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PSYCHOLOGY OF ANIMISM.

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I. *What is Animism?*

IN anthropology, the term Animism is usually employed to denote the proneness of savages and barbarians, or people of unscientific culture, to explain natural occurrences, at least the more remarkable or interesting—the weather, the growth of crops, disease and death—as due to the action of spirits: (1) ghosts (that is, spirits that have formerly been incarnate); (2) dream-spirits, that have temporarily quitted some body during sleep or trance; (3) invisible, living, conscious beings that have never been incarnate. This I propose to call Hyper-physical Animism. Sometimes, however, ‘Animism’ is used to denote a supposed attitude of savages and children toward all things, animate and inanimate, such that they spontaneously and necessarily attribute to everything a consciousness like our own, and regard all the actions and reactions of natural objects as voluntary and purposive. And this I propose to call Psychological Animism. These two meanings of

the word are entirely different: it is one thing to regard an object as moved by its own mind, another to attribute its movement or influence to a separable agent which for the time possesses it; it is one thing to regard an object as having an anthropomorphic consciousness, another to believe that that consciousness is a distinct power capable of quitting it and sometimes returning, or of surviving its destruction, or of existing independently. Even if the doctrine of Animism in the second sense were granted, it would remain to be shown how men came to conceive that the consciousness of a thing can be separated from it, and exist and act by itself, and even with greater powers than it had before—contrary to the opinion of Don Juan,

that soul and body, on the whole,
Were odds against a disembodied soul.

Savages do not always regard a separable spirit as necessarily belonging even to human nature. Dr Seligman writes that, among the Veddas, a few old men "were by no means confident that all men on their death became *yaku*." Influential men and mediums would do so; but for the rest, at Godatalawa it was determined by experiment. The ordinary man was invoked soon after death, and desired to give good success in hunting; and if much game was then obtained, he had become a *yaka*¹. Colonel C. H. Stigand says "the Masai have no belief in a future state for any but chiefs"; the common dead are not even buried, but merely thrown out into the bush². Among the Omaha, though each person has a spirit that normally survives the body, still, a suicide ceases to exist³. The human spirit, then, is not necessarily believed to enter upon a life after death; still less is the spirit of an animal. On the other hand, it may be held that something inherent in weapons, utensils, food and other objects, a 'soul' or soul-stuff, may be separable from them and go to Hades or serve as the food of spirits, although the things themselves are not regarded as having a spirit or intelligent life.

II. *Psychological Animism.*

Andrew Lang described savages as existing in "a confused frame of mind to which all things, animate and inanimate, . . . seem on the same level of life, passion and reason⁴." Children and other immature people are often supposed to be in the same condition. As to children,

¹ *The Veddas*, 126-7.

² *The Land of Zing*, 219.

³ J. O. Dorsey, *American Bureau of Ethnology*, 1889-90, XI. 419.

⁴ *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, 48.

it is pointed out how deeply concerned they are about dolls and rocking-horses, how passionately they turn to strike a table after knocking their heads against it. But probably it is now admitted that impulsive retaliation, on a table or bramble or shirt-stud (not unknown to civilised men), implies not any belief in the malignity or sensitiveness of those objects. Moreover, in children, such behaviour is in large measure due to suggestion; inasmuch as the setting of them to beat the table, or what not, is an easy way of diverting them from their own pain. And, of course, the dealing with dolls, or rocking-horses, or walking-sticks, as if alive, is play. Such play involves intense imaginative belief, which, at first, is not differentiated from earnest. But this stage corresponds with the play of the young of the higher animals, whilst they are still physically incapable of completing the precluded actions. By the time that children are at all comparable with savages, their play has become a temporary attitude, compatible with brusque transition to matter-of-fact, or even with actions which at the height of play show that the illusion is incomplete.

In savages, likewise, much of the behaviour that is supposed to betray an illusionary animism, even in their simple apprehension of things, is really an acquired way of acting, in a temporary attitude, under the influence of imagination-belief, and is compatible with other actions that show how incomplete is the illusion. Andrew Lang, after the passage above quoted, appears to limit the scope of it by the words "when myth-making": no doubt, when myth-making and in practising many rites, savages speak or act as if they believed in the full sense that the objects dealt with are sensitive intelligent beings; and yet their effective conduct toward them is entirely positive. They may, for example, feed the growing rice-plant with pap; in harvesting it, speak a secret language that the rice may not understand them and be alarmed, and proceed to cut it with knives concealed in their palms: but they do cut it. They carry it home and garner it with honour, and come from time to time to take a portion for food with solemn observances: but then they cook and eat it¹. Their animistic attitude, therefore, is not primitive, spontaneous, necessary illusion, but an acquired, specialised way of imagining and dealing with certain things. Were it not possible to combine in this way the imaginative with the practical, all wizardry and priestcraft would be nothing but the sheer cheating which it often seems to be to superficial observers. Normally, imagination-beliefs are unable to overcome biological needs; but often

¹ Frazer, *Spirits of the Corn and the Wild*, I. 183.

they do so within certain limits, or in certain directions, as in innumerable taboos of food, customs of destroying property, starving or maiming tribesmen on the war-path. An universal taboo on rice is not inconceivable. For these are social-pathological cases; like the self-destructive beliefs of individuals and coteries amongst ourselves, such as the faith-healers, who in sickness call upon their god instead of a doctor.

Children, savages and ourselves, in some degree, attribute spontaneously to inanimate things, in our mere apprehension of them (for this has nothing to do with the metaphysics of Pampsychism), something more than external existence: regarding them as force-things and, by empathy, as experiencing effort and quiescence, strain and relief, and sometimes emotion and pain. It is for this attitude toward nature that I adopt Mr Marett's term 'animatism': as not ascribing to inanimate things, or to plants, in general, anything like a human personal consciousness; but merely an obscure, fragmentary, partial consciousness, enough to correspond with our occasional experiences in dealing with them. Perhaps those observers who report in strong terms universal Animism as the tenet of a tribe, mean no more than this; for example, the author above quoted as writing in the *American Bureau of Ethnology*, who says (p. 433) that according to the Dakotas, everything—"the commonest sticks and clays"—has a spirit that may hurt or help and is, therefore, to be propitiated. Probably it would be unjust to the adherents of Animism to accuse them of believing that savages have universally made so much progress in "faculty Psychology" as to distinguish personality, will, passion and reason; especially as they add that savages project these powers into all natural objects through incapacity for discrimination and abstraction; and, at the same time, know very well that in some languages of the most animistic tribes (Algonquin and Naga) the distinction of animate and inanimate is the ground of grammatical gender.

We find, accordingly, that some explorers explicitly deny that, in their experience, savages regard all things as on the same level of life, passion and reason. Dr Coddington says that, in the Banks' Islands, yams and such things are not believed to have any *tarunga* (spirit); "they do not live with any kind of intelligence¹." Messrs Skeat and Blagden report that with the Semang of the Malay Peninsula there is very little trace of animistic beliefs; and they relate a folk-tale of how a male elephant tells a female that he has found a live stone (pan-golin rolled into a ball): "Swine," said the female, "stones are never

¹ *The Melanesians*, 249.

alive¹." Messrs Hose and McDougall tell us that the Kayans hang garments and weapons on a tomb, and seem to believe that shadowy duplicates of these things are at the service of the ghost, but that such duplicates are inert (relatively) and not to be confused with the principle of intelligence².

To be clear about Animism, it is necessary to bear in mind several modes of belief: (1) Hyperphysical Animism, that things have, or are possessed by a conscious spirit, and that this spirit is a separable entity; (2) that things are themselves conscious, but their consciousness is not a separable entity; (3) that things are not conscious, but are informed by a separable essence, usually called soul (better, soul-stuff), which may be eaten by spirits, or may go to ghost-land with them; (4) the extension or limitation of these beliefs to more or fewer classes of things. Unless these distinctions are recognised, any report upon savage beliefs can hardly be clear and adequate; but generally we may take it that when a traveller tells us that such and such things are not believed to have souls, and says nothing of any belief as to their consciousness, he means (except with regard to animals) to deny that anything like human consciousness is attributed to them. Thus when Mr Torday writes that, according to the Bahuana of the Upper Congo, there are two incorporeal parts—*doshi*, common to man, animals and fetiches, and *bun*, peculiar to man—he seems to leave it as a matter of course that plants and inanimate things have neither of these, and are not conscious beings; though probably some of them have soul-stuff, since clothes, weapons and food are buried with a corpse³. The Rev. J. H. Weeks says that the Bakongo of the Lower Congo attribute a spirit only to the *nkasa* tree (from whose bark the ordeal poison is derived) amongst plants⁴; and, similarly, the Baloki, further up the river, attribute a spirit only to the *nka* tree⁵. Since many things are buried by these people in a grave, or broken above it, the things must be supposed to have soul-stuff; but from the denying of spirits to plants, and from silence as to psychological Animism, it may be inferred that neither plants nor inanimate things are regarded as conscious beings. Sir E. F. im Thurn tells us that material things of all sorts are believed by the natives of Guiana to have each a body and a spirit—evidently a conscious and malicious spirit; "and that not all inanimate objects have

¹ *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, II. 222.

² *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, II. 3.

³ *Camp and Tramp in African Wilds*, 17A.

⁴ *The Primitive Bakongo*, 283

⁵ *Among Congo Cannibals*, 275.

this dual nature avowedly attributed to them, is probably only due to the chance that...the spirit has not yet been noticed in some cases¹." Even with these Guiana Indians, then, whose Animism, in every sense is unusually active and extensive, their attitude is an acquired, specialised way of imagining and dealing with things that draw their attention and excite their suspicions, not a primitive, necessary illusion; else there could be no exceptions.

The reasonable view, then, is that savages distinguish between themselves and certain animals, on the one hand, and, on the other, the remaining animals, plants and inanimate things; and raise the second class to the rank of the first, as conscious agents, only when there are special incentives to do so. To find all the causes that excite the animistic attitude toward things would be a difficult task, but some of them may be indicated. Beginning from Animatism, which really is a primitive and necessary illusion, it is reasonable to expect:

(a) That any plant or inanimate thing adopted as a totem should, by that very fact, be endowed with human consciousness; though the savage mind is too inconsistent for us to infer that this must always happen.

(b) That whatever seems to move or act spontaneously, like the winds and streams and echoes, the sun, moon, planets, and shooting stars, should be felt as a spiritual agency, especially if it cry out with empathetic reverberation, as the winds and cataracts do, the waves, fire, and the ice-floe when it breaks up in spring; or if it be extraordinary and dangerous, as the thunder and lightning, whirlwinds and whirlpools are, waterspouts and volcanoes. A whirlpool that has drowned a man, thenceforth is, or has, a spirit. As to waterspouts and shooting stars, see the *Reports of the Cambridge Expedition to Torres Straits*, (vi. 252). As to volcanoes, Dr Speisser writes that at Ambrym, when the volcano is active, the natives climb to the top and bring sacrifices to appease it, throwing coconuts and yams into the crater².

(c) That whatever has been regarded as having magical force should be treated—after the rise of the ghost-theory (supposing this to be of later origin) has given vogue to a new principle of explanation—as owing its virtue to a spirit, either by immanence or possession (two modes of actuation which may or may not be distinguished), and so become a fetich.

(d) That whatever is much used in ritual, especially if often

¹ *Among the Indians of Guiana*, 355.

² *Two years with the Natives of the West Pacific*, 199.

addressed in spells or incantations, should become an object of reverence, apt to be personified and raised to, or even above, the human level as a conscious agent: for example, padi and rice in Indonesia, the ordeal tree on the Congo, already mentioned. In India, the conch, having for ages been used in religious rites, "the people gradually came to revere the instrument itself and to adore and invoke it¹." Amongst the very few inanimate gods of the Cherokees are the Stone, invoked by the Shaman when seeking lost goods by means of a pebble suspended by a string; and the Flint, invoked when about to scarify a patient with an arrow-head before rubbing in medicine². By the Apache, heddontin (pollen of the cat-tail rush) is used as the sacrificial powder in nearly all rites, and is personified and prayed to³.

When spells are addressed to any object, the analogy of address to human beings causes that object to be thought of as humanly conscious. Stocks and stones have been worshipped, and regarded as the dwelling place of spirits in most parts of the world; having superseded in the mind of their devotees the ghost of the man whose burial place they formerly marked, and where offerings were made.

(e) Where Animism is active amongst a timid and suspicious people, whatever injures a man is believed to act of malice: as amongst the Indians of Guiana, who are so timid that rather than go hunting alone they will take a woman or a child along with them⁴.

Under such conditions as these psychological Animism is very widely though very irregularly diffused; but were it universal and uniform, it could not of itself account for hyperphysical Animism—the doctrine that men (or some men), some animals, plants, things, places, are possessed or informed by spirits that are capable of separate existence.

III. *The Ghost Theory.*

Hyperphysical Animism may be easiest understood as having arisen with the belief in human ghosts. The causes of this belief have been fully set forth by Herbert Spencer and Sir E. B. Tylor in a way that to my mind is convincing. Amongst those causes dreams predominate; wherein the dead are met again as in the flesh. The living body having always been for the savage a conscious force-thing, at

¹ J. Hernell in the *Quar. J. of the Mythic. Soc.* (Bangalore), iv. No. 4, 158.

² J. Mooney in *Reports of Am. Bureau of Ethn.* 1885-6, vii. 341.

³ J. E. Bourke in the *Reports of Am. Bureau of Ethn.* 1887-8, ix. 499-507

⁴ E. F. im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, 288, 354.

death the conscious force leaves the thing or corpse. This might be accepted by him as a fact of the same kind as the loss of its virtue by a talisman or amulet (which is known sometimes to happen), were it not for dreams in which the dead still live. That this conscious force that has left the body is not visible except in dreams need excite little wonder, since many forces natural and magical are invisible.

A dream not being common to two men at the same time, the things that are seen in it cannot be pointed out, nor therefore directly named (in this resembling subjective experiences); so that to find names with which to describe such things men turn to other ways in which they seem to have a double existence, to shadows and reflections: which in their sudden appearance and disappearance, and sometimes faint, sometimes distorted outlines, bear some resemblance to dream-images; and probably it is felt to be significant that shadows and reflections disappear at night, just when dreams occur. Shadows and reflections are not necessarily identified with the ghost derived from the dream-image, because their names are given to it; but sometimes they certainly are; so that a man who, on looking into water, happens not to see his reflection may believe that his spirit has gone away, and that he himself must be ill, and accordingly he becomes ill; or if at noon near the equator he notices that he has no shadow, he may run to a medicine-man to get it back; and dead bodies may be believed to have no shadows¹. Inasmuch as a body even lying on the ground casts a shadow, except at tropical noon, the belief that it does not do so at any time implies an acquired inability to see what is before one's eyes; as sometimes happens in hypnosis and other conditions of negative hallucination.

The idea of a separable conscious personal force, or spirit, that leaves the body at death, serves also, as it gathers strength, to explain sleep, fainting, epilepsy; and sometimes every sickness is attributed to the partial detachment or desertion of the spirit; which, therefore, it is the doctor's business to plug in, or to catch and restore; or (if I rightly remember a report of Miss Kingsley's) he may even supply another one from a basket of souls kept at hand for such exigencies.

That the ghost theory arises not only from dreams, but is also suggested by hallucinations and hypnagogic visions is very probable. In various parts of the world savages have been described as having visions of remarkably coherent and convincing vividness that seem not

¹ J. H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals*, 262-3.

to have been dreams¹. But such experiences, even when artificially induced by fasting or drugs, as happens among many tribes, are rare in comparison with dreams; and to the influence of dreams upon these savage beliefs there is abundant testimony. With some tribes dreams are treated as part of their objective experience; so that to be injured by your neighbour in a dream is just ground for avenging yourself as soon as you wake; and to see a dead man in a dream is, therefore, clear proof of his continued existence, and that either he has come to the dreamer or the dreamer has gone to visit him. It is recognised by psychologists that dreams, as immediate experience, have more the character of perception than of imagination. Children are apt to confuse dreams with reality. It can only have been gradually, with the growing knowledge of continuity and coherence in the course of events, and therewith the demand for corroboration of testimony, that dreams were distinguished from the waking life. When no longer supposed to be all of them real, some are still so regarded: the Dieri, amongst lower savages, distinguish between visions, as revelations made by Kutchi (the Evil Spirit), and ordinary dreams, as mere fancies². But so impressive are dreams to many people, in their eagerness to know more than sense and philosophy can tell them, that they persist in hoping, and therefore believing, that dreams, if they give no knowledge of this world, may still be revelations of another, perhaps more real; or if not revelations, adumbrations by way of allegory, which some learned or inspired Daniel may interpret; or, at least, omens of good or evil, which the ancient science of Oneiromancy undertakes to explain.

That the dead are seen alive in dreams is, then, for the savage a fact of observation; and, therefore, the continued existence of the dead is, for him, not in the first place supernatural; although it may be called hyperphysical, because it is experienced only in dreams and not by daylight, and is exempt from ordinary conditions of time and place. But it gradually becomes supernatural, as the capricious incidents of dream-life are felt to be 'uncanny,' as that which occurs only at night is involved in the fears of the night, and as a great cloud of imaginations accumulates about the dead and obscures the simple facts of dream-perception in which the belief originated. This cloud of imaginations, by its mysterious character and by various alliances with Magic, spreads and deepens until it overshadows the whole of human life; is generally,

¹ See e.g. A. W. Howitt, *Nat. Tribes of S.E. Aust.*, 406; and P. A. Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush*, 83-8.

² A. W. Howitt, *op. cit.* p. 358.

indeed, dispersed here and there by the forces of biological necessity, often by subterfuges laughable enough; which have, however, the merit of saving mankind from destruction: but sometimes it extinguishes the last ray of common sense, impoverishes the believer, enfeebles him, fills his days and nights with terror, gives him over to practices the most cruel or the most disgusting, leads him to slay his own tribesmen, his own children, his own parents, and to offer up himself in the sure hope of resurrection.

IV. *Extension of the Ghost Theory to Animals.*

Spirits, having once been conceived of as explaining the actions of men and surviving their bodily death, may by analogy be conceived to explain the action of any other things in circumstances that suggest a motive for the action, and therefore to possess or inhabit such things, and to be capable of separating from them, like ghosts. Other things are already, by Magic and Animatism, force-things, in some degree conscious, whose forces may be capable of acting invisibly at a distance; and at the death of a man it is his conscious force that leaves the body and becomes a ghost. Since, then, there is hardly any natural object whose action may not in some circumstances seem to be interpretable by motives, especially amongst a timid and suspicious people, how can we assign any necessary limits to the spread of Animism? Moreover, the causes most influential in establishing the ghost theory for man directly require its extension to other things. For not human beings only are seen in dreams, but also their weapons and utensils, and also animals, plants, localities. If, then, the dead, because they are seen in dreams, are inferred still to live under conditions in which they are not visible by daylight to ordinary men, how can the inference be avoided that all sorts of things, artefacts, animals, plants, localities, share in that mode of existence—that all have their doubles? And “Why not?” the savage might ask, since it is literally true of all things, without exception, that they are sometimes visible, sometimes invisible. Similar inferences seem to be justifiable from the alliance of ghosts with shadows and reflections, and the fact that not man only but everything else has a shadow and a reflection, and that their shadows and reflections disappear at night, just when the things themselves sometimes appear in dreams. Moreover, so far as the breath, the pulse, the shining of the eye, which cease in the human corpse, are sometimes identified with the departed spirit, the same processes likewise cease at the death

of animals; though, it is true, there is here no analogy with inanimate things, and the breathing and circulation of plants are beyond the savage's observation. Therefore, although Animism is an inferential construction, were the construction entirely due to the logic of analogy, there would be nothing surprising in the discovery that the belief 'that everything has a ghost' is just as universal and uniform in the human race as if it had been an innate or primitive belief. That, on the contrary, Animism prevails very irregularly amongst the tribes of men; that, in all directions, inferences that are analogically specious fail to be drawn; that instead of a general theory of Animism every tribe has its own Animism; this is surprising and needs to be explained. The extension of the theory is easier to understand than its irregular limitation.

Bearing in mind that we are at present considering Animism as a belief in ghosts, not in spirits generally (to which we shall come in Sect. VI), I venture to think that, although dreams, shadows and reflections certainly suggest a double existence of everything, yet savages never assign a true ghost to anything inanimate, nor to plants, nor even to animals, unless there is a special reason for doing so; because only in the case of human beings is the suggestion interesting enough to take hold of the imagination. Hence, even though other things appear in the ghost-world, they have no significance there, except in relation to human ghosts (or ghostlike spirits) on whom they attend. Accordingly, human ghosts have a place in the beliefs of every tribe, because human beings excite affection, admiration and fear, have well-marked individuality; are therefore remembered, have stories told of them; and if they are seen after death, it is, of course, reported. The evidence makes it only too plain that the paralysis of attention by fear is the chief (though not the only) emotional factor of belief in ghosts; and what other thing in all nature is to be feared in comparison with one's fellow-man?

The belief in ghosts, escaped and roaming independent of any normally visible body, as a social belief, is involved in the practice of reporting and discussing dreams, which becomes the same thing as telling ghost-stories—the first and most persistent motive of literature. Stories can only be told effectively of things generally interesting; and, at first, such things must have been recognisable by the hearers and must have had some individuality. Hence—

- (a) Animals that attain to such individuality may have ghosts:
(i) An animal that occasions widespread fear, such as a man-eating

tiger. We must distinguish from such cases the frequent beliefs that tigers, wolves, sharks, snakes, etc., are, or are possessed by, the spirits or ghosts of men. (ii) An animal that comes to be upon terms of special intimacy with men; such as the very tame dogs and pigs that come when they are called among the Bakongo¹; or hunting dogs that have been specially doctored among the Baloki².

(b) Animals slain at funeral feasts to accompany the dead have ghosts so far as necessary for that purpose; but, wanting individuality and personal interest, they make no further figure in ghost-lore; they do not 'walk' or revisit the glimpses of the moon. Thus the Tanghoulis say that ghosts, on reaching Kazairam (their Hades), find the gates barred against them by the deity Kokto; so at the burial feast of a rich man a buffalo is killed that his mighty ghost may burst open the massive gates of that abode. Poor ghosts must wait about outside, till a rich one comes up with his buffalo; when they all rush in behind him³. But we hear nothing further of the buffalo. In the Banks' Islands, pigs killed at a funeral feast have no true ghosts to follow the dead to Panoi, but only a sort of wraith; because they only go for show, that their master may be well received there⁴.

(c) Animals that are important prey to a hunting tribe are often believed to have ghosts that may be hunted by dead tribesmen; or that must be propitiated when one of them is slain: the ghosts, for example, of seals and bears are bribed by the Esquimo to entice other seals and bears to come and be killed. A seal desires above everything, they say, a drink of fresh water; so as soon as one is brought ashore a dipperful is poured into his mouth; else the other seals will not allow themselves to be caught. The polar bear (male) desires crooked knives and bow-drills, or (female) women's knives and needle-cases. Hence, when a bear is killed, its ghost accompanies its skin into the hunter's hut; and the skin is hung up with the appropriate tools for four or five days. Then the bear-ghost is driven out by a magic formula, takes with it the souls of the tools, and reports well of the hunter in bear-soul land. Whilst in the hut, as an honoured guest, nothing is done that it dislikes in human customs⁵.

(d) In the development of mythology, animals and monsters of

¹ J. H. Weeks, *The Primitive Bakongo*, 238.

² J. H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals*, 233.

³ T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, 160.

⁴ Coddington, *The Melanesians*, 269.

⁵ V. Stefánson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, 57.

various kinds may be found inhabiting shadow-land; but these are not true ghosts of any particular things that once died in this world.

This list of the ways in which animals may come to have ghosts is not offered as exhausting all the cases.

V. *Ghosts and Soul-stuff.*

A ghost is a disembodied soul, having a consciousness and power at, or (generally) above, the human level; but there may be disembodied souls, or souls capable of disembodiment, that have no consciousness, or none above the level of Animatism. Even if a living thing have a consciousness, its post-mortem apparition may not; like the Banks' Islanders' pig, which, though "a distinguished animal and acknowledged to be intelligent," has no true ghost. Among nearly all tribes, whatever is offered in sacrifice to gods or left in, or at, the tombs of men deceased, is believed to have some sort of soul; because, plainly, spirits do not eat or consume the visible food or utensils; yet it is necessary to the success of the rites to suppose that the spirits are satisfied; they must, therefore, take the souls of the offerings. And what can be more plausible reasoning than to argue that, as solid men eat solid food, ghosts eat ghostly food. 'Soul' thus appears as a sort of ghost-substance, or ghost-body. For, in dreams, the departed are seen as if in the flesh; and moreover analogy requires that the ghost consciousness and ghost-force shall have a body of some sort, and, of course, one that will maintain in ghost-land the same relations to other things that the mortal body did in this world. In ghost-land, or shadow-land, or dream-land, the substance of all things is this soul-stuff. Sometimes the force of analogy requires a tribe to believe that, in order that the souls of things may be released to accompany a ghost to the underworld, the things themselves must be "killed," that is to say, broken; but other tribes are not such consistent reasoners; and in some cases where things left exposed at a grave (not buried) are broken, it may be to prevent their being stolen.

Anything, then, may have soul after its kind: relatively inert things have relatively inert souls, but never true ghosts; some animals may have ghosts, especially if they have attained to a certain individuality, but generally only in so far as they are imagined to attend upon human ghosts or spirits. Inasmuch as the word 'soul' is often used as equivalent to 'ghost,' it would be convenient always to speak of the

soul which is ghost-food, or ghost-body, as soul-stuff¹. Soul-stuff is conceived of as material, though subtle and normally invisible. A man's soul-stuff may be regarded not only as permeating his body, but also as infecting everything he possesses or touches: no doubt by analogy with his odour; for a man's odour is a personal quality, distinguishable by dogs and (I believe) by some savages and hypnotic subjects; and the stench of his putrefying corpse may be believed to convey his courage and skill to those who inhale it². And the savour of a burnt-offering is food for gods.

Savage ideas are generally so little thought out, and are so irregularly thought out by different tribes, that the relation of a thing to its soul-stuff varies widely from one tribe to another. In many cases the extraction of the soul-stuff from an offering by ghost or god may affect it so little, that the devotee or the priest proceeds to feast upon it; and I have nowhere met with the notion (which logic requires) that such metaphysically eviscerated food can only nourish a man's body and not his soul. However, since the eating of the sacrifice may be an act of communion with the ghost, he then naturally extracts the goodness only from his own share. In other cases, the breaking of weapons and utensils buried with a corpse implies an intimate unity between the wholeness of an object and its soul-stuff; and the Rev. J. H. Weeks says of the considerable wealth put into a grave by the Bakongo, that only the shell or semblance of anything is supposed to remain there³.

This conception of soul-stuff may have been an important contribution to metaphysics. The doctrine of material substance is reached by abstracting all the qualities of things; but then there would be nothing left, were it not for this venerable idea of something invisible and intangible in things in which qualities may "inhere," or which may serve as a "support" to them. Along another line of speculation it may become the Soul of the World. When ghosts or spirits are no longer conceived to have bodies, a spiritual substance must be conceived for their qualities, in order to put them upon an equal footing of reality with corporeal things; but as there is no spirit-stuff ready made by the wisdom of our forefathers, this concept remains uncomfortably empty. In writing of Magic⁴, I have indicated the

¹ Hose and McDougall, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, II. 3.

² J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*, 403.

³ *The Primitive Bakongo*, 371.

⁴ *This Journal*, VII. 2.

origin of the notion of force; and if my view is justifiable, it appears that those celebrated abstractions 'force' and 'matter' may be traced to the savage mind. That savages are incapable of general and abstract ideas seems to be an illusion. It is true that the language of a people of low culture is very poor in abstract expressions; but no one now supposes that language is an adequate measure of thought. A language contains names only for things, groups, and aspects or actions of things, which the people who use it need to speak of: if they do not need to speak of abstractions, they have no words for them. But we cannot assume of the contents of the mind, any more than of the outside world, that things do not exist unless we have noticed and named them. Professor Franz Boas has shown¹ that languages that do not idiomatically express abstract ideas may be made to do so without violence, and that the abstract expression is intelligible to men native to the languages. "Everyone who knows peoples of low culture," says Dr Rivers, "must recognise the difficulty which besets the study of any abstract question, not so much because the savage does not possess abstract ideas as that he has no words of his own to express them²." When we are told that a certain tribe has a name for each kind of tree, but none for 'tree' in general, is it reasonable to infer that they have never received any impression of the resemblance of trees one to another, and of their difference from what we call herbs and grasses? Is there so little economy in the organization of the mind? When a tribe bases its grammatical gender on the distinction of Animate and Inanimate, has it in no sense corresponding ideas? An abstract idea results from a long process of dissociative growth from its concrete sources, and must exist in some manner at all stages of that growth, before its dissociation is completed by an appropriate name; and it is reasonable to suppose that at every stage of growth it functions and influences the course of thought. Accordingly, it is plain that the idea of causation exists obscurely in the savage mind³; so does the axiom "things equal to the same are equal" whenever a common measure is used, the foot for length, the fingers for number; and so do the notions of force and soul-stuff or 'substance.'

¹ *The Mind of Primitive Man*, ch. v.

² *Sociol. Rev.*, Jan. 1910, 9.

³ This *Journal*, vii. 176.

VI. *Ghosts and Spirits.*

Whilst of some tribes, for example the Indians of Guiana, it is said that there is nothing to indicate that they "know of any spirits, except such as are, or once were, situated in material bodies¹," amongst others we are often told that not only ghosts are known but also spirits that are declared never to have been incarnate. An extreme form of the ghost-theory maintains that all spirits were once ghosts whose incarnation has been forgotten; but this is needless, and seems not to be true. It is enough that probably the original inhabitants of the spirit-world were ghosts; that some of those now believed not to have been ghosts were really so; and that those spirits that were never ghosts are later immigrants, who have obtained domicile by having been imagined in analogy with ghosts. The following list indicates more or less probable reasons why (*A*) ghosts have sometimes come to be regarded as non-human spirits, and (*B*) why certain non-human things have come to be regarded as spirits of a similar kind.

A. Spirits that were formerly ghosts, but are now declared not to have been:

(*a*) Ghosts whose former life has been forgotten by mere lapse of time. The memory of the dead amongst many tribes does not extend beyond three or four generations. If then the ghost of some unusually impressive personality happens to be remembered, when all his relatives and contemporaries have been forgotten, he seems to be separated from the human race. And if, according to Spencer's hypothesis, his name had been that of some natural object, his ghost might now be regarded as the spirit of that phenomenon. But as to Spencer's hypothesis², although it gives such a plausible explanation of much nature-worship by real facts as to the working of savage language and thought that it seems to me unreasonable to doubt that it has had some of the effects he traces to it, yet it presses upon me more and more that most cases of nature-worship are to be explained by more particular causes.

(*b*) To dissociate a ghost from mankind is especially easy if his tomb has been forgotten, or if he has no tomb. As the drowned have no tombs, they easily become water-demons. Tombs must often be forgotten in consequence of migrations. In Central Melanesia both ghosts and spirits are recognised; but in the west worship is directed chiefly to ghosts, in the east chiefly to spirits. As migration has been

¹ E. im Thurn, *op. cit.* 363.

² *Principles of Sociology*, §§ 165-193.

from west to east, the tombs of ancestors can no longer be pointed out by the eastern islanders, and so their ghosts may have become spirits. In Tumloo (New Guinea) there are temples of spirits (all female) distinct from ancestral ghosts, and on the banisters of ladders leading up to these temples there are ornamental figures of ape-like animals; the architecture of the temples points to a former superior culture¹. As there are no apes in New Guinea, these figures and temples may indicate a former residence under better conditions in Java or Borneo; and the spirits with which they are associated may be ancestral ghosts whose tombs and other earthly vestiges have been forgotten in the migration.

(c) We may see another way in which a ghost may become a pure spirit, if we suppose that as a ghost he had attained to some measure of worship, but that with the rise of new gods (by conquest, or by the reputation of being more helpful), or by his being himself too good to be worth worshipping, his rites have been neglected and his legend forgotten. Then he is no longer remembered as a ghost, or ancestor.

(d) It may be thought honourable to a god to deny that he was ever a man.

(e) The construction of a world-myth makes it necessary to begin somewhere with someone; and whoever becomes the first being, it is necessary to deny that he was ever begotten. But there may be inconsistent stories: the supreme being of the central Esquimo is a woman, Sedna, who created all things that have life; but other traditions give her a human origin².

B. Spirits that were never incarnate, but have been imagined by analogy with ghosts already propitiated:

(f) A Totem-ancestor may become a spirit; whilst, having himself no antecedents, he can hardly be a ghost as of an ordinary mortal. Nothing can be more irregular than the life of Totemism: with some tribes it seems to die out, or leaves few and doubtful vestiges; with others it continues to flourish even amidst conditions of high culture. Apparently, where it survives, the Totem-ancestor gradually loses his bestial properties, or most of them, and becomes an anthropomorphic spirit with his myths, in analogy with heroic or patriarchal ancestors. He has attained to a considerable degree of individuality; yet may, by association and tradition, confer more or less sacredness upon his animal kindred.

¹ J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*, 220.

² Franz Boas, *Am. Bureau of Ethn.*, vi. 1884-5, 583.

(g) Corn, rice, padi, nkasa, or whatever has been the object of tribal rites and spells—the sun and moon, the earth, fire, wind and rain—having perhaps long been influenced and reinforced by Magic—become, when Animism has gained control of man's imagination, the embodiment or possession of spirits; the spells become prayers, and the rites religious ceremonies or mysteries. Such spirits, at first locally honoured, may with the evolution of the tribe or nation, the increasing intercourse of its villages, and the centralisation of its culture in some city, be released from local conditions and generalised into transcendent gods, either each of its own kind—corn or wine—or of still wider sway over agriculture or the weather. Plants from which intoxicants are obtained, which bring men to a condition resembling insanity, or the ravings of a sorcerer who is supposed to be possessed, are especially easy to understand as displaying the power of spirits. A belief in vegetation spirits, having originated in any way, may be extended according to the circumstances and mentality of a tribe, until every wood is populous with dryads.

(h) Natural objects that have, at first, been regarded with awe and therefore endowed with magical powers—mountain-tops, ravines, whirlpools—under Animism, become the abodes of spirits; and these, again, may, by analogy with others, cease to be conceived as merely local. Among the Moors, “the *jnūn*, which form a special race of beings created before Adam, are generally supposed to be active on occasions or in places which give rise to superstitious fear, and in many cases they are personifications of some mysterious qualities in persons or lifeless objects¹.”

In each of these cases, (f), (g), (h), however, an Euhemerist explanation may be offered. As to (f), Spencer, of course, argued that the Totem-ancestor is always a man, who bore the name of an animal, and was confounded with it after death. As to (g), Grant Allen suggested that the spirit of the corn or vine is always at first the spirit of the man upon whose grave the plant grew². And as to (h), the spirit of a mountain may be the ghost of a man who was buried on the top of it; and the spirit of a whirlpool the ghost of a man who was drowned in it. Indeed some spirits may have originated in one of these ways, others in another way; and what happened in any particular case can only be determined, if at all, by examination of its particular circumstances.

¹ E. Westermarck, *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco*, 343.

² See his ingenious speculations in *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, ch. xiii.

(i) Abstract ideas may, at a very early stage of culture, be personified and treated as spirits. The Semang, according to Messrs Skeat and Blagden, personify Death, Hunger, Disease¹; and the Beloki, according to the Rev. J. H. Weeks, attribute all personal qualities to the aid of spirits; so that if one man wrestles better than another, it is because the spirit Embanda is in him². At a higher stage of culture we find Fides, Fortuna, Concordia; and the modern Greeks of Macedonia personify and propitiate Lady Small Pox³. Such things are conceived of as mysterious powers, and they have names; and so far they resemble demons. Why, then, should they not be personified and propitiated like demons?

(j) Various ways have been pointed out in which the grammatical structures of language may influence the growth of mythology.

(k) Animism having been generally adopted, spirits may be freely invented in explanatory myths. The Kalinis believe that thunder and lightning are the clang and flash of bracelets on the arms of Kidilumai, a girl who dances in heaven, as formerly on earth, for joy of the welcome rain⁴. It would be absurd to suppose that she must once have lived on earth. Some amongst the Ekoi say that Thunder is a giant marching across the sky; others that Thunder is the enemy of Lightning and, on seeing it, growls to drive it away⁵. If free invention may originate myths, it may modify old ones, with results that cannot always be interpreted upon general principles.

Finally, any spirits that have been anthropomorphised in analogy with ancestor-ghosts may be further disguised by giving them mythical family connections with the ancestors and with one another.

VII. *How Ghosts and Spirits are imagined.*

Ghosts and spirits have the same qualities and characters, eat the same food, appear in dreams, possess men and animals, help sorcerers, give diseases, determine the success of hunting or agriculture. At first, they are solid things, not properly incorporeal, merely invisible to ordinary people by daylight; though dogs or pigs may see them even then. A ghost is so associated with its corpse, that it is not always clear which it is that escapes from the grave and walks; and one may

¹ *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, II. iii, c. 6.

² *Among Congo Cannibals*, 272.

³ G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, 236.

⁴ T. C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, 126.

⁵ P. A. Talbot, *In the Shadow of the Bush*, 73.

judge whether a dead man has yet gone to Hades by observing whether in the morning there are footprints around his grave; and to keep the ghost from walking, one may fill the belly of the corpse with stones, or break its limbs, or bury it deep and heap stones upon it. In South-East Australia, ghosts can be heard at night jumping down from the trees or from the sky¹. They may be heard to speak or sing, usually with thin voices like bats:

The sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the streets of Rome.

Spirits may have all the appurtenances of an animal body; for two of them waylaid an Australian, and made a wizard of him by taking out his entrails and filling up the cavity with the entrails of one of themselves². They may marry mortals, as a devil begat Caliban upon a witch. In short, a ghost or spirit can act physically, just as a man can, because he has the same organs; but with greater power, because mysterious and more feared. And such beliefs persist amongst people whose culture is much higher than the Australian, as in Jacob's wrestling with something at the ford Jabbok, and Grettir's slaying of the ghost of Glam at Thorhallstad³. To this day, in Macedonia, there are vampires, or animated corpses, that throttle people and suck their blood⁴. "The Moslem corpse," says Sir R. Burton, "is partly sentient in the tomb⁵." The Karok of California consider it the highest crime to utter the name of the dead; for it makes the mouldering skeleton turn in its grave and groan⁶. In fact, it is difficult to think of one's own future corpse as entirely inanimate. According to Prof. W. Wundt, the *Körperseele*, as eine *Eigenschaft des lebenden Körpers*, is a starting-point of Animism independent of, and probably prior to, the breath and the dream, which suggest the idea of a free separable soul⁷. The confusion of ideas in popular Animism seems to me due to (1) the strong association of the ghost with the corpse, and the performance of rites (which must take place somewhere, if at all) naturally at the grave or in connection with relics; (2) the manifestation of ghosts as visible, speaking, tangible bodies in dreams; (3) the difficulty

¹ Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 437.

² Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 483.

³ *Grettir Saga*, c. 35.

⁴ G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, 217.

⁵ *First Footsteps in East Africa*, 52 note.

⁶ *Am. Bureau of Ethn.* i. 200.

⁷ *Mythus und Religion*, 2^e ed. 78.

of imagining spirits to live and act except in the likeness of the body (though non-human forms—usually animal—are sometimes substituted); (4) the convenience of such imaginations to the story-teller; (5) the convenience of them to sorcerers and purveyors of mysteries, who rely upon such imaginations in producing illusion by suggestion. Accordingly, it is only in a late age, by metaphysical refinements upon 'mind' and 'matter,' or by mystical aversion to sensuousity, that the notion of incorporeal spirit is freed from these primitive qualifications, partially and amongst a few people. A tendency to abstract conception of the spirit is set up, indeed, in the ordinary way of 'dissociation' by the belief in transmigration. For if a spirit may 'possess' all sorts of bodies—men, plants, animals etc.—it is independent of any particular body; though it may still be thought to need *some* body. Where the idea of pure spirit has been established amongst educated people, it becomes necessary for those who believe in ghosts to explain how a spirit can manifest itself to eye, ear, nose, hand, without a physical body, by 'materialising' itself, as invisible vapour (say one's own breath in a frosty morning) condenses into a cloud or into dew; for the power of analogy is not yet exhausted.

The varieties of belief that occur here and there in the world cannot be explained without a much fuller knowledge of local circumstances than is usually available. The Semang say that souls are red, like blood; no bigger than a grain of maize¹; the Malays that they are vapoury, shadowy, filmy essences, about as big as one's thumb²; in both cases shaped like the owner. Elsewhere in the Indian Archipelago, "the animating principle is conceived of, not as a tiny being confined to a single part of the body, but as a sort of fluid or ether diffused through every part³." Amongst the Ekoi, the soul is a small thing dwelling in the breast, whilst a man lives; but at death expands into the body's full stature⁴. It may be the difficulty of finding the soul in the body that leads some thinkers to suppose it must be very small, others very attenuated—thin as a shadow and as breath invisible.

Whilst many savages believe, like ourselves, that the body entertains one soul and gives up one ghost, the Ekoi believe in two, one animating a man's body, the other possessing, or changing into, some animal in

¹ *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, I. 194.

² *Malay Magic*, 47.

³ *Spirits of the Corn and the Wild*, I. 183.

⁴ *In the Shadow of the Bush*, 230.

the bush. Three souls, the vegetative, sensitive and rational, are well known to European philosophy. The Mandans thought that a man has one black, one brown, and one light-coloured soul; but that only the last returned to the Lord of Life¹. The observer who tells us this also reports (p. 484) that some of the Dakotas assign to each man four spirits: one that dies with the body; one that remains with, or near, it; one that accounts for its deeds and at death goes to the spirit-world; and one that lingers with the small bundle of the deceased's hair, which is kept by relatives until they can throw it into an enemy's country to become a roving, hostile demon. In West Africa, too, Miss Kingsley found four souls: one that survives the body; one that lives with some animal in the bush; one, the body's shadow, that lies down every night in the shadow of the great god, and there recovers its strength; and, finally, the dream-soul. Some natives hold that the three last are functions of the first or true soul; but the witch doctor treats all four separately². The shadow of a man, his reflection, his name, his totem, his breath, his dream-wraith, his corpse, supply natural starting-points for such speculations. Some Chinese philosophers held that "each of the five viscera has its own separate male soul³." I have found no belief in six souls; but Mr Skeat reports that, probably, in the old Animism of the Malays, each man had seven souls; though now they talk of only one; except in using spells, when the souls are addressed separately⁴. In the religion of Osiris there seems to have been a still greater number of souls: as of the name, the shape, the strength, the shadow, etc.: all reuniting with the immortal counterpart of a man's mummy, if justified at the last judgment. Professor Wiedemann suggests that these beliefs may have been collected from different local sources, and preserved for fear of losing anything that might be true⁵. Whereas, then, the prescientific mind is often accused of confusing things that are separate, we see here the opposite tendency to reify abstract aspects, and to separate things that are in nature united; and one probable cause of this is the practical interest of treating, and therefore of attending to and addressing, separately, certain aspects of a man in rites of exorcism, lustration, summoning, reinforcing, propitiation.

¹ J. O. Dorsey, "Siouan Cults" in the *Am. Bureau of Ethn.* 1889-90, xi. 512.

² *West African Studies*, 200.

³ Quoted by Sir J. G. Frazer's *Balder the Beautiful*, II. 196-208, with other beliefs in a plurality of souls; in one case thirty, in another thirty-six.

⁴ *Malay Magic*, 48

⁵ *Rel. of the Anc. Egyptians*, ch. ix.

The belief in an external soul that exists apart from oneself (though identified with oneself for good or evil) in an animal, in the bush, or where not, may have arisen from the connecting of the soul with the shadow or reflection. The shadow is, indeed, attached to a man by the feet (except when he leaps), if the whole is seen; but it goes away at night: the reflection is quite separate, and is seen *within* a pool (as in a mirror), not on the surface, approaching us when we advance, and withdrawing when we retire: whence it is easy to understand that to take a man's photograph may be (with advanced animists) to take away his soul; and this may be a third way, besides two already mentioned¹, in which the substitution of a likeness for a person comes to be practised in Magic². If this kind of soul may be some feet distant, why may it not be much further off, if there be any motive (such as the desire of secrecy) to wish or think it so? If it may reside within a pool, why not within anything else? What, in fact, becomes of it when we turn away? That it should be in an animal in the bush is reasonable enough, if one's Totem (even though imperfectly remembered as such) is an animal in the bush, and if oneself is in some sort that animal.

Beliefs as to the origin of souls sometimes bear the character of fanciful explanation myths. The Semang say that souls grow upon a soul-tree in the world of Kari (their chief god); whence they are brought by birds, which are killed and eaten by an expectant mother: souls of fishes and animals are also obtained by the mothers' eating certain fungi and grasses³. Here the analogy of the growth of fruits is adopted: being so familiar as to need no further explanation. Leibnitz's suggestion that monads are *fulgurations continuelles de la Divinité*⁴, is at about the same level of thought. In other cases, we see the struggling to birth of ideas that still seem plausible: such is the widespread tenet that every present human soul is the reincarnation of an ancestor. We find this in Australia, in Borneo, in Manipur, on the Congo, in North America and elsewhere; and it has been adopted with a moral significance into higher religions. The Bakongo seem to base their belief partly on personal resemblance; upon which ground a child may be thought to have the soul even of a living man; so that to point out such a resemblance is displeasing, since it implies that, the child having

¹ This *Journal*, vi. 315, and vii. 185.

² The Malays, in their Black Magic, having prepared a wax image of someone who is to be injured, endeavour, before operating, to entice their victim's soul into it: for them the image alone is not enough. (Skeat, *Malay Magic*, 48.)

³ *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, i. 194.

⁴ *Monadologie*, 47.

his soul, he must soon die¹. Another reason they give for their belief is that the child speaks early of things its mother has not taught it, and that this must be due to an old soul talking in a new body. But Bakongo albinos are incarnations of water-spirits, and greatly feared. Plato thought that, by a sort of law of psychic conservation, there must always be the same number of souls in the world². Possibly in some cases people began by naming children after their ancestors, and later inferred that those who bore the same name must be the same persons.

As to the destiny of souls there seems to exist amongst the tribes of men even greater variety of belief than as to their origin. They may pass through more than one stage of development: as in the western isles of Torres Straits one becomes at death, first a *mari*, and later a *markai* with a more definite status³; or as with the Veddas, one is at first called "the living one," and only a few days later becomes a *yaka*⁴. Often the dead will be reincarnated, but the interval between death and rebirth may be passed in an underworld, or in a city in the forest, or indefinitely in a land of ancestors. They may turn into plants; as among the Mafulu old people's ghosts become large funguses growing in the mountains⁵: but more frequently into animals; either (from seeming caprice) into such things as termites or wild pigs; or (because wings seem to suit the spirit) into a butterfly or bee; or into owls or bats that haunt the night; or into deer or bear-cats, because these are seen in the clearings near tombs; or into snakes, because these are seen to come out of tombs, and often come into huts as if returning to their homes. They may also become stars, or shooting stars, or mere naked demons, or white men.

Though the ghost survive the body, and it may be said (as by the Ekoi) that it cannot perish, and the reason may even be given (as in the Bismarck Archipelago), that it is of different nature from the body⁶, it is by no means always immortal. It may die, as it were a natural death, by oblivion; or, the next world being just like this, ghosts may fight together and kill one another⁷; according to the Tongans a ghost may be killed with a club; amongst the Bakongo it may be destroyed

¹ *The Primitive Bakongo*, 115.

² *Rep.* 611 A.

³ Haddon, *Cambridge Exp. to Torres Straits*, 355.

⁴ Seligman, *The Veddas*, 133.

⁵ R. W. Williamson, *The Mafulu*, 266.

⁶ J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*, 396

⁷ C. G. Seligman, *The Melanesians*, 658.

by burning its corpse¹. It has been thought that to suppress the ghost was the original motive of cremation; but the western Tasmanians cremated their dead, and can hardly have done so to be rid of such mild Animism as seems to have been entertained by the eastern tribes, who buried their dead or abandoned them². However, they seem to have been rid of it; whereas, in general, ghosts survive cremation, because this process cannot put an end to dreams. According to the Egyptians, the ghost participated in every mutilation of the body, and perished with its dissolution.

Whilst the ghost's life endures, its dwelling may be in the earth or sky, sea or forest, or in the land of the setting sun, or in the land of ancestors whence the tribe remembers to have migrated. Before departing to that undiscovered country, it may haunt the grave or the old home, till burial, or till the flesh decays, or till the funeral feast, or till death has been avenged. There may be one place for all ghosts, or two, or more, according to their age, or rank, or qualities (as sociable or unsociable), or whether or not their noses were bored; or according to the manner of their death, by violence, or suicide, or sorcery. Their journey thither may be short or long, an unadorned migration or rich in details of adventure. They may begin the new life exactly as they finished this one, or the old may be rejuvenated. As to their manner of life there, oftenest it is a repetition of their earthly state, perhaps better, or even much better, perhaps worse. And this conception is historically of the utmost importance: for (1) it seems to give the greatest confidence in a hereafter. Hume ascribes what seemed to him the incredulity of men with regard to a future life "to the faint idea we form of our future condition, derived from its want of resemblance to the present life³." And (2) from this conception proceeds the development of ghostly politics: presided over, according to tribes that have no chiefs, by a headman, such as Damarulum, or by the greatest known hunt-leader, like Kande Yaka; under advancing political structures, by chieftains, amongst whom one may be paramount, and so become a king or lord of all. It is everywhere an edifice built by hope and fear, under the guidance of analogy, and sometimes decorated by caprice, if this find acceptance with the tribe.

¹ J. H. Weeks, *The Primitive Bakongo*, 224.

² Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, 57-61.

³ *Treatise*, B. I., Part III, § 9.

VIII. *The Treatment of Ghosts.*

The behaviour of men toward the ghosts of their dead is chiefly governed by fear. The human power that has left the corpse is now invisible; that power, rarely quite trustworthy whilst in the body, especially when unobserved, retains its desires, caprices and hatreds that were partially controlled by social influences. What controls them now that the man is exempt from observation? How shall one defend oneself against him, or procure his neutrality, or even (as sometimes in the flesh) his help? The fear of ghosts has peculiar qualities: the invisibility of a spiritual enemy produces a general objectless suspicion and a sense of helplessness; associations with the physical conditions of the corpse and with darkness excite feelings very much like those aroused by snakes and reptiles. This fear may make the survivors quit the neighbourhood of the dead; sometimes makes them adopt means to induce the ghost to leave, and invent stories of how and whither he goes, which are believed by biological necessity; because, unless they can be rid of the ghost and the dread of him, or establish in some way the *pax deorum*, it is impossible to go on living.

The Yerkla-mining never bury their dead, nor in any way dispose of them. On seeing death approaching a tribesman, they make up a good fire for him, and leave the neighbourhood, not to return for a considerable time¹. The Sakai, having buried the dead affectionately with necklaces, wallets, etc., say to him: "Do not remember any more your father, mother, or relations. Think only of your ancestors gone to another place. Your living friends will find food." They then burn his house and desert the settlement, even abandoning standing crops². Among the Kikuyu, "if a person dies in a village, that village is often burnt, and the people trek off and build elsewhere," though much labour may have been spent on the surrounding fields. Sick people are often deserted³. Where land is closely settled such flight becomes impossible, and in any case it is very inconvenient; so that if anyone can believe it possible to frighten away the ghost by shouting at him, beating the air with boughs or firebrands, letting off arrows or guns, or to restrain him from walking by breaking the corpse's legs, or by placing loaded 'ghost-shooters' (straws filled with gunpowder) around the grave, so much the better. Many such plans are adopted, and they *must* be believed in.

¹ Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, 450.

² Skeat and Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, II. 95-9.

³ Stigand, *The Land of Zing*, 250.

Affection, however, has its part in the treatment of the dead: it is reasonable to attribute to affection the beginnings of the practices of leaving food at the tomb, burying weapons or ornaments with the corpse, celebrating funerary rites with lamentations; though in time this motive may be mixed with, or superseded by, fear of the ghost, or by fear of being suspected of having murdered the deceased by sorcery, should rites be neglected or maimed. It is not uncommon to carry about some bones of the departed, to hang round one's neck the skulls of infants untimely dead. The wild Veddass, though, having covered a corpse with boughs, they avoid the place for a long time for fear of being stoned, nevertheless have a strong feeling of good fellowship for the spirits of their dead¹. The old Norsemen believed that the dead were still united with the living by intense sympathy². In the eastern isles of Torres Straits, the Miriam perform an eschatological mystery, in which the recently deceased reappear on their way to the other world. The women and children take it for reality: their affections are said to be gratified; and at the same time their fears are allayed by the conviction that the ghosts, having been seen on their way to Hades, will no longer haunt them³. As rites begun in affection may become propitiatory through fear, and be further extended to obtain the aid of spirits in hunting, war, revenge, love, agriculture, trade, or any undertaking for subsistence, riches or power, every passion in turn seeks its gratification through Animism.

Extravagance in funerary rites may be checked by considerations of economy or convenience. Thus some tribes of South Australia may burn all the property of the deceased, but sometimes all except their stone axes, which are too valuable to be lost to the survivors. The Nagas bury with the body the things most closely associated with the dead; but things of small value, never the gun or the cornelian necklace⁴. The Todas, who burn their dead, lay the body on a bier with many valuable offerings and swing it three times over the fire; they then remove the money and the more valuable ornaments and burn the rest with the corpse. They say that the dead still have the use of everything that was swung over the fire; and tell a story to explain the ceremony; but Dr Rivers observes that "this symbolic burning has the great advantage that the objects of value are not consumed,

¹ C. G. Seligman, *The Veddass*, 131.

² Vigfussen and Powell, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I. 417.

³ *Camb. Exped. to Torres Straits*, VI. 253. .

⁴ Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, 100.

and are available for use another time¹." Economy may also induce the belief that ghosts are easily deceived, or are unaccountably stupid in some special way: as in the widespread practice of carrying a corpse out of its house through a hole in the wall; trusting that, the hole having been immediately repaired, the ghost can never find his way back; so soon does he forget the familiar door. This is cheaper than to burn the house down. Whilst often the most painful or disgusting rites are endured for fear of ghosts, at other times they are assumed to be so dull that we are tempted so say: "Whatever is convenient is credible." Superstitious practices may be carried out with self-destructive infatuation, or restricted at will: in Florida (Melanesia), in a certain stream, a very large eel was taken for a ghost; no one might bathe in, or drink at, the stream—"except at one pool, which for convenience was considered not to be sacred²." A conflicting desire creates a limiting belief.

Imagination-beliefs, being swayed by moods and passions, are necessarily inconsistent. Natives of the Bismarck Archipelago are cannibals and greatly fear the ghosts of those they devour. Whilst feasting they hang up a slice for the ghost himself, and afterwards make an uproar to scare him away. Nevertheless they keep his skull and jawbone, which the ghost might be supposed especially to haunt; so easily do other passions overcome fear. Of the fear of ghosts sometimes seems true that which Bacon says of the fear of death, that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak but it mates and masters it. The Sia Indians of North Mexico had a masterful way of dealing with the ghost of a slain enemy: they annexed him together with his scalp; for this having been brought to the village, a shaman offered a long prayer, and thus addressed the ghost: "You are now no longer an enemy; your scalp is here; you will no more destroy my people³." The inconsistency (sometimes met with) of supposing a man's personal qualities to go with his ghost, and yet eating some part of his body to obtain those qualities, may be due to the latter practice having been magical, and having persisted after the rise of Animism. Some of the Eskimo have such control over ghosts by magic, that they fear them very little. After a death, the ghost remains peaceably in the house four days (if a man) or five (if a woman), and is then dismissed by a

¹ *The Todas*, 363.

² Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*, 379.

³ Miss M. C. Stevenson, "The Sia" in *Am. Bureau of Ethn.* 1889-90, xi. 121.

ceremony to the grave, to wait there until a child is born in the village, when it is recalled to be the child's tutelary spirit¹.

IX. *Evolution and Dissolution of Animism.*

Animism, originating in the belief in ghosts of men, tends to spread as the explanation of whatever had formerly been attributed to Magic (if we take this to have been earlier); although it is far from occupying the whole region that thus lies open to it. We have seen that the extent of its prevalence as an explanatory principle, and consequently as the basis of cults, differs greatly amongst different peoples. But more interesting than the spread of belief as to the agency of spirits so as to include more and more objects, is the gradual differentiation of some of them from common ghosts in power, character and rank, and their integration into families and polities. A process, going on for ages and varying with every people, cannot be briefly described: the work of Sir E. B. Tylor, Herbert Spencer, Prof. W. Wundt and others in this department is well known. In general it may be said that, allowing for the influences of geographical conditions and tradition and foreign intercourse, the chief cause of the evolution of a spirit-world is the political evolution of those who believe in it; so that the patriarchies, aristocracies, monarchies and despotisms of this world are reflected in heaven. Tribes of the lowest culture—some African Pygmies, Fuegians, Mafulu, Semangs, Veddas—have the least Animism; at successive grades—Australians, Melanesians, Congolese, Amerinds, Polynesians—Animism increases and grows more systematic; and it culminates in the barbaric civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, Peru. But in civilizations of our modern type it rapidly loses ground.

The cause of such differences in the extension and elaboration of the animistic hypothesis cannot be that some tribes have had more time than others to think it out; since they have all had an equally long past. Animism is known to be very ancient, and there is no evidence that some races adopted it later than others. That, in the lower grades of culture, men want brains to think it out, is not a satisfactory explanation; because, on contact with superior races, backward peoples show themselves capable of much more than could have been inferred from their original state. Improvement in culture depends upon much besides native brains, namely, opportunities afforded by the resources of their habitat, and communication with other peoples.

¹ Stefánson, *My Life among the Eskimo*, 397.

The most backward peoples are the most isolated peoples. The development of Animism is entirely a matter of operating with ideas; and it seems to me that before men can build with ideas they must build with their hands; there must be occupations that educate, and give advantage to, constructive power, as in the making of boats and the building of houses and temples; for to this day a nation's material edifices are always, in clearness of plan, coherence and serviceableness, much in advance of their systems of theology and philosophy; because they must 'work,' as the Pragmatists say. Secondly, a suitable model for the edifice of ideas must be presented in the world of fact; and this, as we have seen, is supplied by the tribe's social and political structure; which, again, is clearly correlated with the improvement of architecture in building the houses of chiefs and gods. Thirdly, a favourable condition of the working out of any theory is to have the means of recording, either in oral literature or (still better) in writing, the advances already made; and, fourthly—a condition historically involved in the foregoing—the growth of a class of men, generally a priestly caste or order, sometimes poets, who have time to think, and the education and vocation to bring the accumulating masses of animistic—now religious—ideas to greater order and consistency. Hence there are two stages in the development of Animism—of course, not sharply separated: first, a long period of irregular growth in the tribal mind; and, secondly, a much shorter period, in which the extension of animistic theory depends more or less upon quasi-philosophical reflection.

With the differentiation of superior beings—heroic, ancestral or other gods—from common ghosts, Religion arises. As to the meaning of the word 'religion,' indeed, there is no agreement: some lay stress upon the importance of beliefs concerning supernatural beings; others upon prayer, sacrifice and other rites of worship; still others upon the emotions of awe and mystery. To define 'religion' (as a tribal institution) by all three of these characters seems to me the most convenient plan, and the most agreeable to common usage. That, on the one hand, pure Buddhism (if it ever was a living faith outside of a coterie of philosophers and saints), and, on the other hand, the spiritual condition of a few savages, may be wanting in one or other mark, is no serious objection. The former case is, in fact, exceptional and aberrant, and the latter rudimentary; not to give them the name of 'religion' in a technical sense is no wrong to anybody. Thus understood, then, Religion brings to the development and support of Animism many

social utilities and other influences; especially the influence of dynasties supposed to have descended from the gods; and of priesthoods, whose sustentation and authority depend upon the supposed necessity of their intervention in worship. In their hands the free popular development of animistic ideas comes to an end, and gives place to the co-ordination of ideas by reflection, and to the dictation of tenets and rites by policy. The simple motives of hope and fear that actuated popular Animism are now supplemented by dynastic and priestly interests and ambitions; beneath which lies, faintly recognised and ill served, the interest of society in order.

This later sophisticated Animism, so far as it obtains a hold upon the people, is imposed upon them by suggestion, authority and deception. The part of deception in the history of Animism cannot be overlooked: it begins at the beginning, preceded, perhaps, and prepared for by the devices of Magic-mongers. Amongst the Arunta, women and children are taught that the noise of the bull-roarer during initiation ceremonies is the voice of the spirit Twanyirika¹. Near Samoa Harbour, at harvest, they offer some of the first-fruits in a bowl to the ghosts; and, whilst the family feasts on the remainder, "the householder will surreptitiously stir the offerings in the bowl with his finger, and then show it to the others in proof that the souls of the dead have really partaken²." So early is the end supposed to justify the means. Animism, like Magic, strives to maintain its imaginations by further stimulating the imagination; and, in both cases, such practices are, with many men, compatible with firm belief on the part of the practitioner; who is merely anxious to promote the public good by confirming the weaker brethren: himself weak in the perception of incongruities.

Parallel with the development of Religion, a change takes place in the emotions connected with Animism. As the gods emerge from the shadow of night and the grave, and are cleansed from the savour of corruption, and withdraw to the summit of the world, they are no longer regarded with the shuddering fear that ghosts excite; as they acquire the rank of chiefs and kings, the sentiments of attachment, awe, duty, dependence, loyalty, proper to the service of such superiors, are directed to them; and since their power far exceeds that of kings, and implies the total dependence of man and nature upon their support and guidance, these sentiments—often amazingly strong toward earthly rulers—may toward the gods attain to the intensest heat of fanaticism.

¹ Spencer and Gillen, *Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, 497.

² Frazer, *Belief in Immortality*, 259.

Extolled by priests and poets, the attributes of the gods are exaggerated, until difficulties occur to a reflective mind as to how any other powers can exist contrary to, or even apart from, them: so that philosophical problems arise as to the existence of evil and responsibility, and the doctors reason high

Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And find no end, in wandering mazes lost.

This is one cause of the dissolution of Animism: the power that comprehends all powers ceases to be an object, and becomes the immanence of all things, good and evil. Another cause is the complexity of theogonies, or of spiritual kingdoms with their orders and degrees: found too fanciful, when hierarchic despotisms, that furnished the analogues, give place to the simpler social structure of democracies; or, to a certain type of democrat, even insulting, a provocative disparagement of the sovereignty of the people. And Animism has other enemies in the growth of Positivism, and sometimes in the resurgence of Magic.

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