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MAGIC AND RELIGION

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In the domain of magic and religion, as in most other pursuits of the "idle curiosity," the last few years have proved singularly unproductive in significant contributions. But it may perhaps not be amiss, at this time, to review briefly some of the ways in which the nature and origin of magic have been conceived, especially with reference to the nature and origin of religion.

More than once magic has been characterized as anti-social and religion as social, magic as proscribed, religion as prescribed. Jevons (15) recently returns to this view; for this author the difference between the two sets of phenomena lies essentially in the circumstance that these are condemned while those are approved. From this standpoint, "it is the difference between the two sets of proceedings which is [for the author] of cardinal importance, not the similarity in the *modus operandi*" (p. 261). The crudeness of this timeworn attitude discourages careful criticism (*cf.*, however, Thomas (34)); the true source of the author's view, moreover, is revealed in a subsequent passage: "The difference is fundamental for those who believe in magic. It is fundamental for those of us who, though they believe in religion, do not believe in magic. For those of us, however, who believe in neither it can hardly be fundamental" (15, p. 274)).

Magic has been represented as referring to the individual while religion appears as a group function. There is, of course, an element of truth in this, in so far as the magic art, in its later transformations, becomes the prerogative of the individual magician, whereas religion, at all times, is participated in by the community at large. On the other hand, however, religion, no less conspicuously, remains the business of the individual, always relying on him for its inspirations, revivals, emotions and rationalizings,

while magic, during a period of great length extending over a large part of primitive civilization, belongs as intimately to the group as a whole as does religion.

The mechanical character of magical procedure has been emphasized as against the inevitableness of spiritual agencies in the religious complexes of ritual and belief. While not by any means consistently, Frazer on the whole adheres to this view in his *Golden Bough*. Again, the view may not be rejected as wholly erroneous, in so far as spiritual agencies are more uniformly present in religious contexts than they are in those of magic; also, magic, particularly in its capacity of a technique, often involves protracted processes the interconnections of which are purely mechanical, thus often bearing resemblance to matter-of-fact procedure. In religion features of this sort are somewhat exceptional. And yet, anyone who will take pains to compare the magical facts of the Australian medicine man with the strictly analogous performance of his British Columbian confrère, must realize that the participation of spirits in the proceedings is as conspicuous in one set of cases (America) as is its absence in the other set (Australia). (Cf. the relevant criticisms of Frazer's position in Lang (18), Marett (25 and 26) and Hartland (10).)

Another interpretation of magic, which we also owe to Frazer, consists in the conception of magic as a sort of primitive science, while religion represents the breakdown of that primal science, falling into a period when the conceit of the all-powerful magician began to give way before the ever more frequent onslaughts of experiential disappointments. Losing faith in himself and in nature, man turned for help to the gods. This doctrine combines a very slight modicum of truth with a fundamental misunderstanding of the entire magical world-view. The regularity and inevitableness of magical connections, however conspicuous to the outsider, form no essential part of the psychic attitude of the magician as agent or as believer in magical connections in nature. His basic belief is in *power* and in its efficacy; the rest is contingent. In criticising Frazer's contention that magic involves the belief "that in nature one event follows another necessarily and invariably," Hartland quite rightly points out that "the intervention of the magician himself is proof of the contrary" (10, p. 73); for were the succession of events fixed, the magician's act could not break into the chain nor would such intervention be necessary. Marett speaks in equally unmistakable terms when he declares that "the

magician surely does not postulate that the same causes will always produce the same effects: on the contrary, his art is based on the supposed possibility of miracle—on what might be called super-causation as contrasted with normal causation" (26, p. 250). (Cf. also Wundt who passes the following judgment on the idea of magic as primitive science: "It seems to me that the belief in magic, if analyzed objectively and kept free from ideas which do not belong to it, contains in its very essence a most convincing refutation of this view" (35, p. 180, note).)

This brings us to those conceptions of magic which ally it to or identify it with supernatural power. A notably constructive effort in this direction is that of Lévy-Bruhl (21). The author describes the supernatural idea and emotion complex of the primitive man as a general *dynamism*, and also goes a step further in suggesting a psychic mechanism by means of which the supernatural bonds are established between beings, things and events. This mechanism the author conceptualizes as a *principle of participation*, in accordance with which multifarious bonds of emotional and intellectual association are established between phenomena which, from our naturalistic standpoint, may seem wholly unrelated (21, pp. 68-151); Lévy-Bruhl's concept of a primitive *dynamism* was anticipated by Lovejoy's primitive *energetics* (22). Lévy-Bruhl thus succeeds in giving psychological plausibility and logical precision to a principle long understood and applied, if in less rigorous fashion, but the author errs in exaggerating beyond all proportion the rôle played in the psychic world of the savage by these supernatural cycles of participation. (For a critical estimate of the author's position compare my critique (5), also Rivers's article (31) and my comments on Lévy-Bruhl and Rivers (6).)

With the introduction of conceptions such as Lévy-Bruhl's the line of demarcation between magic and religion becomes blurred,—one is confronted with primitive supernaturalism, such as has been made familiar to ethnologists and others under the catch-word designation of *mana*. The contributions to this branch of the subject fall into three groups. First come the writings of those who, in the course of personal contact with primitive peoples have become familiar with manaistic conceptions, at first hand. Among these mention must be made of Codrington (2), Hewitt (11), Jones (16), Miss Fletcher (4), and Pechuel-Loesche (28) in whose hands the fetichistic phenomena of West Africa have received new illumination through the *mana* idea. The merit of these

contributions is to have established beyond cavil the presence and wide occurrence in the primitive world of a belief in supernatural magic power of a non-personal sort. By this is not meant, however, that the problem can be solved by simply identifying such conceptions as *mana*, *fadi*, *orenda*, *manitou*, etc., and regarding them as so many illustrations of the primitive concept of impersonal supernatural power. The latter concept, held perhaps by all even most primitive tribes, but scarcely ever expressed in language, constitutes but the common core of the more advanced concepts of particular tribes or tribal groups, which concepts having received terminological expression, become subject to mutations of meaning, to accretions of content, due to changing cultural settings and to other historic causes of conceptual transformations.

To the second group of contributions belong the writings of such authors as Marett (24, 25, 26) and Preuss (29), who have proceeded less cautiously and, having applied synthesis and generalization to the more concrete data of the other authors, have constructed a supernatural world of primitive animatism (Marett) or magic (Preuss). They have also chronologized the conception, giving it priority over animism. While it seems justifiable to go beyond the necessarily fragmentary picture resulting from the concrete contributions, Marett and Preuss have certainly gone too far in their elaborations of the nature and scope of *mana* or magic, the chronological reference to animism being of an especially dubious character. (Cf. also the numerous discussions of *mana* at the Third International Congress of Religions (14), which contains no original contributions, and the theoretically more guarded articles by Lowie (23) and the writer (7). A convenient summary, up to 1910, of the discussions centering about the *mana* concept, will be found in King (17, pp. 134-164).) Among the writers who adhere to the more limited use of the *mana* conception note must be taken of Wundt (35, pp. 171-177, 185-188) and Radin (31, 344-351), whose stand in opposition to *mana* deserves careful consideration in view of the author's extensive experience with two tribal groups of American Indians.

The third group of writers, finally, is dominated by the figure of Durkheim (3). The French sociologist and his disciples, Hubert, Mauss and, to a degree, Beuchat (12, 13, 27), have incorporated the *mana* conception into every part of their theories of magic and religion; but the distinctiveness of their attitude consists in the drastically social derivation given by Durkheim and his followers

to magic, religion, *mana* and the very notion of the sacred. No adequate presentation of Durkheim's brilliant but not convincing argument can be given here; suffice it to say that the individual sources of religious experience and development are no more justifiably underestimated in his system, than were the sociological and historical sources in the systems of his predecessors, Spencer and Tylor. (Cf. my critique of Durkheim (9) and Miss Campbell's *Manaism* (1). Miss Campbell's dissertation is rather carefully done, although in no sense original. She is evidently greatly influenced by Durkheim's position. See also Saintyves (32) and Söderblom (33).)

A notable attempt to analyze psychologically the nature and origins of magic and religion has been made by Leuba (19, 20). An important element of the author's attitude is expressed in the following passage: "I maintain that in seeking to replace belief in personal agents (animism) by *mana*, which leaves in solution the distinction between personal and impersonal, Marett disregards the only definite line of cleavage which can be used to differentiate religious from non-religious life; that is, the line separating the attitudes and actions that involve the idea of personal power from those that do not. In my view of the matter, when the distinction between personal and impersonal is in solution, religion itself is in solution" (20, p. 74, note 1). In this significant formulation the author definitely breaks with those who see the test of religion in an emotional attitude, such as *the religious thrill*, and transfers the weight of the distinction between religion and non-religion into the conceptual domain. Thus the author is led to see non-personal power (such as *mana*) in a different light from the authors reviewed before. We read: "The original idea of non-personal power possesses but one necessary characteristic: *it is dynamic, it does things*" (20, p. 83). Once more we have *dynamism* (cf. Lovejoy and Lévy-Bruhl), which to Leuba means "power," without any necessary connotation of the mysterious or wonderful. But as the workings of this power are to a great extent unforeseen and uncontrollable, it evokes commonly dread and awe (83). While space is lacking for either an exposition or a criticism of the author's doctrines, note must be taken of a number of important theoretical principles which place the author's discussion on a level compatible with modern ethnological theory. The principles are: god-ideas of different origin have subsequently interacted upon one another (20, p. 99); the fundamental ideas underlying primitive religious

conceptions are based on normal and universal mental processes, thus being common to primitive and to modern man ("There are few men living today," writes Leuba, "barring the mental'y defective, who, if deprived of the inheritance of civilization, would not people an unseen world with these unreal creatures" (20, p. 100)); the limitation of objective knowledge in primitive society is one of the mainsprings of the peculiar idiosyncrasies of the savage (20, p. 170). The summary of the author's conclusions with reference to the nature and mutual relations of magic and religion deserves to be stated in full: (1) Magic and religion have had independent origins. Neither of them need be regarded as a derivation from the other. (2) Magic contributed very little directly to the making of religion. (3) The simpler forms of magic probably antedate religion. (4) Because they are different ways of achieving the same ends, magical and religious practices are closely associated. (5) Religion is social and beneficial; magic is dominantly individual and evil. (6) Magic is of shorter duration than religion. (7) Science is closely related neither to magic nor to religion, but to the mechanical type of behavior (20, p. 176).

In a recent article I have made the attempt to account for the basic elements in religion in an epistemological way. The treatment is very concise and must be taken in the nature of a preliminary statement. The religious thrill, the fundamental emotional reaction in all religious experience, is taken for granted; it is characterized as "one of the most deeply rooted and ancient traits in the psychic organization of man" (8, p. 639) and no attempt is made to analyze it any further. The concepts subjected to epistemological treatment are "spirit" and "mana." Having pointed out the intellectualistic character of animism ("animism as such is not a religion, but a *Weltanschauung*"), I formulate the derivation of spirit in the following terms: "The specific channels through which particular groups of men have arrived at the animistic interpretation of nature are no doubt many and varied, but a most general *rationale* of the process may perhaps be given in the following formula: *Whereas the generalized experience of the behavior of things compatible with gross and permanent materiality becomes crystallized in the consciousness of man as the world of matter, the generalized experience of the behavior of things incompatible with gross and permanent materiality finds conceptual expression in the world of spirit*" (8, p. 633). Thus we have spirit, but so far it is outside of religion, a pure concept (cf. Leuba (20, p. 111). The generalized

explanation of the association of spirit with the religious thrill is given in these words: "*The same peculiarities in the behavior of things which are responsible for the conceptualization of a world of spirit, are also responsible for the early association of the world of spirit with the religious thrill*" (8, p. 634).¹

Before proceeding to the deduction of "mana," it must be noted that the concept of which a psychological explanation is attempted in the essay, is not the specialized concept of *mana* or *orenda* or *manitou*, etc., but the more general and vague notion of supernaturalism of impersonal magic power, which is constantly found associated with magic and religion. "It seems fairly certain"—to quote the passage—"that the notion of *mana*, as entertained in most primitive times, must be directly correlated with the religious thrill. The psychological derivation of *mana* may be expressed in the following formula: *The generalized experience of the behavior of things associated with the religious thrill receives conceptual expression in mana.* *Mana* thus is the direct objectivation of the religious emotion, it is *that which causes the (religious) thrill*. We have seen before that the religious emotion, and with it, we may now add, the concept of *mana*, supernatural power, must have become associated with spirit from the earliest times. Now, while *mana* thus becomes in part absorbed by spirit, psychological plausibility again suggests the assumption that it does not become wholly absorbed. While spirits are many and varied, in form as well as in function, they all have *mana*, they all arouse the religious thrill; but so also do other beings, things, events, not associated with spirits. Thus the common thrill-producing element in all religious situations, whether centering in a spiritual or a material thing, may be expected to preserve its separate conceptualization on a par with spirit and other carriers of the religious. . . . Thus spirit and *mana* must be characterized as the fundamental concepts of all religion" (8, pp. 635-6).

The section on magic, or rather the magic act, in my essay is very fragmentary, also it is too long for incorporation in this review.

¹ This formulation must be pronounced somewhat unfortunate in so far as many experiences of the behavior of things contributory to the notion of spirit are quite free from any elements which might evoke the religious reaction. The very numerous residual cases are, however, amply sufficient to account for the association. The formula ought to read thus: *in a large number of situations the behavior of things responsible for the conceptualization of a world of spirit is accompanied by features apt to arouse the religious thrill; often the same elements of the behavior will do service in both directions.*

The principal points are these: "a magical act, as such, may be described psychologically as *an expression in behavior of a mental content the core of which is a desire*. . . . Desires, in order to lead to expression in behavior representative or symbolic of the object desired must reach a certain degree of intensity. . . . When subsequent to the magical act the things present themselves, the events occur, they are brought into causal connection with the magical act" (8, p. 638. Cf. Leuba; (20, pp. 157 and 167-87)). The saturation of the magic procedure with religious emotion, finally, is due to certain peculiarities of the magic act which differentiate it from an act of matter-of-fact behavior.

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APPLIED ASPECTS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Henderschott (5) believes that men are very prone to overestimate their own value as workers. If some way could be found to bring each man adequately to realize his actual value to the employer it would greatly reduce discontent. The present industrial unrest is more psychological than economic. The wise use of social psychology should relegate the matter of wage to a secondary and more true position as an object of contention. McChesney (7) urges that the secret of efficiency in factory operation lies in the employer's having the confidence and respect of the employees. This confidence and respect functions as an active coöperation. It can only be obtained by sincerely seeking and securing the welfare of the employees. Fish (4) says that the turnover in labor which in the aggregate is enormously expensive is greatly reduced by creating pleasant mental and physical surroundings in the shops. Good mental conditions are promoted by competitive games, picnics and celebrations where employers, employees and