

FOLK-PSYCHOLOGY

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Folk-psychology has not yet reached the happy condition of "the ship that found herself." Its scope, its method, are matters of dispute, its *raison d'être* even is in some quarters accepted with hesitation. It would hardly be profitable to discuss here the methodological and terminological questions involved; some of the more important issues, however, will be incidentally touched on in the course of this review.

Thurnwald (12) observes that in primitive conditions there can be no question of formal legal categories; savage law is simply savage custom looked at from a certain point of view. It follows that we cannot make use of our own legal abstractions in describing the legal forms of primitive folk. He further notes that savages do not always live up to their reputation as good observers; the people of Buin (Bougainville, Melanesia), for instance, are unaware of the connection between the caterpillar and the butterfly. The inhabitants of the Gazelle Peninsula assert that children found in the bush are the fruit of a liana. Thus we need not wonder at the ignorance of some peoples with reference to the processes of sexual conception; an ignorance which results in multiform whimsical beliefs as to the relations between man and plants and animals. Thurnwald's remarks about blood revenge in Melanesia are interesting. The avenger may meet his victim in open combat or he may suddenly attack him from ambush. Nor is it necessary for the act of vengeance to occur at once or within a defined period. If the offender is strong and powerful, well protected and hard to get at, vengeance may be postponed for months and years; but sooner or later the fatal blow will fall.

Kroeber (7) points out that the still current belief that conduct may be determined by ideas or reason is a delusion. The opposition also to some actions, as cannibalism, incest, lack of parental or filial devotion, "is so thoroughly instinctive that these crimes have hardly had to be dealt with by most people, and their rarity and want of infectiousness are recognized in the failure of creeds and codes to provide against them." While the horror of incest, pollution, etc., is common to all people, the ideas as to what constitutes incest or pollution vary greatly from place to place and from time to time.

Stumpf (10) criticizes Darwin's theory of the origin of music from

song; Spencer's theory of its origin from emotional speech; Wal-laschek's, from dancing; Bücher's, from communal labor. Music, for Stumpf, is characterized by definitely fixed but transposable intervals. The origin of music he finds in vocal signs at a distance. Thus certain sounds became fixed in pitch and were sustained longer than in ordinary speech. Later, intervals, beginning probably with the octave, arose. Religious motives may have coöperated in the early development of music. Stumpf gives valuable bibliographic references and a collection of primitive songs and tunes.¹

Thurnwald attempts to characterize the mental atmosphere (*Denkart*) reflected in totemism (II). He also emphasizes the social aspect of that institution. "Der Totemismus ist eine soziologische Theorie, die auf einer bestimmten Naturauffassung von den Existenzbedingungen des Menschen basiert ist." And again, "Von Totemismus aber sollte man nur dann reden, wenn Anzeichen vorhanden sind, die auf eine durch die geschilderte eigenartige Denkart beeinflusste soziale Gestaltung schliessen lassen."

Sapir (9) draws attention to some common elements in all languages, such as a fixed phonetic system and a definite grammatical structure. With reference to older theories of the origin of speech he observes that "we are forced to conclude that the existence of onomatopoeic and exclamatory features is as little correlated with relative primitiveness as we have found the use of gesture to be." The probable origin of phonetic changes is seen in the inexact imitation by children of the pronunciation of elders. Some of the phonetic variants thus produced are imitated by others until either the entire language is changed phonetically or a separate dialect arises. It seems that the time-honored characterization of languages as inflectional, agglutinative, etc., must be set aside. We may speak of derivative elements in language, elements which affect only the form of the word, and of relational elements which, while affecting the form of the word, also affect its relation to other parts of the sentence, which, in consequence, also change. In this connection "it is important to note that, although the distinction between derivational and relational grammatical elements we have made is clearly reflected

¹ The value of music for folk-psychology has only recently been realized, and the number of careful studies on the subject is exceedingly small. Professor Stumpf and his excellent collaborators, Abraham and von Hornbostel, are pioneers in this work. I must here refer to his *Beiträge zur Akustik und Musikwissenschaft* (6), which reached me too late for a more detailed review. Sapir's "Song Recitative in Paiute Mythology" (*J. of Amer. Folk-lore*, 1910, 23, 455-473) should also be consulted for interesting hints as to some specific relations between primitive music and mythology.

in some way or other in most languages, they differ a great deal as to what particular logical concepts are treated as respectively derivational and relational."¹

Rivers (8) insists that in many instances where primitive beliefs contain apparent contradictions, these resolve themselves into perfectly logical sequences if allowance is made for the fact that natural phenomena "have been classified and arranged into categories different from those of ourselves." A case in point is afforded by the Melanesian concepts of life and death, which do not coincide with our own but are expressed by the terms *mate* and *toa*, one including with the dead the very sick and the very aged, while the other excludes from the living those who are called *mate*. Rivers believes that the states "on either side of this condition of *mateness*" are much less different, to the primitive mind, than are for us the states indicated by the terms life and death. Death to the primitive man is a form of existence, and "the difference between the two existences is probably of much the same order to the primitive mind as two stages of his life, say the stages before and after his initiation into manhood."²

Boas (2), in his Clark University lecture, deals with the psychological problems in the study of ethnology. On the one hand the anthropologist seeks to reconstruct the historical development of cultures; on the other hand he is interested in the psychological laws underlying the thought and action of man, in different racial and social groups. On close analysis the "composite pictures" of the mental make-up of different races would probably reveal significant differences. The performance of individuals belonging to a given group may to some extent depend on hereditary individual and racial ability, but in the main it depends on the habitual characteristics of the social group to which the individual belongs. The main difficulty with the comparative method commonly used by ethnologists is the incomparability of the data on which the conclusions are based. "The person, for instance, who slays an enemy in revenge for wrongs

¹ It becomes increasingly apparent that the field of primitive languages will soon prove a treasure-trove to the folk-psychologist. For quite apart from the value of language as a mirror of culture, the classification of experience and the categories of concepts unconsciously expressed in the grammatical structure, vocabulary, and even phonetics, of a language, and which are now being laid bare by the student, promise to reveal to us the sanctum of mental life, the laboratory of thought itself. I commend to the attention of psychologists the *Handbook of American Indian Languages* (Bulletin 40 of the Bureau of Ethnology).

² Lévy-Bruhl has reached much the same conclusion in his *Les Fonctions Mentales des Sociétés Inférieures*. See the present writer's remarks on Rivers and Lévy-Bruhl in *Current Anthropological Literature*, 1912.

done, a youth who kills his father before he gets decrepit in order to enable him to continue a vigorous life in the world to come, a father who kills his child as a sacrifice for the welfare of his people, act from such entirely different motives that psychologically a comparison of their activities does not seem permissible." Thus two phenomena are culturally similar, not when they reveal objective resemblances, but when the underlying psychological processes are similar.¹

The classification of experience underlying the thought of different groups of men is thoroughly different. This classification of experience is not due to any ratiocinative process but occurs unconsciously. The best example of classifications which do not rise into consciousness is offered by the grammatical categories of languages; but it is no less plausible that some of the fundamental concepts of religion as well as of other cultural phenomena, have arisen in the same unconscious way; with the difference that in the latter instances the fundamental concepts, and in part the underlying classifications, tend to rise into consciousness. The subsequent conscious elaboration of the concept leads to secondary explanations, the study of which constitutes a highly important branch of ethnology.

Woodworth (14) examines the same facts from a somewhat different angle. He warns against the hasty assumption of specialized mental traits in different groups. "The circumstances surrounding a group call for certain special abilities and bring to the fore individuals possessing these abilities, leaving in comparative obscurity those gifted in other directions." Woodworth dismisses with little ceremony the oft made assertions that savages are deficient in reasoning powers, that they are incapable of abstraction, of foresight. The difference in these respects between the savage and civilized is only one of degree. The author proceeds to analyze the results of investigations on the senses of savages conducted by Rivers, McDougall and Myers, among the islanders of Torres Straits, and of his own experiments with several primitive groups at the St. Louis Fair in 1904. In the light of these data the sense superiority of the savage is as much of an illusion as his mental inferiority seems to be. Woodworth thus reaches the conclusion that the progress made by a group cannot be conceived as determined solely by its intellectual endowment. "The spur of necessity, the opportunities afforded by leisure, the existing stock of knowledge and inventions, and the factor of apparent accident or luck have all to be considered."

¹ Boas has emphasized this point of view in several previous publications as well as in his recent *The Mind of Primitive Man*. (See special review on p. 404.)

Graebner (5) lays down the principles of the science of ethnology and the method of ethnological inquiry. We are particularly concerned with pp. 62-124 of his work. He starts out with the proposition that two cultural phenomena possess the greatest mutual interpretative value if they belong to the same cultural complex. If then we want to interpret culture we must reconstruct the cultural complexes that have developed, spread and fused in the course of the historic process. This is the main aim of ethnology. The geographical separation of cultural areas complicates our investigations, but it should not in principle affect our attitude towards cultural similarities. As independent development of similarities in culture is rare and convergent, evolution is to a large extent an imaginary process; such cultural similarities, however distant geographically, must be interpreted as due to historic contact, and, in the last analysis, to genetic relationship. The actually existing cultures which confront the ethnologist are valuable to Graebner only in so far as they constitute the points of departure for his cultural reconstructions. Needless to say, all intensive analysis of the interplay of psychic forces in any given cultural area does not, for Graebner, fall within the scope of the ethnologist's task. There is no more room for the soul in Graebner's system than there was for God in the universe of Laplace.¹

We must pass by without comment Ankermann (1) who is a more cautious representative of the "historical" school of ethnology, and Foy (4) whose position is even more extreme than that of Graebner.

Boas (3) characterizes Graebner's system as "mechanical." He sees safe progress in "the patient unravelling of the mental processes that may be observed among primitive and civilized peoples, and that express the actual conditions under which cultural forms develop. When we begin to know these we shall also be able to proceed gradually to more difficult problems of the cultural relations between isolated areas that exhibit peculiar similarities." The

¹ The full significance of Graebner's methods as well as their bearings on the problems of folk-psychology cannot be fully appreciated without acquaintance with his concrete investigations. See particularly his "Die Melanesische Bogenkultur" (*Anthropos*, 1909), "Die Wanderungen sozialer Systeme in Australien" (*Globus*, 1906), and "Die sozialen Systeme der Südsee" (*Zsch. f. Socialwissenschaft.*, 1908). Also Graebner's and Foy's discussion with Haberlandt in *Petermann's Mitteilungen*, March and May, 1911. Dixon meets Graebner on his own ground in "The Independence of the Culture of the American Indian" (*Science*, 1912, 35, No. 889). Lowie defends the principle of convergence against Graebner's challenge of its non-existence (*J. of Amer. Folk-lore*, 1912).

significance of cultural phenomena lies in their psychological setting. Against Graebner, Boas maintains "that certain types of changes due to internal forces have been observed everywhere."

Wundt (15) once more formulates his conception of folk-psychology. Although it is true that no psychic process may occur outside an individual consciousness, many processes in the individual mind cannot be properly understood when abstracted from their social context. The metaphysical concept of a soul and the fiction of "laws" must be set aside. The soul is naught but the sum total of psychic experience; the psychic laws are the regularities of that experience. If so much is granted, the ethnic soul (*Volksseele*) becomes as proper a field for psychological investigation as is the individual soul. Particular developmental processes become the subject-matter of folk-psychology only in so far as they contain common elements based on the psychic unity of man, a condition represented by remote social origins. In later stages, as outer and inner social forces increase in particularity, number and variety, the common fundamental psychic motives become obscured and are carried off with the flood of historic conditions. Thus folk-psychology and individual psychology constitute the foundation of history, not *vice versa*. Individual psychology furnishes the clue for the solution of folk-psychological problems; folk-psychology, on the other hand, itself supplies valuable material for individual psychology. Thus linguistic phenomena throw light on the processes of thinking; mythology, on the workings of imagination; custom, on the nature of will.

A number of German psychologists and ethnologists contribute a set of suggestions for the psychological study of primitive peoples. Thurnwald (13) joins Lévy-Bruhl in advocating the necessity of a psychological characterization of ethnic groups.¹

Hayes (6), in a series of articles, champions the psychological view of society. He analyzes the views of Tarde, Spencer, de Greef, Fairbanks, Ross, Giddings. "Society," he defines, "is in essence the interrelated activities of men," and activities are psychic facts, while the connotations of the term "interrelated" are, in this connection, also psychic. Wundt's view as to the relation of individual to social psychology is endorsed. "Individual" psychology is really "general" psychology, for it deals with what is universal in man. "It is sociology that investigates the building up of the content of consciousness which differs at different times and places, the indi-

¹ See special review on p. 400.

vidual's share in which constitutes his individual life, a life composed of activities which have been socially evolved and which by each individual are socially derived. The individual is a concrete, complex, unanalyzed sample of the social reality." In criticizing Giddings, Hayes repudiates the time-honored view of society "as a population of human organisms, under political control, inhabiting a given territory."¹

The narrow limits of this review prevent me from treating this problem of the objective versus the psychic method of studying man and society with the care it deserves. I believe that ethnologists as well as sociologists are divided over the question. We see a somewhat striking example of convergence in thinking in that the psychologist and the professional philosopher also find themselves facing a similar situation. I refer to such works as Thorndike's *Animal Intelligence* (1911), particularly the last two chapters; the introductory chapters of Pillsbury's *The Essentials of Psychology*; the whole of McDougall's *Introduction to Social Psychology*; as well as the discussions at the recent meeting of the American Philosophical Association, in Cambridge. The situation is fascinating and somewhat ominous. Need we fear that the word *Geisteswissenschaften* will reveal itself as a contradiction in terms?

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¹The inclusion of an article on sociology in a review of folk-psychology may arouse criticism. I venture to submit, however, that sociology stands in the same relation to historic society in which folk-psychology stands to prehistoric society. The discussion of the scope and method of sociology by a number of German, English, and American students (*Amer. J. of Sociol.*, 1910) will be found suggestive in this connection.

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THE PRIMITIVE RACES IN AMERICA

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The literature relating, specifically, to the psychology of the primitive races in America, during the past two or three years, is exceedingly meager, and indeed in most cases its psychological bearing is rather indirect.

In Part I. of the *Handbook of the American Indian Languages* (I) an attempt is made to bring together material bearing on the morphology and phonetics of the American languages with a view, ultimately, of organizing an analytical grammar. When more material has been collected in subsequent volumes, an attempt will be made to get hold of the phonetic processes involved in these languages, so as to discover the psychological foundations of their structure.

Boas, in the introduction of eighty-three pages, traces the significant social and psychological influences which have been factors in modifying phonal, articulatory and language complexes. His study brings out the fact that there is little correlation between language, material culture, and anatomical structure when these three elements are employed, respectively, to determine ethnic relationship between groups of people. A difference in physical type, and customs, is noted when the language is common; or one finds the anatomical type the same, but the language and the social customs at wide variance, and so on. This makes it fairly certain that sets of influences may act now in one direction and now in another. Boas's conclusion is that the biological unit is safest as being the most inclusive and permanent, since, obviously, anatomical structure reacts