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Greek Cults and Myths

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GREEK CULTS AND MYTHS.

Die Griechischen Culten und Mythen in ihren Beziehungen zu den Orientalischen Religionen. Von O. GRUPPE. Erster Band: Einleitung. Leipzig: Teubner. 1887. 14 Mk.

THIS is a work in the very best German style. A chapter runs to nearly four hundred pages, the introduction to upwards of seven hundred, and each page is the very largest octavo, closely printed, and containing more matter than a page of the *Classical Review*, and the work on the title-page does not profess to be, like Mr. Casaubon's, *A Key to all Mythologies*, but merely to deal with one mythology, the Greek, and only with one aspect of that, its relation to Oriental religions. It is surely not with a light heart that one sits down to master the contents of such a work, with the prospect of a second and a third such volume yet to appear. Nor is one encouraged by the statement which meets one directly in the preface, that the whole work is based on the fundamental idea of an unbroken and general community of culture between the Greeks and the Orientals. The idea is as irritating as that of the Baconian authorship of Shakspeare. But, lo! when one takes up the book, one is undone: it is intoxicating; everything else must be put on one side, and you can do nothing else but read the book, and though it takes five days hard reading, it is—extravagant as the statement may sound—worth the time expended.

The work begins with a critical review of all the most important attempts that have been made in ancient times and modern to explain the meaning and origin of cults and myths. In this examination the author has, according to the preface, endeavoured to put aside all prepossessions and conduct the investigation without prejudice, in order to lay a safe foundation, if not for his own theory, at any rate for a better solution of

the problem dealt with. It must therefore be regarded as a fresh instance of the truth that virtue is itself its own reward that the result of Herr Gruppe's long criticism of his predecessors is to establish the really fundamental idea of the book—which of course is that Herr Gruppe's key is right and everybody else's wrong. With the attempts made before the present century to explain the origin of myths, and the success with which Herr Gruppe successively overturns and triumphantly tramples on them, we do not propose to deal here. It is enough to say that these pages are most fascinating reading. They are so full of brilliant writing, profound learning, wholesome scepticism, and admirable common sense, that one's curiosity—and again it is the irony of fate which has led to a consummation so widely opposed to the author's careful endeavour, as we are warned in the preface, to exclude everything that can excite the curiosity of the reader—becomes most eager to learn how Herr Gruppe will maintain his own thesis. The reader feels that the author must be above the ordinary arguments designed to prove the dependence of early Greece on Egypt and the Orient for its civilisation, art, and mythology; and yet how is it possible that evidence strong enough to convince such an admirable sceptic as Herr Gruppe can have escaped all his predecessors? With this undercurrent of eager curiosity running in one's mind one readily agrees with the author in dismissing the Rationalists, such as Grote, who will persist in endeavouring to import reason into myths which are evidently destitute of reason; and in dismissing the Localists, who, from the topographical features of one locality, try to derive an explanation for a myth which so far from being local is universal. But when the author next proceeds to open an attack on the school of Grimm the reader begins to feel that things are becoming serious. The

explanation of the origin of mythology offered by this school is based on the teaching that the tales of gods and heroes enshrined in the poetry of a Homer are derived from the folk-lore, the *märchen*, and the popular poetry of the people to which the epic poet belonged: the people alone can create myths, and the people can create myths alone. Myth is the form in which the people expresses its feelings. Now, Herr Gruppe points out, the people as a whole cannot compose; some one individual must first invent the tale, and from the narrow circle of his hearers the tale must spread from circle to circle until it gradually permeates the whole people. If it does so spread it becomes popular poetry and national. It is the expression of the people's feeling only in the sense that it alone has commended itself to the feelings of the people, whereas countless rival attempts have failed to commend themselves to the popular taste, have perished in the struggle for existence. But in what other way does the epic of literature survive in the struggle and become national? Plainly in both cases the function of the public is not creative but critical, in both cases it weeds out what it does not approve. It matters not from what point in the area of the nation the tale takes its start, the conditions which determine whether it shall or shall not spread in ever-widening circles from the spot into which it was first cast by the artist, until its final circle comprises the whole of the nation, are identical in both cases. But into what part of the nation is the myth first cast? Is it necessarily cast first amongst the lower classes of society, as is assumed by the Grimm school? On the contrary, it is matter of common observation that the lower classes endeavour to imitate the enjoyments and amusements of the upper, and in literature the fact is undoubted; the songs and anecdotes, &c., which in one generation are the exclusive property of the upper classes, in the next generation or the next after that sink to the middle and lower classes. So far as observation can establish any conclusion, it is that the direction of the current in these matters is from the upper to the lower strata, not the opposite. But in any case the Grimm school leave the origin of myths quite unexplained. Granted that the point in society at which myths about the gods always originate is somewhere in the lower strata, what external force or internal impulse is it that compelled the people to imagine that there were gods

outside the world, and to bend the knee to them?

We now come to the school of Comparative Mythologists, represented by Adalbert Kuhn and Max Müller, who undertake to ascertain what gods the original Indo-Europeans worshipped, in the same way as it has been ascertained what plants they cultivated and what animals they had domesticated, and who announce to the world as the result of their investigations that the gods of the pre-ethnic period were nature-gods, and its myths nature-myths. Herr Gruppe begins his examination of this theory with a review of those gods whose names have been established for the pre-ethnic period by etymological equations which do not violate the principles of Comparative Philology. Such are indeed few, but they are the names of nature-powers. That the words *Dyaus*, *Uranos*, *Helios*, do go back to Indo-Germanic times, the most cautious of philologists may safely admit; and words are the names of things, therefore the things, in this case gods, were known to the people who possessed the names for them? Not quite: words are certainly the names of things; but, unfortunately they are the names of other things also in many cases. The etymological equations referred to prove that the Indo-Europeans before their dispersion had names for the sun, the sky, &c.: they do not prove that the Indo-Europeans prayed to these phenomena of nature. But by violating the laws of Comparative Philology, which they protest must never be violated, the Comparative Mythologists succeed in imputing many other gods to the pre-ethnic period. With regard to these gods Herr Gruppe shows two things. First, it is those gods of whose functions, or the derivation of whose names, we know least, that are most plausibly identified. None of the public gods of the Greeks can be identified with a Hindu god without being violently wrested from his natural sphere, whereas a name of which we know so little as we know of *Mamers* or the Swabian hunter *Marten* can make no protest when it is identified with the Hindu *Marutas*. Next, viewing these identifications from the philological side, merely as etymological equations, we cannot but feel suspicious when we observe that these identifications never extend beyond two languages—except indeed when they do not extend as far as two, when, that is to say, one of the two names is invented for the purposes of Comparative Mythology, as for instance **Svarya* to correspond to *Hera* or **Dyunishya* to *Dionysus*. When the iden-

tifications are of a less suspicious character, as is the case with many points of resemblance between Hindu and Persian mythology, we find that these resemblances do not occur in the oldest parts of the literature of the two nations, but in the more recent. Consequently the unprejudiced inquirer will be tempted to wonder whether the facts do not rather point to borrowing, since these two nations lay so close to each other, than to an original pro-ethnic origin. And further, as a matter of philology we always have to remember that two nations may quite well develop similar names for the same thing, when they possess in common a root which affords a natural designation for the object. Bearing this undoubted fact of philology in mind we can now take a step farther. So far it has been shown that there are no names of gods common to all Indo-Germanic peoples, and that therefore we cannot scientifically ascribe any such names to the pro-ethnic period of these peoples. Nor can we ascribe a belief in gods either in general or in particular to that period. True, many Indo-Germanic peoples have a word for god which is derived from a root *div* which seems in pro-ethnic times to have been used to designate the light and the sky. But then, in the Chinese, the Finnic, and the Mongol languages we find that the names for god are derived from roots with this meaning. Such roots were obviously predestined to be employed for this purpose. Further, if the original Indo-Europeans possessed a belief in gods, they must also have had certain rites with which they worshipped them and made their sacrifices to them. It should therefore be possible to identify in the various Indo-Germanic peoples the rites and cults which they inherited from pro-ethnic times. But this reasonable demand is not fulfilled. When we get an undoubted etymological equation, as we will assume is *pontifex* = *pathikrit*, we find that the *pathikrit* originally had nothing to do with religious rites, and the *pontifex* originally nothing to do with bridges or roads. To all this we must add that the contents of the myths imputed to the primitive Indo-Germanic period are absolutely at variance with the stage of culture which palaeontology, linguistic and otherwise, has shown to be characteristic of that period. The limping smith Hephaistos corresponds to the lame Wayland Smith, the golden fleece of the Argonauts to the gold of the Nibelungs; and if there is a fact certain about the primitive Indo-Europeans it is that they knew nothing of metals and nothing of smithying. So too De Gubernatis'

book on Comparative Zoology is full of primeval myths about plants which were as unknown to the primeval Indo-European, as is the paradise of Hindu, Persian, and Greek writers. The conclusion of the whole matter is that the comparative method is wrong from its inception and in its very conception. It is based on the erroneous idea that a nation is an organism, of which the organs are the various expressions of the national life and the various departments of national culture, transmitted from one generation and reproduced by inheritance in the next; whereas in reality a nation is a perpetually changing mass which is ever absorbing foreign elements and thereby establishing points of resemblance and community between itself and the nations from which it borrows those elements. A nation *A* may as regards its bodily structure belong to an ethnological family *B*, as regards complexion to *C*, may share its vocabulary with *D*, and its accent with *E*, borrow its agriculture from *F*, and its alphabet from *G*, and share its religion with *H*. Every nation of which history knows is a compound of heterogeneous elements; and an original people pure and uncompounded is a 'combination' for which actual facts offer absolutely no parallel. The original Indo-European people is a linguistic hypothesis. The peoples grouped together under it are not those which any ethnological hypothesis groups together. Nor are they those which would be grouped together if we took as our principle of classification the habit of praying to the sun and the sky, and a belief in a future and a better world. Political divisions do not correspond with linguistic divisions; and the area of propagation of art or science or of religion or myth is not determined by the limits of language.

The comparative method, then, does not, and from its fundamentally erroneous nature could not be expected to give any satisfactory explanation of the resemblance shown even in detail by the various forms of a myth—such, for instance, as that of Paradise, which not only cannot be traced back to pro-ethnic times, but cannot even be traced back to the oldest literature of the countries which possess it, and which, further, is wholly irreconcilable with the stage of culture to which the original Indo-Europeans had attained. Since, therefore, the comparative method breaks down so utterly, is it entirely inconceivable that these myths may have spread from one nation to another by borrowing? In historic times foreign cults and deities were only excluded on political

grounds; when no such grounds existed, they were admitted. But whereas in historic times it was through the layer of the foreign slave population that Oriental cults filtered into Greece, and consequently were absorbed unassimilated, in prehistoric times they were presented to the educated classes, and were by them digested into a pure Greek form. It is unfortunate that there is a great absence of direct evidence of Phœnician settlements in early Greece. Homer does not seem to know that the Phœnicians had any settlements in Hellas; the attempts to refer the names of various Greek places to a Semitic origin are not to be trusted; myths such as those of Kadmos, Europa, Pelops, are quite worthless for purposes of history. But nevertheless the Phœnicians must have settled in Greece: the currents of the Mediterranean must have taken them by its coasts, and the murex trade compelled the erection of a factory and a visit lasting at least through the winter. The alphabet, weights and measures, came to Greece through Phœnician agency. Agronomy and medicine may be traced to Egypt. The Homeric house is modelled on the Aegyptio-Phœnician palace. Helbig has shown the Phœnician origin of Homeric clothing, armour, &c. 'Even such an Aryo-maniac as Milchhöfer is compelled to allow that Greek art was considerably influenced by Oriental.' Further, the Greek language, especially in sacral terminology, is penetrated with Oriental influence, not so much with loan-words, which are inconsiderable in number, but with translations of Oriental words: thus *ὄρκος* is connected with *ἔργον*, just as the Egyptian *ārgu* 'oath' means 'that which binds'; *ὥρα* like the Egyptian *Renenet* means not only 'time' but also 'spring' and 'youth.' And, finally, there are myths admitted by everybody to be of Oriental origin: those of Kadmos, Adonis, Typhon, Baitylos, &c.

After this digression Herr Gruppe resumes his historical and critical review. The older school of Grimm regarded the fairies and nixies of modern *märchen* and folk-lore as the gods and heroes of the old mythology, dethroned by Christianity. The younger school, on the contrary, regards these tales as going back to the oldest, pre-ethnic times, and as forming the soil out of which grew the tales of heroes and the myths of the gods, incorporated in Epic poetry. To a certain extent the ancient gods may now "go spooking around" — *herumspuken*, as the German has it—as sprites and hobgoblins; and some *märchen* were incorporated, for instance, in the wonderland tales

of the *Odyssey*; but if these tales were the soil out of which grew mythology, then the more complicated and most recent myths should be the most highly differentiated; whereas it is the most complicated and the most artificial myths of the Greeks, the Hindus, and the Semites, the myths of paradise, the flood, the creation, cosmogonies, etc., which most closely correspond to each other. Above all, the theory leaves it unexplained how people came to believe in the supernatural in the first instance.

A much more satisfactory explanation of the origin of myths is that of Max Müller, who is undoubtedly right in referring myths to the necessity under which those who use language are laid of expressing themselves in similes. But although we have here the undoubted origin of myths, Max Müller fails to explain why the most different peoples should be compelled to use precisely the same similes. The idea at once suggests itself that if they do so, it must be because all peoples in a primitive stage of development are essentially like each other; and this is in fact the explanation put forward by the Demonologists. Now the arch-Demonologist is Mr. Andrew Lang. But the supposed similarity, as a matter of fact, does not exist, except in the negative sense that all uncivilised peoples are different from our civilised selves. In all other respects savages differ amongst themselves most widely. We can, for instance, no more associate polygamy with a certain stage of development amongst savages than we can with a certain stage of development in the animal world. As for the problem of the immoralities of mythology, it cannot be solved by the theory of survival, because, as is amply shown by the way in which the Greek tragedians treated myths, every generation modifies the myths it inherits to accord with its own views of morality; and when one part of a myth is thus modified, and another not so completely modified, we get the truly irrational element of myth.

But all attempts hitherto made to explain the origin of mythology have failed because they have been dissociated from the problem of the origin of religion. Mythologists have specialised; but the separation of myth from religion, though convenient for the investigation of mythology, is absolutely without warrant in history. Thus we find it necessary to embark on the sea of problems which surround the origin of religion. Max Müller's attempt to derive the sentiment of religion from man's perception of the Infinite and the Absolute is in the first place at variance with

recorded fact; the Hindu of the Veda does not pray to the Infinite, but to the Sun. Next, granted that man has a perception of the Infinite—*i.e.*, that infinity exists—how could that merely intellectual conviction ever induce him to cast offerings into the fire and murmur prayers? Those Kakodaemonists, who derive the religious sentiment from ancestor worship, equally offend against the recorded sequence of actual facts: in the Vedas worship of the gods, as a matter of history, preceded the worship of ancestors. It is to the Eudaemonists we must rather turn. Of these J. S. Mill has pointed out: "So long as human life is insufficient to satisfy human aspirations, so long there will be a craving for higher things, which finds its most obvious satisfaction in religion." This craving, as Bender has rightly shown, receives an illusory satisfaction—illusory in the sense that the satisfaction of the craving is internal and peculiar to the individual. But though the satisfaction of the craving is personal and peculiar to the individual, the function of the instinct is social. The individual instinct can only be satisfied by the performance of actions which in their result tend to the preservation of society, which is the result also of the exactly parallel illusion of Free-Will. But if the thing is an illusion, if the savage's prayer to his idol meets with no objective and external response or fulfilment, how did any man, to say nothing of all men, come to believe in it? When once started the belief might be spread by the teaching and preaching of those who were firmly, though falsely, convinced of its truth. Indeed it is a matter of history that all religions are spread by the enthusiastic teaching of the founder and his apostles; and it is a matter of personal observation with each of us that religion is communicated to us. We may possess a latent capacity of religious belief, but there is no active impulse universal in man which would impel, say a deaf mute, in the absence of all teaching, to work out the ideas of immortality, future punishments and rewards, etc., or even to make offerings and prayers. It is difficult to conceive how the belief could originate in any speck of the mass of humanity. It is almost impossible to conceive that it should originate several times, or in several places, and yet now it leavens the whole mass; and—which is still more instructive—in the ancient world the form it took was the same amongst the most different peoples. The conclusion is irresistible—and Herr Gruppe claims to be the first to have reached the conclusion—that in no

very remote period of the past the religious idea or illusion was propagated from one centre to the various nations of the earth, and then by them modified into the shape most adapted to their several requirements. Even Mexico and South America cannot be exempted. But how could the illusion have ever entered the mind of the first man who entertained it? What can the stimulus be which first called the capacity into play and fostered the illusion? Herr Gruppe has the answer to that question, and it would be as unfair to reveal it here as it would be to disclose the plot of a sensational novel in a review. It is only necessary to say that he keeps his secret to the last page but one with a skill worthy of Gaboriau, and that the art with which the whole book up to that point is written so as to culminate in the startling proposition with which the first chapter ends is such as is to be found only in novelists of the first rank in the construction of plots. The feeling with which one puts down the book is much the same as that produced by the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—most wonderful, most powerful, most ingenious, perhaps even possible; but is it legitimate art to give the reader such a shock?

There are many scholars who will be compelled to read this book. It is a treasury of weapons against the Comparative Mythologist. The Demonologist will have to reckon with it. The Kakodaemonist will have it thrust before his notice. Linguistic palaeontology will have to justify itself. Writers on the origin of religion cannot ignore it. Orientalists will have to pronounce upon it. The historian will have to include it in his survey. Historians of Greek literature especially must pay it the tribute of consideration. And no scholar should be without it.

If what has been said is enough to advertise the book to the notice of scholars by whom, not being specialists in any of the directions enumerated, it might otherwise be overlooked, the first object of this review will have been accomplished. It is however impossible to allow the work to go without some words of criticism. As a rule works which argue that myths spread by borrowing and not by inheritance can only be judged on the instances which they produce; and, as Herr Gruppe does not in this volume get beyond introductory matter, it might be thought premature and illegitimate to criticise his work at this stage. But it is of the essence of Herr Gruppe's position to deny *in toto* the existence of a pro-ethnic

Indo-European religion, to deny that the mind of man is so constituted as to allow of religion originating at several distinct centres, and to deny that there may be more than one key to mythology. If therefore a pro-ethnic Indo-European religion can be established, his theory must submit to structural alterations so considerable in extent as to amount to pulling down the whole theory; for the theory demands apparently that the Indo-European peoples shall be shown to have borrowed their religion at no very remote period. The theory again collapses if the instinct to worship, instead of being, as Herr Gruppe maintains, a mere potential capacity, is as active and imperative in all men as it is amongst those of our fellow subjects in India, who find it necessary to worship the red pillar-boxes erected, for other purposes, by Her Majesty's Government. And in the case of both these rival hypotheses Herr Gruppe seems to me to have failed to make out his case. First as to the Comparative method: it is true that the original Indo-Germanic period is a linguistic and not an ethnological hypothesis; what complexion or what skulls the people who spoke the original Indo-Germanic language possessed we do not know, and what they had they may have borrowed for aught we know. Next, if every piece of culture they possessed was borrowed by them from the neighbouring populations, that would not alter the fact that they did possess those pieces of culture, and the value of language as proving that they possessed them would remain unimpaired. The original Indo-Europeans may have been as heterogeneous a compound as any modern nation, their language may in respect both of vocabulary and syntax have been as mixed as our own, and yet their language would be as good a catalogue of the things they were familiar with as is the language of any other nation. The question is whether amongst the objects thus catalogued we can find any gods, or any religious ideas. Herr Gruppe denies that there was in the original language any word for god at all; he explains the etymological equation: Skt. *dēva* = Pers. *daeva* = L. *divus* = Lith. *dēvas* = O. Pr. *deiwas* = Gall. *deivos* = Cymric *duw* = Irish *día* = O. Norse *tívar*, in effect, as a chance coincidence. This seems to me extravagant, and most readers of the *Classical Review* will probably agree with me, and will feel themselves fortified in their opinion when they learn that it is also the opinion of so careful an inquirer as Dr. O. Schrader. Scepticism is good, but caution is better. But when we have once admitted

that the original Indo-Europeans did possess a word for god, then we have no reason for denying that Uranos, Zeus, etc., which may have been words in ordinary use to designate the sky as an object of sense, may also have been used to designate it specially as an object of worship. Further than this, however, I cannot go with the Comparative Mythologist. I believe in Zeus, Uranos, Ushas. I renounce all gods who owe their existence to violations of the laws of Comparative Philology, and I am left with quite enough—though they may be counted on the fingers of one hand—to overthrow Herr Gruppe's position. Another first-class fortress which Herr Gruppe has passed without capturing and has left in his rear to harass and annoy him is the stronghold of the Demonologists. He is quite at one with the Demonologists as to the fact which requires explanation. It is that nations resemble one another in their myths who differ in language, culture, and everything else. He maintains that the resemblance of these myths is too great to admit of the theory of their independent origin. I should be inclined to maintain that their area of distribution was too wide to admit of the theory that they spread from one single centre. The comparatively recent date of the Aztec civilisation of Mexico, and the odd nooks and corners of Asia into which at a very early date Christianity penetrated, do indeed make it conceivable that the religions of Central America may have come ultimately from the Old World; but what shall we say of the theory of borrowing when it is called in to account for the religions of Polynesia? And yet, though I am not Demonologist enough to quote from Polynesian cosmologies off-hand, or to possess the means of giving chapter and verse for my assertion, I believe that there are resemblances enough to be found in Polynesian theogonies and mythology to make it necessary for Herr Gruppe to maintain that they too were borrowed from the Old World: and yet these resemblances are not great enough to lend the least degree of plausibility to the assumption that they were borrowed. A yet more fundamental difficulty in the way of the borrowing theory is that it does not account for the whole of the facts. That a religion may be borrowed is intelligible enough, from the intrinsic importance of the loan, and from the ardour of its apostles (though Herr Gruppe admits that ancient religions are distinguished by the absence of proselytising ardour), and finally from the alluring charms which, if we believe in Herr Gruppe's secret,

we must allow were conditional of the acceptance of the religious illusion. But none of these considerations can be used to explain the enormous area covered by such a trivial amusement as that of what Mr. Tylor calls, I believe, "sense riddles." Our nursery riddle, in which the teeth appear as white sheep on a red hill, has its parallel in the Zulu riddle, where they appear as dancers dressed in white hip-dresses. These riddles are obviously of independent origin, and may the more justly be quoted in this connection as they plainly owe their (independent) origin to that delight in similes which Herr Gruppe himself admits to be the chief factor in the making of myths. In truth he seems to me considerably to underrate the amount of human nature in man, and not once to touch the undeniable truth that similar organisms must respond to similar tests with a similar reaction. On no other hypothesis do I see how we are to account for the apparently concerted actions of the gregarious and migratory animals, and I see no reason for refusing to employ it to explain some of the actions of man in the stage of his development least removed from the scale of creation below him. As for Herr Gruppe's refusal to admit that the immoralities of myth can be survivals, because each generation adapts the myths it has inherited to its own notions of morality, it is only necessary to say that this logically leads him to the conclusion that these immoralities were not inconsistent with the views and habits of the generation which continued to recount them; nor indeed does he shrink from affirming the conclusion: "If the mutilation of Uranos, or Kronos' swallowing his children, had been as incompatible with the modes of thought of the later Greeks as A. Lang maintains, the myths would have either been forgotten or modified."

No one but a man with a theory to maintain will deny that the Demonologists make important contributions towards the solution of the problem of mythology, and we cannot join Herr Gruppe in denouncing eclecticism. At present we must be content to attack the problem from all sides, and to accept a fact by whomsoever it is established. There will come a time when it will be possible to combine the facts: at present it is perfectly allowable to check one method by another without committing ourselves unreservedly to any. That similar myths may have originated independently is one of the facts that the mythologist has now to reckon with. That some of these myths can be traced by the comparative method to pro-ethnic Indo-

European times is another. And that some myths are borrowed by one nation from another is a fact which even Herr Gruppe's advocacy of it will not induce us to disbelieve. But what we want now, in order to decide in any given case between the theories of borrowing and independent origin, is a more precise definition of the area of distribution of the myths in question and of the exact amount of resemblance. It is conceivable that the area of those myths, such as that of the Four Ages of the world, which present the closest resemblances, will be found to be narrow enough to admit of the theory of borrowing: and that the resemblances of those myths, of which the area is too wide to admit of the theory of borrowing, such as the belief in a future world, will be found to be not too great to admit of the theory of their independent origin. The decision, in the case of any given myth, between the claims of the comparative method and the borrowing theory will, I venture to suggest, be found to depend on the possibility of dating the myth in question. When we can approximately and relatively date a myth, as would be possible in the case, for instance, of myths connected with the metals, cultivated plants, the vine, etc., then we shall have some criterion by which to distinguish between inherited and borrowed myths, and should gain some information as to the conditions under which borrowing is possible. Nor can we dismiss ancestor-worship quite so summarily as does Herr Gruppe; but we must content ourselves with pointing out that he scarcely appreciates the enormous area of this form of belief, neglects the important fact that it is found where gods are unknown, and with regard to the Vedas puts too much reliance on the argument *ex silentio*, which, if applied to the tragedians of Athens, would lead to the erroneous conclusion that ancestor-worship was unknown to the contemporaries of Sophocles.

It is when we come to Herr Gruppe's own theory that we find the necessity of precision in dating myths. As it is necessary for his theory to post-date the original Indo-Germanic religion, so it is necessary to ante-date the zenith of Phœnician influence in Greece. To prove that the mythology of Homer was borrowed from the Orient, and assimilated into such thoroughly Greek form as it wears in Homer, the Phœnicians must be shown to have established an intellectual and culture-ascendency over Greece in pre-Homeric times such as must have left unmistakable marks on Homeric life. Now,

to me Herr Gruppe does not at present seem to have even made out a case for this view. The strongest argument he can point to is Helbig's book on Homeric dress; but that, as all know who know anything of the question, has been considerably shaken—not to say shattered—by Studniczka (*Altgriechischen Tracht*, Wien: 1886). The pre-Homeric remains at Mycenae are not now (cf. Baumeister, *Denkmäler*, s.v. Mykenai) considered to show traces of Phoenician art influence. The Iron Age, which the Phoenicians may be regarded as introducing into Greece, is only beginning in Homeric times; and the alphabet, which undoubtedly marks the zenith of Phoenician influence, being in its earliest Greek form not earlier than 800 B.C., is post-Homeric. As for Herr Gruppe's own contribution to the question of the date of Phoenician influence, I mean the translation of Oriental words into Greek, as evidenced, for instance, by the analogy between *homo* (if it is connected with *humus* and *χαμαί*) and *ὄν*, we can only ask whether he thinks that the Indo-Europeans had to wait for a word for 'man' until the Semites showed the advisability of having one. And is it usually the case that in translating from a foreign language one invents a word for an idea or an object which has no recognised designation in one's own language? Is not the common practice to borrow the foreign word or to specialise or generalise an already existing word?

The same tendency to ante-date Oriental influence on Greek religious thought is visible in Chapter II., which makes by far the larger part of this volume, and of which as yet we have made no mention. It consists formally of a review of the most important sources of our information as to the history of myths and cults, that is to say of the Vedas, of Assyrian hymns and theogonies (for which the author was of course unable to utilise Professor Sayce's Hibbert Lectures), Phoenician literature, Egyptian, and finally (and at great length) Greek literature. But this chapter, too, like the first, in its result is seen to advance the author's own theory; and from this point of view Orphic theogonies are of the utmost value to Herr Gruppe. With regard to Orphic literature it is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that of the literature ascribed in classical times to the mythical Orpheus we possess only extremely comminuted fragments, and that of its contents we know nothing. On the other hand, of post-classical and pseudo-Orphic literature

we do possess considerable specimens, which are, as is unanimously agreed upon, penetrated throughout with Oriental influence. Hitherto every one has regarded the Oriental quality of pseudo-Orphic literature as the natural and necessary consequence, or rather expression, of the fact that in Hellenistic times Greek thought and speculation were transplanted from Greece into centres, such as Alexandria, where they were surrounded by and soaked in Oriental influence. Herr Gruppe, however, admitting that stray Phoenician, Syrian, or Egyptian ideas may have found their way into the pseudo-Orphic literature at this period, maintains that the bulk of such ideas were present in Orphic literature, not only in the time of the pre-Socratic philosophers, but from the beginning. And his proof, so far as I can pick the argument out, is based on the idea (novel to me) that the *Διὸς ἀπάτη* in *Iliad* XIV. is a parody. That, further, it is a parody on a pre-Homeric Orphic theogony is perfectly clear, for Homer calls Oceanus *θεῶν γένεσιν*, and speaks of Oceanus *ὅσπερ γένεσιν πάντεσσι τέτυκται*; while Plato in the *Cratylus* says that Orpheus delivered himself to the same effect; and Athenagoras expressly says (*Ath.* c. 18) that the verse *ὅσπερ γένεσιν κ.τ.λ.* did actually occur in the Orphic theogony. Finally, when we have once admitted that Oceanus and Tethys were the primal parents, we are at once in the groove in which runs the Phoenician cosmogony translated by Philo. Now, a hypercritical opponent might say that it is difficult to distinguish between what Philo actually found in his Phoenician authorities and what he may have imported into them; that it seemed to him that the literature ascribed to the mythical Orpheus in or before Plato's time was quite as likely to contain quotations from Homer as Homer from it; and lastly, that the *Διὸς ἀπάτη* does not read to him like a parody. But we, dismissing such hypercriticism, will content ourselves with pointing out that the question at issue is: how to account for the Oriental colouring of the post-classical, Hellenistic, pseudo-Orphic literature. On the one hand we have Herr Gruppe's somewhat complicated hypothesis; on the other we have the ordinary view that the pseudo-Orphic literature, flourishing, as it admittedly did flourish, at a time when Oriental influence was, as a matter of history, pervading and penetrating Greek thought, borrowed its Oriental character then, and not at a time when the influence of the Orient on Greek thought is conjectural and the very existence

of any kind of Orphic literature doubtful. The known cause is ample to account for the effect; but Herr Gruppe prefers to resort to an additional cause, as unnecessary as it is unsatisfactory; and herein, though not here alone, he shows, as it seems to me, a want of the judicial faculty, which can in mythology, of all departments of scholarship, least be dispensed with; for the business of the mythologist is principally to hold the balance between hypotheses which differ in their amount of probability, though they may agree in never reaching certainty.

Long as this notice is, I must add to its length a remark on Herr Gruppe's theory as to religion and its origin. That religion is an illusion will seem to some of us a *petitio principii*. But let us assume for the moment that it is an illusion; then the whole force of his subsequent argument is derived from the assumption that it is the hardest thing in the world to understand how a man can delude himself into believing something which is not a fact. This is simply the vulgar fallacy that because man possesses reason, therefore he is a rational being. But to return to the *petitio principii*. Herr Gruppe may be right that religion is illusory, and the religious sentiment a mere potential capacity, and yet the stimulus to it may be something far other than that which he suggests. In a volume of the 'International Scientific Series' issued a few weeks ago ('*Animal Magnetism*') we have satisfactory medical evidence to show that a hypnotised patient, to whom it is suggested that on waking he should do a certain action, not only punctually performs the appointed action, in entire ignorance that it was suggested to him, but also when questioned is always prepared with an explanation, satisfactory to his own mind, of the motive which he erroneously imagines prompted him to the action. So too it is conceivable that religion

may be an illusion in the sense that "the craving after higher things" which Herr Gruppe and J. S. Mill explain to their own satisfaction, and in entire ignorance of the real cause, as the necessary play of the psychological mechanism of man, may be itself the "suggestion" of a Mind not our own. Or our explanation of the "suggestion," if we explain it as do the believers in religion, may be illusory in the sense that the way in which our minds, conceiving from their very constitution everything under the forms of space and time, conceive a Being not in space and time, must necessarily be illusive though not delusive.

It has already been said that there is a lack of the judicial faculty in Herr Gruppe; there is also an absence of judiciousness. His explanation of the origin of religion—the secret which we have hitherto faithfully kept, and are not now going to reveal—is not more plausible than half a dozen other explanations which a man of Herr Gruppe's ingenuity and learning could, we are confident, readily have elaborated, and any one of them would have been less crude and injudicious than the one he has chosen to advocate. Had the speculation been put forward, as in itself it might well have been, in a Programme or Dissertation, it would have been enough to point out that the stimulant which, according to Herr Gruppe, called into exercise the latent capacity for religious illusion was long known to the pro-ethnic Indo-Europeans, who yet according to him had no religion: every one would have accorded him the merit of ingenuity and would have prophesied that with time and wider reading the author would wax in wisdom and discretion. But, as it is, his book shows tremendous learning and must have taken enormous time to write. If water chokes us, wherewith shall we wash it down?

F. B. JEVONS.

ARCHAIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM CRETE.

D. COMPARETTI, *Leggi antiche della città di Gortyna*, Firenze, 1885 (also in the *Museo Italiano*, Vol. i); F. BÜCHELER and E. ZITELMANN, *Rheinisches Museum* (1885) N. F. Bd. 40 (*Ergänzungsheft*; 'Das Recht von Gortyn'); J. and T. BAUNACK, *Die Inschrift von Gortyn*, Stuttgart, 1886; H. LEWY, *Stadtrecht von Gortyn*, Berlin, 1885; *Museo Italiano di Antichità classiche*, edited by D. COMPARETTI, Florence, 1885 sqq. Vols. i, ii.

THE appearance of a new number of the *Museo Italiano* affords a fitting opportunity for a short notice of the recent epigraphical discoveries in Crete. Our sketch must necessarily be a very imperfect one. A mere glance at the list given above of the literature called into existence by the discoveries will suffice to show that no one article can give an adequate account of them, whether as concerns their bearing upon the history of the Greek Alphabet, the history of Ancient