They, too, will have had their protestant ethic, their shakers and quakers and anti-sacerdotal movements. They will also have had their periods of scepticism and secularism. Why not? A modern study of comparative religion must do away equally with the notion of the global primitive and with the notion of the fixity of tribal beliefs."

And in her latest book (1970b), she claims to be concerned with "a formula for classifying relations which can be applied equally to the smallest band of hunters and gatherers as to the most industrialised nations" (p. viii) and compares the philosophical position of Congo pygmies and Dutch bishops (p. 49). She asserts that she has "dared to compare Christian ritual with magic and primitive notions of taboo." In Natural Symbols Mary Douglas is explicitly attempting to formulate a general framework for comparative studies: "If we cannot bring the argument back from pygmy to ourselves, there is little point in starting it at all" (p. 63). We are exhorted to "break through the spiky, verbal hedges that arbitrarily insulate one set of human experience (ours) from another set (theirs)."

How are we to reconcile this position with the earlier arguments of Purity and Danger for the resurrection of "the primitive world"? The social and political context of anthropology is changing; why should it be necessary to reaffirm the colonial boundaries of its thought? Surely the best contemporary writing, including some of Mary Douglas' own, removes the necessity for the word "primitive", which has after all obscured more issues than it has clarified in the history of our subject.

Wendy James.

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THE "FREE COMPETITION OF THOUGHT" - A CRITIQUE

"The truth of philosophy - what philosophy really is - is discovered in politics. Philosophical ideas - views of the world, of society, and of man elaborated by philosophers - have always been related in some way to political issues and goals."<sup>1</sup>

Henri Lefebvre's challenging statement takes us beyond the scope of most of what was written in the previous issue of this magazine. I would agree with much that P. Heelas has to say in his exposition of the problems of "comprehending" societies and "translating" between one culture and another. However, only once does he touch upon what I believe to be a question of prime importance in the social sciences today. He writes:

"At least on certain issues, the anthropologist faces a moral decision in deciding between basic theories of man and society."<sup>2</sup>

And even this sentence is qualified:

"I do not think that such considerations ... bear so heavily today."<sup>3</sup>

Here I am at odds with him, and more so with statements such as the following by Winch and Wittgenstein respectively:

"Philosophy is uncommitted enquiry."  
"Philosophy leaves everything as it was."

Winch takes the extreme position of the uninvolved academic:

"It is not (philosophy's) business to award prizes to science, religion or anything else."<sup>4</sup>

The implications of such a view are that scholarly writing becomes another "game" - a sort of art for art's sake - with no responsibility to the rest of the world, and of no more social relevance than a game of chess. Yet what must be questioned here is whether a subject of such potentially explosive subject-matter as sociology or social anthropology can abstract itself to this degree. Maybe archaeology or botany can be safely left to the eccentric, and perhaps even a professional philosopher can do little harm. But any theory of society, and even the most innocent ethnography, contains elements that may have a practical effect, outside the university walls either in action or in ideology. This effect, of course, may not be intended.

Let us now take a few examples, from different periods, and see how two particular problems apply. I shall label them, for convenience (a) moral and political implications, and (b) distortion processes.

One of the earliest "comparative sociologists", Montesquieu, came up against ethical problems in a striking manner. His main thesis is a sort of ecological determinism.<sup>5</sup> Large countries, hot climates, the existence of navigable rivers, the supply of domestic animals - all these condition what he calls the "esprit general" of a nation (e.g. hot weather makes people either lazy or excitable, and thus unamenable to democracy as a political system.). For a religion or a form of social organisation to take root, a certain "caractere commun" or "principe" is required (e.g. "point de noblesse, point de monarchie")<sup>6</sup>

This principle, once established, rules, and many times, Montesquieu asserts that it is virtually unchangeable: it comes from "la nature des choses":

"Dès que le ton est donné et reçue, c'est lui seul qui gouverne."

And more important, he claims that we must in many cases accept the status quo, even perfect it. For example, the Chinese being by nature a lewd race, there is no point in attempting to introduce Christianity with its emphasis on chastity!

However, his problem is that he cannot maintain this moral relativity. Christianity for him is the true religion. Slavery is repugnant to him, as is the Spanish Inquisition. He begins to retract. His final position is an uneasy compromise. There are some regions, he claims, where true morality (Christian, of course) can combat physically-determined morality (e.g. in Ethiopia). Some races, because of their "lachete", will always remain slaves, but in intermediate cases, perhaps slow moral pressures can change the general spirit. His final position on slavery is summed up in the sentence:

"Il faut borner la servitude à de certains pays."<sup>8</sup>

Thus, even in a man who was continually claiming a disinterested scientific objectivity ("Je n'ai point tiré mes principes de mes préjugés, mais de la nature des choses"<sup>9</sup>), and who himself avoided any political involvement, preferring his library in Bordeaux to a position of power (conferred by his title), we still find the inescapable need to make (political, moral, practical) judgments and recommendations. The same applies to the "philosophes" who followed him - Diderot, Voltaire, d'Holbach, Maupertuis, d'Alembert, Condorcet, etc.

In some ways, luckily for them, most did not live to see the French Revolution, when to write meant to take sides. Many, in fact, were either nobles or comfortably off, and ultimately, one could say, they represented a leisured class playing with philosophy - there is the famous story of Voltaire's dinner party, where he cautioned his companions, "Ssh, not in front of the servants!" Nevertheless, this secret society atmosphere - for philosophers only - had its advantages, in that they had nearly a century in which to experiment fairly harmlessly. Views ranging from those of Montesquieu to those of de Sade found expression, but had little immediate effect on society.

The difference today, though, is that the "servants" do hear what the philosophers say, and so do the politicians. With privileged isolation no longer the case, academics must now rethink their position vis-a-vis the real world. To demonstrate this, let us take our second example from a post-war social anthropologist/psychologist.

I refer here to Dr. O. Mannoni's book, "La Psychologie de la Colonisation" (first published in 1948, translated in 1956,<sup>10</sup> reprinted in 1964). His theory is interesting and much of what he says about colonials rings true. Yet I would condemn the book as ethnocentric, (virtually racist), in tone, and, worse, an excellent weapon for interested parties in Madagascar. To take the first criticism first (this is my (a) moral and political implications from p.1.):

The assumption underlying the whole theory is that western man has escaped from the "pre-logical" or "primitive" (the fact that he puts these terms between quotation-marks does not remove the value-judgement) and has entered the "maturity" of the "scientific spirit". Phrases like "heroic attitude", "experimental spirit", "more advanced", "civilised", etc., abound, contrasted with "regressive", "infantile", "primitive", "fetishism", and so on. In a nutshell:

"The characteristics of the scientific approach to reality are in fact the same as those of democratic society and of the highly-developed personality."<sup>11</sup>

His main regret is that colonials "revert" to a primitive father-child relationship once in contact with an "un-scientific" people

(here the Malagasies). He has the vague, idealistic hope that the colonials, and ultimately the Malagasies, will be weaned to his sort of liberal wisdom. Yet in 1964 he confesses:

"The administrators, military officers and even missionaries who dealt with practical problems of colonial life, adopted the book in order to exploit it, and extracted from it methods and gimmicks to use in the pursuit of their own ends - a development I might have forestalled had I expected it."<sup>12</sup>

I doubt it. The whole tenor of this book is ready-made for racist propaganda. What hypocrisy to write, for example:

"It would perhaps be better for the authorities to remain in ignorance and for disinterested research to continue",<sup>13</sup> (c.f. Voltaire?)

and then continue to endorse new editions of this big-selling book! It seems to me that Mannoni simply wishes to cover himself against legitimate criticism. For instance, and I noticed this only by chance - the Introduction (p.34, 1964) emphasises that this is only a personal document:

"I became preoccupied with my search for an understanding of my own self ... my study of social relationships coincided with my research into my own personal problems",

and yet, 29 pages earlier, in a small footnote, we find:

"The end of the Introduction from the bottom of page 33 to the bottom of page 34 has been rewritten for the English edition."

We can relate this to an admission in the 1956 preface:

"I rashly employed certain theoretical concepts which needed more careful handling than I realized at the time. I must frankly admit that I am now disturbed by the obvious weaknesses of the book in this respect .... On the whole, what I regret is not so much these weaknesses in my book as the fact that I have not produced a much more personal study."

Clearly, then, he has felt guilty about the impact of his book, yet has not the courage to withdraw his main thesis. Instead he tries weakly to proclaim that at the time he was indulging mainly in self-examination. This is nonsense. The book itself is dogmatically and "objectively" written, as if these psychological conditions are given reality. This then is another very good example of moral and political issue clouding. In his chapter headed "What can be done?" he sounds liberal, but is virtually saying that the French have a duty to remain. This is clear from sentences like:

"If the once-subject peoples were to revert to political systems of which we disapproved, we should feel uncomfortably responsible for letting this regression take place."<sup>14</sup>

At the risk of a cliché, I would compare this to American rationalisations for remaining in Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and so on. Yet it follows closely upon an insistence that "all peoples, even the most ignorant and backward, are capable of governing themselves, provided of course, that they are left to choose their own methods."

Mannoni cannot have it all ways. He has an empirically-based theory which he later claims is a "personal" document, and a justification of French presence mixed with a wish to see enlightened self-government. "The Communists," he laments, "denounced the book as an obfuscation". And, in this case, they are absolutely right!

My third example is the most modern. In two leading articles in February this year, the Sunday Times examined the views of Professor Jensen of the University of California. These are based upon an investigation of the relative I.Q.s of racial groups within the United States, and the implications are, very strongly, that Negroes, Indians and Puerto Ricans have an inherited intelligence lower than that of the average white child. To cover himself (I quote the Sunday Times writer, Bryan Silcock):

"Jensen acknowledged that the evidence upon which he was working was not strong. Nevertheless, he did say that the possibility that the intelligence gap derived from inheritance was 'worthy of further consideration'."

Silcock continues:

"And within days of publication, his paper was being cited in law-courts by white Southerners battling against racial integration of the schools."

I hope no further comment is required here. I do not see how Jensen can possibly escape the charge of playing his part in the segregationist cause.

Another example from America is a book called "Race and Reason" published by the "Public Affairs Press", Washington D.C. (1961), endorsed by two leading Senators and a host of academics. It quite openly argues that the Negro is "uncivilisable", and, unlike Jensen, is absolutely sure of its "evidence". The preface proudly proclaims:

"There is logic and common-sense in these pages: there is also inescapable scientific validity."

My reason for quoting this is not to suggest that such openly expressed poison is widespread, but that the idea is by no means dead that the social sciences can produce incontrovertible empirically-based "scientific" theories on the old model of the natural sciences. The high prestige of academic theories outside Universities has, I think, much to do with this belief, still alive within them. Although Kuhn, Heisenberg, and others have challenged even chemistry and physics as purely empirical sciences, in the sense of elucidations of a given reality ("... When examining normal science, ... we shall want finally to describe that research as a strenuous and devoted attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by professional education."<sup>15</sup>), in the social sciences the tradition of Comte, Radcliffe-Brown, Merton, Parsons, etc., remains difficult to combat. B. V. Street (last issue) discussed the way in which academic theories filter (via popular works, fiction, newspapers, etc.) into the general consciousness. (He is interested chiefly in the "scientific" myth behind racial stereotypes in the nineteenth century). It is also true that the politicians take note of the reports prepared by scholars, particularly if accompanied by impressive statistics substantiating them. An obvious example of this is the present concern with "immigrant birth-rates". What is forgotten is that our books and essays are no more than inspired guesses - "models" in the current terminology - and no matter whether the original writer pays lip-service to this (c.f. Mannoni's "personal" examination, Jensen's "weak evidence") or whether he (like Montesquieu and Putnam) himself claims scientific validity for his ideas, in the present climate of statistics-worship the chances of more weight being put upon a work than it deserves are very great.

I use, then, Mannoni's chapter heading: What can be done? First of all, I believe we can do something about my problem (a) the moral and political implications of a theory. The more individual writers question all assumptions behind their own works, the better. Books on "social cohesion", "social change", "culture contact", might include a clear statement of whether or not the "cohesion" entails suffering, whether the author approves of the direction the change is taking, whether "contact" is a euphemism, and so on. I am in favour of some form of self analysis by the writer, and possibly of more personal anecdotes in ethnographies. (If, for instance, the anthropologist intervened in native politics at all, he should tell us.) Again, other writers should not hesitate to apply "sociology of knowledge" techniques when criticising works. That is to say, to put the use of certain types of model and the employment of key words into a historical framework, to see to which main theory it explicitly or implicitly subscribes, and to bring out the social, ideological, and political implications of that theory. Marxists, of course, have been doing this for a long time, although too often spoiling their credibility by overgeneralisation and crude jargon. Liberal academics have been late to see the importance of such study, and even then, tend to miss the political point. In 1929, Clarence Irving Lewis took at least some steps in this direction.

"I suppose it must be admitted, in the last analysis, that there can be no more fundamental ground than the pragmatic for a truth of any sort ..."<sup>16</sup>

... "Any set of basic concepts has vested interests in the whole body of truth expressed in terms of them, and the social practices based on them. The advantage of any change must be considerable and fairly clear to overcome human inertia and the prestige of old habits of thought."<sup>17</sup>

However, he, like Kuhn<sup>18</sup> tends to think more in terms of academic pragmatism in vacuo and the needs of "knowledge", rather than considering the social and political theories and interests involved. Although no doubt some scholars are relatively unaffected by events outside the university, it is virtually impossible to avoid the influence of dominant "schools", which, particularly in social studies, can hardly help being concerned with what are generally seen as the main problems of the time. Sociology delves into "juvenile delinquency" (already a passé term - subsumed by "deviance" or "social conflict"), "race relations" ("ethnicity?"), "education", "business management" and so on - presented, as it were, by society (or, maybe, by a certain group ideology within that society) with an object of study, which it then takes as real. The same applies, perhaps less obviously, to anthropology, where "kinship", "religion", and studies in "equilibrium" have given way to "social change", "plural societies", "classification", and, of course, moves towards other disciplines. The origins of the first two concerns are fairly clear, and the last reflects the idea (fact?) that "primitive" societies are on the way out. "Classification" (Douglas, Needham, Beattie, Leach, etc.) is more difficult to explain, but no doubt an historical explanation could be made for the present interest in this field.<sup>19</sup>

If it then be convincingly suggested to e.g. an "empiricist" collecting "facts" on "ethnicity" that the reality he is dealing with has been defined for him by a certain, temporarily powerful ideology, one can hope at least for a re-questioning of his assumptions. This may be the only effective way to attack certain American political scientists,<sup>20</sup> who have persuasive defenses if questioned only within their own terms. James E. Hansen, an American dialectician, puts this succinctly:

"Inquiry is value-laden, not only because it is one of many possible inquiries into 'data', but also because it is grounded in specific historically-generated needs ... Since all science utilises caeteris paribus experimentation, and since the

particular experimentation conducted depends upon the value-orientation of the experimenter, what was once 'objective' may no longer be taken as such (e.g. witches, phlogiston, aether)...History determines facts, not facts history."<sup>21</sup>

Does not this make nonsense of the unrealisable ideal which Popper, in a highly revealing phrase, calls the "free competition of thought"?<sup>22</sup> Surely the notion of free individuals competing in a free market of ideas involves the same sort of errors and omissions as those made by the proponents of the pure laissez-faire capitalism model!

So much for the theoretical implications of individual works. Finally, however, we have to consider how to deal with (b), what I called "distortion processes". It is arguable how much effect academics have upon, for example, the formation of official ideologies or the formulation of policy, but we must still face the question: how is it possible to avoid use being made of one's work which utterly distorts its original purpose? Mannoni could deplore "a development I could have forestalled had I expected it", but he does not tell us how. Jensen finds himself quoted by segregationists. The original proponents of the American Dream, the theoreticians who influenced Robespierre, the lovers of the German State, from Hegel to Spengler, - most would have been horrified at the reality into which their ideas were incorporated. There are no doubt western writers on Nigeria who have witnessed the same sort of process. Or, on a different tack, what of the detailed ethnography which provides excellent information in, say, a subsequent war or an eager business enterprise? Several analyses of "primitive economy", for example, have indicated precisely where an entrepreneur could make a fortune (e.g. Barth on the Darfur, Epstein on the Tolai of New Britain).<sup>23</sup> Anthropological knowledge can be useful, too, for projects such as "settling" nomads or "assimilating" rebellious groups.

I am not arguing the paranoid case for ceasing to write anything in case "they" get hold of it! (although in sciences like genetics, this is indeed the conclusion that one or two men have been forced into)<sup>24</sup>. In fact, anthropology may one day be in the reverse position, of being denied access to information. Several ex-colonial countries, with a perfectly justified dislike for white anthropologists, have refused entry visas to ethnographers - indicating that I am not alone in my fears. What steps can we then take to avoid such a situation? First, we can encourage a healthy mistrust of words like "pacification", "integration", "assimilation", "aid", and "development" in general, as well as a reluctance to work as an anthropologist for any government, without very careful thought. Secondly, there might be more study devoted to understanding the main ways in which academic pronouncements influence ideas and events. The development of ideologies in general, is an important subject which few but Marxists<sup>25</sup> have tackled (a notable exception being Leach's Political Systems of Highland Burma).

However, in the end I am sure that prediction could not be accurate beyond very general level. Ultimately I do not think there is much one can do about misuse, except to denounce it as such. In fact, if anthropologists fail to make their motives and allegiances (or lack of allegiances) clear, it may not be long before so many countries will be closed to them that they will have to either join the professional sociologists or return to the armchair and rework Malinowski.

E. M. W. Maguire.

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THE GENESIS OF SCIENTIFIC RACISM, INCLUDING  
SOME THOUGHTS ON SCHOLARLY WORKS PRODUCED IN  
THE YEARS 1774-1775

I

Many modern scholars believe that scientific racism is a discrete historical phenomenon, that its birth occurred somewhere around the last part of the eighteenth century, and that it became an important force in the middle of the nineteenth century (See Banton, 1967, p. 12; Poliakov, 1967, pp. 223-7; and Van den Berghe, 1967, pp. 11-18). Margaret Hodgen has also remarked (1964, p. 213) that racialism was virtually non-existent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

'In setting out upon an analysis of the problem of cultural diversity, as its solution was undertaken by sixteenth and seventeenth century inquiry, it should be said at once that "cultural" divisions were never associated with "racial" divisions. Any attempt to distinguish the "races" of mankind on either anatomical, physiological, or cultural grounds was relatively negligible. Racialism in the familiar nineteenth and twentieth century sense of the term was all but non-existent.'

But what was 'scientific racism?' Is there anything about scientific racism that makes it worthy of study for the sociologist and social historian?

I do not propose, myself, to give any definition of scientific racism, because I have not, as yet, evolved or produced a perfect one. I should rather beg the reader to ponder upon the following definition by Van den Berghe (1967, p. 11):

'Racism is any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between human groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or the absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinctions between groups socially defined as races.'

For my part, I would delete from this definition the word 'invidious' and insert at the end 'or varieties,' so that the last part of the definition would read:

'... hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of distinctions between groups socially defined as races or varieties.'

The sociologist and the social historian must ask themselves whether scientific racism has a distinctive identity, in other words, whether or not it is analytically separable from notions such as 'class', 'prejudice', or 'ethnocentrism'. Secondly, one must ask whether the concept of scientific racism is pertinent to the study of the history of the social sciences and the politics of the last two centuries. It is useful to consider certain approaches that have been made to the problem of scientific racism. Regretfully, one has to state that most of the approaches which I now list are simplistic, although none, bar Benedict's, is absolutely incorrect.

(1) Racism equals ethnocentrism. The supporters of this argument clearly do not see scientific racism as a discrete social phenomenon that has appeared during the last 200 years.

"Racism," asserts Dr. Benedict, "is essentially a pretentious way of saying that 'I' belong to the Best People. The formula 'I belong to the Elect' has a far longer history than modern racism. These are fighting words among the simplest naked savages" (Cox, 1948, p. 478, quoting Benedict, Race Science and Politics, 1943, pp. 154-155).

As Cox correctly remarks, 'Ethnocentrism is a social constant in group association, hence it cannot explain variations in collective behavior' (ibid.). Benedict's error proceeds from her failure to develop a sociological approach. Identifying racism with ethnocentrism, she defines both as a dogma used by one ethnic group to justify persecution of another. She is engaged in a psychological investigation of beliefs.

(2) The Idealist approach. The historian of ideas is often more interested in constants which survive changes in the social climate than in the mere ephemera that are the social facts of any society at a fixed point in history. Arthur Lovejoy (1960) and J. C. Greene (1959) are both more interested in the intellectual pedigree of racist ideas than in their social background. The social scientist is also interested in the intellectual pedigree, but he is hardly willing to ignore the social background.

(3) The Vulgar Marxist approach. This approach can take two forms (See Van den Berghe, 1967, p. 17). First of all, racism is an epi-phenomenon of capitalism, an attempt to justify colonialist exploitation. Secondly, racism is a device employed by the ruling class to apply in their treatment of the working classes the axiom 'divide et impera'. Both of these statements are correct. They both describe social facts, but neither is a full explanation. One must explain why scientific racism did not appear with the first discovery and exploitation of non-European races. It is true that before the appearance of scientific racism the myth of Ham's curse was occasionally used as a justification of racial exploitation, but one must add a cautionary note:

'When the story of Ham's curse did become relatively common in the seventeenth century, it was utilized almost entirely as an explanation of color, rather than as justification for Negro slavery, and as such it was probably denied more often than affirmed' (Jordan, 1968, pp. 18-19).

For a hundred years colonialist debasement and exploitation existed without a suitable ideology. Even when an ideology appeared, it took eighty years before it was popularly utilized. I shall suggest later that the solutions to this problem may lie in the scientific debates and social conflicts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

(4) The Romanticist approach. Theophile Simar (author of Etude Critique sur la formation de la doctrine des races, Brussels 1922), viewed racism as a product of romanticism. Romanticism endowed nations and groups with a personality and a will. Thus far, I think Simar is not incorrect. However, Simar pays much attention to the struggle between the bourgeoisie and aristocracy in sixteenth to nineteenth century France in the first one hundred pages of his study. Out of this struggle, according to Simar, came racism from romanticism.

In fact, racist ideas were formulated elsewhere earlier. A

product of colonial settlement, exploration, and exploitation, racism was a model which proved eminently adaptable to the dynamics of class warfare in Europe.

A valid account of scientific racism must relate both to social background and to scientific ideas, however difficult the task. Winthrop Jordan's book, White over Black (1968), a remarkable scholarly achievement, is the best attempt so far.

Scientific racism was a product of the Enlightenment era. Its origins lie in that series of myths which were developed by the natural philosophers of the eighteenth century to explain man's place in Nature. Certain of those myths were employed by those who sought to defend the system of slavery, which was based in mercantile capitalism, against the fury of the nascent abolitionist movement. In its early years, scientific racism was a defensive ideology, but myths, as social facts, have a power of their own, and in the latter years of the nineteenth century, racial determinism assumed an aggressive note.

## II

Before commencing my main account of racism in the years 1774-75, I must add a few words concerning certain scientific notions. This brief account is little more than a glossary. Detailed accounts of these ideas are given by Greene and Lovejoy. The reader is also referred to Slotkin's sourcebook, Readings in Early Anthropology (1965).

The discoveries of Gallileo, Copernicus, and Newton, and the philosophy of Descartes, disturbed the peaceful world of Providence. 'Give me extension and movement and I will remake the world,' said Descartes, the first prophet of mechanistic Deism. John Ray, in his Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation, 1701, made a valiant attempt to defend the doctrine of final causes. The universe was seen as a perfect, unchanging, whole. In it existed every conceivable variety of thing. It was a plenum formarum, and nothing in its perfection was without purpose; even the rocks and stones had their uses. In the twelfth century Peter Abelard advanced the doctrine that Lovejoy calls 'the doctrine of sufficient reason', and that doctrine remained in currency for five hundred years. The doctrine was that everything was generated by some necessary cause 'for nothing comes into being except there be some due cause and reason antecedent to it' (Abelard). Such perfection was the expression of the goodness of the Creator. One consequence of these doctrines was that species were seen to be eternal. To talk of fresh creation or of extension would be to imply inadequacy in the Creator's plans.

This complex of ideas was attacked and eroded by mechanism as the eighteenth century progressed. Later on, the new geology, paleontology, and, finally, Darwinism, destroyed teleology, but it was a protracted battle, and Providence took long to surrender (See Gillispie, 1951). The mechanists saw God as somewhat distant; they believed in God, if at all, as a first cause, rather than in the doctrine of final causes. Their leaders included the 'wicked' Baron d'Holbach and the cowardly and charming Buffon, who questioned revelation but recanted at double speed when ordered so to do by the Sorbonne (1751).

Throughout the eighteenth century mechanism and final cause were engaged in a perpetual tug of war. Many eighteenth century works are inconsistent in their adherence to either. Furthermore, in view of the social pressures of the time, whether of Protestant conformism or of the Holy Inquisition and its zealous allies, the modern reader has often to read between the lines.

One idea often associated with the ideas of sufficient reason and plenitude was the doctrine which is commonly known as the doctrine of the Great Chain of Being. At the turn of the eighteenth century it was embellished by Leibniz and Spinoza. Later in the century it was popularised by Pope in his Essay on Man (1732-1734) and by Charles Bonnet in his Contemplation de la Nature (1763 and 1769). A continuous unbroken

chain stretched from the smallest inanimate object, through all forms of life, leading to man, culminating in the angels at the peak of creation. There were no gaps in the chain, because the creator had produced everything that could be produced. The chain was hierarchical, stretching from highest to lowest. The doctrine of La Grande Echelle des Etres flourished during the last quarter of the eighteenth century and declined during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, so soon after it reached its peak.

The notion of the Great Chain of Being was not consistent with the notion of species, which was being developed by Linnaeus and the systematizers of the eighteenth century. Linnaeus viewed species as determinate bodies of morphologically similar beings. The classification of species was seen as a natural one, although orders and genres were artificial concepts. Buffon (See Odom, 1967, pp. 10-11) found the idea of determinate natural species inconsistent with the idea of continuity in the Great Chain of Being.

'Nature proceeds by unknown gradations, and consequently does not yield totally to divisions:' 'Species fade into species and often genus into genus by imperceptible nuances.'

Later Buffon modified his position and adopted his own notion of species, which was based on the criterion of mutual fertility. If two varieties of animal or plant produce fertile hybrids, they were of the same species. Species were held to be distinct from varieties, which were the subdivisions of species, often permanently distinct morphologically in minor details, but interfertile. Varieties were generally regarded as degenerations from the species prototype.

The notion of degeneration is crucial to the understanding of eighteenth century taxonomy. Through some comprehension of the taxonomy, one becomes aware that accounts of degeneration into varieties are not accounts of evolution of species, for such an error has frequently been made.

### III

#### MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE

In 1735 Linnaeus, in the first edition of his *Systema Naturae*, classed man as part of the Class Quadrupedia. Man was divided into four varieties according to colour: European, American, Asiatic, and African. Linnaeus's work was significant in that the author not only linked man to the animal creation but assigned him to a part of it. In Linnaeus's tenth edition, 1758, his pupil, Hoppius, is believed to have added the much-famed satyrs and Troglodytes, including *Homo Sylvestris orang-utang*. The ignorance of Europe's best informed naturalist indicates both the curiosity of the time and the gaps in human knowledge. Reports from the coasts of Africa by voyagers and slave traders, and also from the East Indies, and the opening of America, had led to some increase in knowledge, in errors, and in speculations concerning the varieties of mankind and of human cultures. Diverse reports had arrived concerning strange, man-like creatures. Some of these creatures we can, with hindsight, identify as chimpanzees, orang-utangs, and gorillas, but between 1760 and 1780, the evidence was sparse, the classifications unclear. In pictures and illustrations that were widely circulated, the manlike qualities of the anthropoid apes were greatly exaggerated (See Greene, 1959, p. 188). One can, therefore, forgive Lord Monboddo for his theory of the humanity of the orang-utang (Monboddo, 1774).

Round these accounts and classifications were built new theories concerning man's natural role. They were constricted, in the main, by the need to conform to the Biblical account. Man was of one species and of one origin. It was heresy to contradict the theory of monogenesis. It was possible to say that mankind had degenerated into

several varieties; it was not permissible to say that he was originally created as several distinct species. Just a few sceptics, fanatics, and eccentrics dared to counter orthodoxy and advance a polygenist argument.

The monogenist theory of the eighteenth century was dominated by environmentalism. This is well known to many as the doctrine advanced in Montesquieu's L'Esprit des Loix. The physical and moral constitution of the human species was affected by such factors as climate, ecology, diet, and mode of life. The role of climate was of peculiar importance. Climate accounted for the colour of the skin: the heat of the sun acted upon the skin, and caused it to darken. (Various mechanisms were suggested as the reason for the darkening of the skin, including the secretion of excess bile.) Climate also affected stature. Diet and mode of life had a subsidiary effect upon colour and physique. The degenerations from the original type which were induced by the environment were gradual. Changes took place over several generations, and the environmentalists were always hard put to explain how they could have taken place in the short span of years allowed by Biblical texts.

The multi-talented George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, Superintendent of the Jardin du Roi, was a leading environmentalist and monogenist. He believed that dark colour in the skin was produced both by extreme cold and by extreme heat. However produced, it was a misfortune (See Buffon, 1791, pp. 203-207). This view of Buffon's was later (1787-1810) developed by Samuel Stanhope Smith, although like most environmentalists, Buffon did not believe that those who possessed 'inferior' cultures were eternally damned to servitude and savagery. Buffon was a propagator of an aesthetic racism, and used the climate theory to support his aesthetic:

'The most temperate climate lies between the 40th and 50th degree of latitude, and it produces the most handsome and beautiful men. It is from this climate that the genuine colour of mankind, and of the various degrees of beauty, ought to be derived. The two extremes are equally remote from truth and from beauty. The civilized countries, situated under this zone, are Georgia, Circassia, the Ukraine, Turkey in Europe, Hungary, the South of Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, and the northern part of Spain. The natives of these territories are the most handsome and most beautiful people in the world' (Buffon, 1791, pp. 203-207).

In 1774 John Hunter, (who was no relation of a famous surgeon of the period who was also called John Hunter), produced his Dissertatio Inauguralis. He defines species according to the fertility criterion:

'A class of animals of which the members procreate with each other and the offspring of which also procreate other animals, which are either like their class or afterwards become so.'

In the main, Hunter's dissertation is an orthodox and uninspired tract full of the clichés of the climate theory. At the end of his treatise, however, he appends some interesting remarks (pp. 389-394) concerning 'the varieties of mind'. He noted (p. 389) that 'the mental varieties seem equal to and sometimes greater than the bodily varieties of man'. Climate and custom interacting affected the mental faculties, just as they affected the physical faculties. At one point, Hunter nearly anticipates the cultural relativist position:

'Travellers have exaggerated the mental varieties far beyond the truth, who have denied good qualities to the inhabitants of other countries, because their

mode of life, manner, and customs have been excessively different from their own. They have never considered, that when the Tartar tames his horse, or the Indian erects his wigwam, he exhibits the same ingenuity which an European general does in manoeuvring his army or Inigo Jones in building a palace'.

In 1775, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach published the first edition of De Generis Humani Varietate. This work was a brilliant defence of the monogenist position. The human species had degenerated into disparate varieties, of which he lists four:

- (1) European and Asian west of Ganges
- (2) Asian east of Ganges and Australian
- (3) African
- (4) American, apart from the far north.

In his second edition (1781) Blumenbach was to distinguish between the Malayan and Mongolian, accordingly replacing his fourfold with a fivefold classification. In this edition, also, he introduced a new classificatory term, Caucasian. Blumenbach, who classified mankind in an order of its own, bimana, was no believer in the Great Chain of Being. Man, devoid of instincts, was protected by the 'developing germ' of reason, which was dependant upon society and education. He was distinguished further by his unique brain and his erect position. Even the fiercest nations of mankind possessed the power of speech. The hymen and menstrual flux were also possibly unique (See Blumenbach, 1775, pp. 82-90). Unlike many of his contemporaries, Blumenbach exhibited a healthy scepticism with regard to wild children, Albinos, and men with tails (See Blumenbach, 1775, pp. 129-145).

In the year 1774, which saw the publication of Hunter's Dissertatio Inauguralis and the preparation of Blumenbach's thesis, which was completed the next year, two major polygenist works appeared, the one by Henry Home, Lord Kames, a Scottish Judge of Sessions, the other by Edward Long, a former Jamaican judge and member of the Jamaican plantocracy.

The two works were alike insofar as they criticised certain flaws in the environmentalist case. In other respects they were very different. Long's work anticipated the racial determinism of the mid-nineteenth century. He seemed to care little for the Bible. Per contra, Kames's work was guilty, self-conscious heresy. It looked back to de La Peyrere's Praeadamitae (1655), not forward to Knox, Nott, and Hunt. In his Sketches of the History of Man (1774, Vol. 1, pp. 38-43), Kames notes that all evidence seems to indicate that the Creator had originally produced many pairs of the human race, that is to say, separate human species. But Moses said otherwise. 'Though we cannot doubt of the authority of Moses, yet his account of the creation of man is not a little puzzling, as it seems to contradict every one of the facts mentioned above'. An inspiration offered itself: mankind, formerly of one species, had been diversified by some great catastrophe, imposed by the Creator as punishment. This catastrophe was the fall of the tower of Babel:

'Thus, had not men wildly attempted to build a tower whose top might reach to heaven, all men would not only have spoken the same language, but would have made the same progress toward maturity of knowledge and civilization. That deplorable event reversed all nature: by scattering men over the face of all the earth, it deprived them of society, and rendered them savages. From that state of degeneracy, they have been emerging gradually. Some nations, stimulated by their own nature, or by their climate, have made a rapid progress; some have proceeded more slowly, and some continue savages ...' (Ibid.)

In a somewhat more rational vein, Kames (Vol. I, p. 5) criticized Buffon's use of the fertility criterion in the definition of species. Could Buffon explain the production of fertile hybrids by sheep and goats? Elsewhere (pp. 10-14) he criticizes environmentalist theory, and its main proponent in natural philosophy, Buffon. 'There have been four complete generations of Negroes in Pennsylvania without any visible change of colour...'

'If the European complexion be proof against a hot climate for a thousand years, I pronounce that it will never yield to climate. In the suburbs of Cochin, a town in Malabar, there is a colony of industrious Jews of the same complexion as they have in Europe. They pretend that they were established there during the atrocity of Babylon: it is unquestionable that they have been many ages in that country'. (*Ibid.*, p. 13).

Although Kames was impelled by his consideration of the physical character of the Negro to consider him a separate species, he viewed the Negro's 'inferiority of understanding' as a product of environmental deprivation:

'A man never ripens in judgment nor in prudence but by exercising these powers. At home the negroes have little occasion to exercise either of them: they live upon fruits and roots, which grow without culture; they need little clothing; and they erect houses without trouble or art. Abroad, they are miserable slaves, having no encouragement to think or act'. (*Ibid.*, pp. 31-32).

Kames's essentially benign polygenesis contrasts sharply with the malign utterances of Jamaica's historian, Edward Long.

#### MERCANTILE CAPITALISM, SLAVERY, AND RACISM: THE WORK OF EDWARD LONG

In retrospect it seems inevitable and tidy that Edward Long's History of Jamaica, a work that in so many ways foreshadowed and so greatly influenced later scientific racism, should have appeared when it did (1774) and from so appropriate a source. Edward Long had recently come to England from Jamaica, where he had been a planter and a judge. His family were prominent citizens of the island:

'Also connected with Jamaica were the Longs. Charles Long, at his death, left property in Suffolk, a house in Bloomsbury, London, and total property in Jamaica comprising 14,000 acres. He enjoyed a very great income, by far the largest of any Jamaican proprietor of that period, and was accordingly entitled to live in splendor. His grandson, a Jamaican planter, wrote a well-known history of the island'. (Williams, 1944, p. 89).

Jamaica, the great sugar island was the hub of the system of mercantile capitalism which Britain dominated through her naval strength and control of the Asiento. The slave trade made Britain 'great' and the port of Liverpool burgeoned from its profits (See Williams, 1944, pp. 29-106). In the year 1771, 190 British ships transported 47,000 slaves. Furthermore, 'The Importation into Jamaica from 1700 to 1786 was 610,000, and it has been estimated that the total import of slaves into all the British colonies between 1680 and 1786 was over two million'. (*Ibid.*, p. 33).

I do not propose to enter into the controversy concerning the merits or evils of Anglo-American as compared with Latin American slavery (summarized in Foner and Genovese, 1969). I think it would

be generally agreed that Jamaica was one of the most vicious, if not the most vicious, of the slave-owning colonies, having an advanced plantation system, controlled by a powerful planter interest, many of whom lived as rich, ostentatious absentees in Britain.

At the time Long wrote his history, the island was still most prosperous, but storm clouds were looming. The Liverpool traders were beginning to lose money (Williams, 1944, p. 38). The abolitionists under Granville Sharp were launching their first major attack. Two years earlier, they had obtained a decision from Lord Mansfield, in the course of which he had remarked that the case, which involved one James Somerset, a slave who was about to be returned by his owner to Jamaica, was one which was not 'allowed or approved by the Law of England.' The decision in no way affected the slave trade, but it greatly perturbed Long (See Long, 1772).

In the Introduction to his History of Jamaica, Long defends the institution of 'servitude' against its detractors, particularly Messrs. Sharp and Godwyn. 'Wherever circumstances make it inevitable, "servitude" is a happy institution, provided only that the slave-owners are truly free men'.

The gist of Long's argument concerning the Negro is contained in some thirty pages of the second volume of his history (Long, 1774, Vol. II, Book III, Chap. 1, pp. 351-379). First of all, he remarks that the colour of the Negro skin is not affected by change of climate. He remarks upon their 'covering of wool, like the bestial fleece, instead of hair,' some bodily peculiarities, including 'the general large size of the female nipples, as if adapted by nature to the peculiar conformations of their children's mouths', 'the black colour of the lice which infest their bodies' (p. 352), and 'their bestial or fetid smell' (p. 382). The Negro, according to Long, is not merely physically revolting, but mentally much the inferior of the white man:

'In general, they are void of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science. They have no plan or system of morality among them. Their barbarity to their children debases their nature even below that of brutes. They have no moral sensations, no taste but for women, gormandizing and drinking to excess, no wish but to be idle. Their children, from the tenderest years, are suffered to deliver themselves up to all that nature suggests to them'.

After such invective, Long's conclusion (p. 356), is anti-climactic:

'When we reflect on the nature of these men, and their dissimilarity to the rest of mankind; must we not conclude that they are a different species of the same genus?'

Having established that the Negro is a distinct species, Long decided that he must establish the Negro's place in Nature. He expounds the doctrine of the Great Chain of Being and the principle of continuity. The Negro, according to Long (pp. 356-370) occupies a place in the chain between the orang and the rest of humanity. In order to cover any gaps in the chain, Long, having dehumanized the Negro, equips the orang with human attributes:

'For my own part, I conceive that probability favours the opinion, that human organs were not given him for nothing: that this race have some language by which their meaning is communicated... nor for what hitherto appears, do they seem at all inferior in the intellectual faculties to many of the Negro race, with some of whom, it is credible that they have the most intimate connexion and consanguinity.'

The amorous intercourse between them may be frequent; Negroes themselves bear testimony that such intercourses actually happen; and it is certain that both races agree perfectly well in lasciviousness of disposition'.

It is interesting to note that the links of the Great Chain of Being were stretched in similar fashion by the authors of Personal Slavery Established by the Suffrages of Custom and Right Reason, Being a Full Answer to the Gloomy and Visionary Reveries of All the Fanatical and Enthusiastical Writers on that Subject, an anonymous work, which appeared in Philadelphia in 1773 (the year before the publication of Long's book), and which was, as its title implies, directed against the abolitionist movement. My attention was drawn to the latter work by Winthrop Jordan, who remarked how apt a tool was the Great Chain of Being for the scientific racist who sought to defend slavery against fresh attacks:

'...the popularity of the concept of the Chain in the eighteenth century derived in large measure from its capacity to universalize the principle of hierarchy. It was no accident that the Chain of Being should have been most popular at a time when the hierarchical arrangement of society was being challenged. No 'idea', no matter how abstract or intricately structured, exists in isolation from the society in which it flourishes' (1968, p. 228).

The concept of the Great Chain of Being disappeared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. But Long's ideas survived that disappearance. His description of the peculiarities of the Negro, his tenor of argument, is repeated in parrot fashion by many later racists, including the American School, Knox and Hunt.

#### CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to do that most difficult of things, to describe the genesis of a myth. And scientific racism most certainly is a myth.

It offered a resolution of two paradoxes in natural and moral philosophy: the antithesis of the evident disparity between human physiques and cultures of different peoples and the old belief in the unity of the human species under God; and the paradox of Mankind, newly perceived to be part of the animal creation, yet thought to be unique in its possession of a soul and the developed power of reason. Further, it resolved from some the conflict between the doctrine of Natural Rights and the existence of slavery in a society of free men. The pressures of the nascent abolitionist movement upon the defenders of slavery may have acted as a catalyst.

Once established, the myth of scientific racism grew at first slowly, and then flourished, creating a momentum of its own. It was to affect not just an intellectual elite, but an administrative and a literary elite. In the end it was to act as a corrupting agent upon popular movements.

Andrew P. Lyons.

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NATURAL SYMBOLS - Barrie and Craessil (1970)

by Mary Douglas

Mary Douglas' new book Natural Symbols grew out of a series of lectures and some of the needling tone apparently necessary to rouse the slumbering anthropologist has come through. From the evidence of this book it seems that a spirit of unadventurousness is abroad and if she succeeds in defeating it she is to be congratulated. At the posing of questions, and it is reasonable to say that practically every statement in the book is a challenge, Dr. Douglas is excellent. Perhaps the sermonising on the Friday mass might have been less obvious but the emphasis on the extensions of the body is welcome. Although I have no desire to criticise the more worked out ideas in the book since I believe the reader will make up his own mind on the value of Bernstein's codes and the author's desire to correlate conceptual and social organization I feel that the grid-group notion ought not to be passed over because it is symptomatic of a too common reductionism. This matrix is an analytic model and by imposing a given vocabulary on the material it gives the impression that data drawn from differing cultures are being discussed whereas it is the model which is discussed. For a further example of this circularity consider Joan Lewis' views mentioned on p.83. May we suggest that the passing of structural-functionalism has left a feeling of insecurity? But the abandonment of intellectual security ought to be a fact of anthropological life. The Grid-group matrix does no justice to the complexities of the material even when modified, see p. 143, and this is the more regrettable as Purity and Danger was a remarkably good book just because Dr. Douglas' inside/outside division was presented as a synthetic not analytic proposition.

S. Milburn.

SAINTS OF THE ATLAS - Weidenfeld & Nicholson:

by Ernest Gellner.

An election is a kind of holiness rat-race. Each leader puts his party forward as the more faithful to vows, more pious, more generous to the poor and the weak, more defiant towards tyrants. In an English general election the role of political saint is complicated by being combined with the other roles, military, financial and judicial. A leader claims to be capable of authority in all spheres. Gellner's study of Moroccan Berbers, with subtle political insight, shows a people who have divided up the various political roles. A saint is entered in the sanctity stakes, very rewarding in themselves, but quite different from the competition between chiefs. Lay tribes provide chiefs; hereditary saintly tribes provide official arbitrators. The lay tribes combine into groups which vote annually for a single chief. Coalition theory will find here a classical instance of polyarchy. Each tribe takes a turn to provide the annual chief, but while it is offering a candidate for election, it may not vote. Chiefship rotates between tribes and the victory always goes to the man whose reputation for nullity ensures the voting tribes that his own tribe will not benefit unduly during his term of office. With this perfect formula for weak government, the fierce Berbers still need a system of arbitration. Hence the role of hereditary saints, who are pledged to pacifism and to Islam. Gellner shrewdly observes how a member of the saintly lineage rises to the heights of sanctity by playing his role of mouthpiece of God more successfully than his fellow saints by birth. He must be lavishly generous and show no concern for material wealth. He must do it in such a way as to ensure a rich and steady flow of wealth into his house - or he will have nothing to distribute to his clients. He watches at his window and runs out to welcome an obviously prosperous traveller, leaving less well-heeled visitors to the hospitality of his rivals. The first law of sociology is: to him who hath shall be given. This is a description of a generative cycle which sends some men up and up, with every successful arbitration they perform guaranteeing that the next will be taken seriously and so be effective too. Other saints spiral downwards in public esteem. Inevitably the saintly lineages multiply, but the demand for their services is fixed by the pattern of disputes. Consequently there is a trend to shed poor relations by labelling them with second degree sanctity. For anthropologists this book illuminates many problems of political and religious interest, far outside the scope of Berber studies. It will also be significant for historians of many periods of European history. Who has not wondered in his school days about the apparent injustice of the Anglo-Saxon oath taking procedures? Here the same system of proving innocence by getting a larger number of co-swearers than your rival is shown to be full of political wisdom and practical justice. Similarly for religious sociology - to understand how miracles were attributed to particular shrines or saints we need to assimilate this vital contribution to anthropology which is more than just a tribal monograph.

Mary Douglas.

FILM FOR THE REVELATION OF SOCIETY

An unknown but by all indications fairly large number of people in social science departments in Great Britain are interested in the making and use of sociological and ethnographic films. Until recently, however, film-making and the use of film for educational purposes within the social sciences has been a matter of individual enterprise, carried out in relative isolation. Certain efforts are now being made to co-ordinate and organise these activities, as well as to promote actual film-making and to encourage discussion of the whole field of 'film for the revelation of society'. Whatever any one of us may feel about the kind of films that should be made, and whatever personal contacts and abilities each one of us may have, there is little doubt that the greater awareness of the availability of resources and of the extent of present interests and activities in sociological film making, that some sort of organized exchange of information would produce, will result in the improvement and expansion of such facilities as do exist and the film making activities associated with them.

The Royal Anthropological Institute in London has established a Film Committee which is at present forming an ethnographic film library, and hopes to be able, in the future, to promote the making of new films. In March this year David Seddon organised a meeting of social scientists and professional film makers under the slogan 'Film for the revelation of society' in order to place ethnographic film making in its wider context.

Discussion at this meeting, held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, centred around the problem of distribution facilities. It was noted that television was unsatisfactory in several ways (e.g. the inevitable removal of film from the control of the film maker responsible in order to edit for short programmes of popular appeal), and that, in any case, it was not likely to provide an expanding field of distribution. University circuits, on the other hand, already developed in North America, seemed more promising, and the showing of film for generally educative purposes in schools, colleges and such institutions as the Voluntary Service Overseas was felt by some to be a real possibility. Another major area of discussion concerned the need for training and special equipment. The social scientists present took film directing and producing to be a special competence that requires extensive training; whereas at least one of the professional film makers stressed that adequate films could be made with relatively simple equipment and very little training. The meeting agreed that further steps should be taken to collect more information on these, and other related, subjects; to sound out interest both in educational and professional circles, and to co-ordinate activities and discussion.

Since March 1970 David Seddon has been joined by Stephan Feuchtwang, also of the Anthropology and Sociology Department of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, in starting a newsletter. It is likely that the service provided by this newsletter will be continued by the Royal Anthropological Institute Film Committee in 1971. The first issue appears in June and contains a questionnaire regarding the use made of films, the existence of projects involving film making, the presence of technical equipment and of training facilities in the social science departments of all British universities. The results of the questionnaire and any other information gathered will appear in subsequent newsletters. Contributions in the form of announcements, short articles, comments and suggestions, as well as enquiries, are welcome and should be sent to Film Newsletter, David Seddon and Stephan Feuchtwang, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, S.O.A.S., University of London, W.C.1.

David Seddon.