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Bronislaw Malinowski
**THE ROLE OF
MAGIC AND RELIGION**

Few writers in modern times have written as lucidly and with as much firsthand field experience on the subject of magic and religion as has Bronislaw Malinowski. His classic paper on the subject is "Magic, Science, and Religion," which was first published in James Needham (ed.), *Science, Religion and Reality*, in 1925. But since this famous paper was reprinted by the Free Press in a book by the same name in 1948, and then in 1954 became available in a Doubleday Anchor Book edition, we are presenting a briefer statement of most of the same theoretical ground drawn from his article, "Culture," which appeared in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. For a more detailed version

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of the argument, the reader may turn to the readily available Anchor Book entitled *Magic, Science, and Religion*.

To understand Malinowski's thesis that every society, even the most primitive, has perfectly sound empirical knowledge to carry out many of its practical activities, that "magic is to be expected and generally to be found whenever man comes to an unbridgeable gap, a hiatus in his knowledge or in his powers of practical control, and yet has to continue in his pursuit," and that "religion is not born out of speculation or reflection, still less out of illusion or misapprehension, but rather out of the real tragedies of human life, out of the conflict between human plans and realities," one has to understand some of the thinking that was current about primitive religion at the time he wrote. Tylor had made primitive man into a kind of rational philosopher who tried to find answers to such problems as the difference between the living and the dead, and had developed the belief in animistic spirits which he regarded as the basis for primitive religion; Frazer had been concerned with showing that magic was a kind of "false science" and that an age of magic preceded an age of religion; Lévy-Bruhl had been engaging in brilliant speculations concerning the prelogical and mystical character of primitive thought. Into this cluster of ideas Malinowski brought some new insights—insights that were based for the first time on extensive, firsthand field experience. He was able to invite his readers "to step outside the closed study of the theorist into the open air of the Anthropological field," in this case the Trobriand Islands.

In addition to clarifying the relationships among magic, science, and religion, Malinowski clearly showed that the myths of primitive peoples also have important functions in social life. Thus he writes in the following article that "the function of myth is to strengthen tradition and to endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural and more effective reality of initial events." For a more detailed version of his thesis on myths, and his classification of the oral literature into myths, legends, and folk tales, the reader may turn to his book *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (1926), which is also reprinted in the Anchor Book edition of *Magic, Science, and Religion*.

In spite of the various theories about a specific non-empirical and prelogical character of primitive mentality there can be no doubt that as soon as man developed the mastery of environment by the use of implements, and as soon as language came into being, there must also have existed primitive knowledge of an essentially scientific character. No culture could survive if its arts and crafts, its weapons and economic pursuits were based on mystical, non-empirical conceptions and doctrines. When human culture is approached from the pragmatic, technological side, it is found that primitive man is capable of exact observation, of sound generalizations and of logical reasoning in all those matters which affect his normal activities and are at the basis of his production. Knowledge is then an absolute derived necessity of culture. It is more, however, than a means to an end, and it was not classed therefore with the instrumental imperatives. Its place in culture, its function, is slightly

different from that of production, of law, or of education. Systems of knowledge serve to connect various types of behavior; they carry over the results of past experiences into future enterprise and they bring together elements of human experience and allow man to co-ordinate and integrate his activities. Knowledge is a mental attitude, a diathesis of the nervous system, which allows man to carry on the work which culture makes him do. Its function is to organize and integrate the indispensable activities of culture.

The material embodiment of knowledge consists in the body of arts and crafts, of technical processes and rules of craftsmanship. More specifically, in most primitive cultures and certainly in higher ones there are special implements of knowledge—diagrams, topographical models, measures, aids to orientation or to counting.

The connection between native thought and language opens important problems of function. Linguistic abstraction, categories of

space, time and relationship, and logical means of expressing the concatenation of ideas are extremely important matters, and the study of how thought works through language in any culture is still a virgin field of cultural linguistics. How primitive language works, where it is embodied, how it is related to social organization, to primitive religion and magic, are important problems of functional anthropology.

By the very forethought and foresight which it gives, the integrative function of knowledge creates new needs, that is, imposes new imperatives. Knowledge gives man the possibility of planning ahead, of embracing vast spaces of time and distance; it allows a wide range to his hopes and desires. But however much knowledge and science help man in allowing him to obtain what he wants, they are unable completely to control change, to eliminate accidents, to foresee the unexpected turn of natural events, or to make human handiwork reliable and adequate to all practical requirements. In this field, much more practical, definite, and circumscribed than that of religion, there develops a special type of ritual activities which anthropology labels collectively as magic.

The most hazardous of all human enterprises known to primitive man is sailing. In the preparation of his sailing craft and the laying out of his plans the savage turns to his science. The painstaking work as well as the intelligently organized labor in construction and in navigation bears witness to the savage's trust in science and submission to it. But adverse wind or no wind at all, rough weather, currents and reefs are always liable to upset his best plans and most careful preparations. He must admit that neither his knowledge nor his most painstaking efforts are a guaranty of success. Something unaccountable usually enters and baffles his anticipations. But although unaccountable it yet appears to have a deep meaning, to act or behave with a purpose. The sequence, the significant concatenation of events, seems to contain some inner logical consistency. Man feels that he can do something to wrestle with that mysterious element or force, to help and abet his luck. There are therefore always systems of superstition, of more or less developed ritual, associated with sailing, and in primitive communities the magic of sailing craft is highly developed. Those who are well acquainted with some good magic have, in virtue of that, courage and confidence. When the canoes are used for fishing, the accidents and the good or bad luck may

refer not only to transport but also to the appearance of fish and to the conditions under which they are caught. In trading, whether overseas or with near neighbors, chance may favor or thwart the ends and desires of man. As a result both fishing and trading magic are very well developed.

Likewise in war, man, however primitive, knows that well-made weapons of attack and defense, strategy, the force of numbers, and the strength of the individuals ensure victory. Yet with all this the unforeseen and accidental help even the weaker to victory when the fray happens under the cover of night, when ambushes are possible, when the conditions of the encounter obviously favor one side at the expense of the other. Magic is used as something which over and above man's equipment and his force helps him to master accident and to ensnare luck. In love also a mysterious, unaccountable quality of success or else a predestination to failure seems to be accompanied by some force independent of ostensible attraction and of the best laid plans and arrangements. Magic enters to insure something which counts over and above the visible and accountable qualifications.

Primitive man depends on his economic pursuits for his welfare in a manner which makes him realize bad luck very painfully and directly. Among people who rely on their fields or gardens what might be called agricultural knowledge is invariably well developed. The natives know the properties of the soil, the need of a thorough clearing from bush and weed, fertilizing with ashes and appropriate planting. But however well chosen the site and well worked the gardens, mishaps occur. Drought or deluge coming at most inappropriate seasons destroys the crop altogether, or some blights, insects, or wild animals diminish them. Or some other year, when man is conscious that he deserves but a poor crop, everything runs so smoothly and prosperously that an unexpectedly good return rewards the undeserving gardener. The dreaded elements of rain and sunshine, pests and fertility seem to be controlled by a force which is beyond ordinary human experience and knowledge, and man repairs once more to magic.

In all these examples the same factors are involved. Experience and logic teach man that within definite limits knowledge is supreme; but beyond them nothing can be done by rationally founded practical exertions. Yet he rebels against inaction because although he realizes his impotence he is yet driven to action by intense desire and strong emotions. Nor is inaction at all possible.

Once he has embarked on a distant voyage or finds himself in the middle of a fray or halfway through the cycle of garden growing, the native tries to make his frail canoe more seaworthy by charms or to drive away locusts and wild animals by ritual or to vanquish his enemies by dancing.

Magic changes its forms; it shifts its ground; but it exists everywhere. In modern societies magic is associated with the third cigarette lit by the same match, with spilled salt and the need of throwing it over the left shoulder, with broken mirrors, with passing under a ladder, with the new moon seen through glass or on the left hand, with the number thirteen or with Friday. These are minor superstitions which seem merely to vegetate among the intelligentsia of the western world. But these superstitions and much more developed systems also persist tenaciously and are given serious consideration among modern urban populations. Black magic is practiced in the slums of London by the classical method of destroying the picture of the enemy. At marriage ceremonies good luck for the married couple is obtained by the strictest observance of several magical methods such as the throwing of the slipper and the spilling of rice. Among the peasants of central and eastern Europe elaborate magic still flourishes and children are treated by witches and warlocks. People are thought to have the power to prevent cows from giving milk, to induce cattle to multiply unduly, to produce rain and sunshine and to make people love or hate each other. The saints of the Roman Catholic Church become in popular practice passive accomplices of magic. They are beaten, cajoled and carried about. They can give rain by being placed in the field, stop flows of lava by confronting them and stop the progress of a disease, of a blight or of a plague of insects. The crude practical use made of certain religious rituals or objects makes their function magical. For magic is distinguished from religion in that the latter creates values and attains ends directly, whereas magic consists of acts which have a practical utilitarian value and are effective only as a means to an end. Thus a strictly utilitarian subject matter or issue of an act and its direct, instrumental function make it magic, and most modern established religions harbor within their ritual and even their ethics a good deal which really belongs to magic. But modern magic survives not only in the forms of minor superstitions or within the body of religious systems. Wherever there is danger, uncertainty, great incidence of chance and accident, even in

entirely modern forms of enterprise, magic crops up. The gambler at Monte Carlo, on the turf, or in a continental state lottery develops systems. Motoring and modern sailing demand mascots and develop superstitions. Around every sensational sea tragedy there has formed a myth showing some mysterious magical indications or giving magical reasons for the catastrophe. Aviation is developing its superstitions and magic. Many pilots refuse to take up a passenger who is wearing anything green, to start a journey on a Friday, or to light three cigarettes with a match when in the air, and their sensitiveness to superstition seems to increase with altitude. In all large cities of Europe and America magic can be purchased from palmists, clairvoyants, and other soothsayers, who forecast the future, give practical advice as to lucky conduct, and retail ritual apparatus such as amulets, mascots, and talismans. The richest domain of magic, however, is, in civilization as in savagery, that of health. Here again the old venerable religions lend themselves readily to magic. Roman Catholicism opens its sacred shrines and places of worship to the ailing pilgrim, and faith healing flourishes also in other churches. The main function of Christian Science is the thinking away of illness and decay; its metaphysics are very strongly pragmatic and utilitarian and its ritual is essentially a means to the end of health and happiness. The unlimited range of universal remedies and blessings, osteopathy and chiropractic, dietetics and curing by sun, cold water, grape or lemon juice, raw food, starvation, alcohol or its prohibition—one and all shade invariably into magic. Intellectuals still submit to Coué and Freud, to Jaeger and Kneipp, to sun worship, either direct or through the mercury-vapor lamp—not to mention the bedside manner of the highly paid specialist. It is very difficult to discover where common sense ends and where magic begins.

The savage is not more rational than modern man nor is he more superstitious. He is more limited, less liable to free imaginings and to the confidence trick of new inventions. His magic is traditional and he has his stronghold of knowledge, his empirical and rational tradition of science. Since the superstitious or prelogical character of primitive man has been so much emphasized, it is necessary to draw clearly the dividing line between primitive science and magic. There are domains on which magic never encroaches. The making of fire, basketry, the actual production of stone implements, the making of strings or mats, cooking and all

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minor domestic activities although extremely important are never associated with magic. Some of them become the center of religious practices and of mythology, as, for example, fire or cooking or stone implements; but magic is never connected with their production. The reason is that ordinary skill guided by sound knowledge is sufficient to set man on the right path and to give him certainty of correct and complete control of these activities.

In some pursuits magic is used under certain conditions and is absent under others. In a maritime community depending on the products of the sea there is never magic connected with the collecting of shellfish or with fishing by poison, weirs, and fish traps, so long as these are completely reliable. On the other hand, any dangerous, hazardous, and uncertain type of fishing is surrounded by ritual. In hunting, the simple and reliable ways of trapping or killing are controlled by knowledge and skill alone; but let there be any danger or any uncertainty connected with an important supply of game and magic immediately appears. Coastal sailing as long as it is perfectly safe and easy commands no magic. Overseas expeditions are invariably bound up with ceremonies and ritual. Man resorts to magic only where chance and circumstances are not fully controlled by knowledge.

This is best seen in what might be called systems of magic. Magic may be but loosely and capriciously connected with its practical setting. One hunter may use certain formulae and rites, and another ignore them; or the same man may apply his conjurings on one occasion and not on another. But there are forms of enterprise in which magic must be used. In a big tribal adventure, such as war, or a hazardous sailing expedition or seasonal travel or an undertaking such as a big hunt or a perilous fishing expedition or the normal round of gardening, which as a rule is vital to the whole community, magic is often obligatory. It runs in a fixed sequence concatenated with the practical events, and the two orders, magical and practical, depend on one another and form a system. Such systems of magic appear at first sight an inextricable mixture of efficient work and superstitious practices and so seem to provide an unanswerable argument in favor of the theories that magic and science are under primitive conditions so fused as not to be separable. Fuller analysis, however, shows that magic and practical work are entirely independent and never fuse.

But magic is never used to replace work.

In gardening the digging or the clearing of the ground or the strength of the fences or quality of the supports is never scamped because stronger magic has been used over them. The native knows well that mechanical construction must be produced by human labor according to strict rules of craft. He knows that all the processes which have been in the soil can be controlled by human effort to a certain extent but not beyond, and it is only this beyond which he tries to influence by magic. For his experience and his reason tell him that in certain matters his efforts and his intelligence are of no avail whatever. On the other hand, magic has been known to help; so at least his tradition tells him.

In the magic of war and of love, of trading expeditions and of fishing, of sailing and of canoe making, the rules of experience and logic are likewise strictly adhered to as regards technique, and knowledge and technique receive due credit in all the good results which can be attributed to them. It is only the unaccountable results, which an outside observer would attribute to luck, to the knack of doing things successfully, to chance or to fortune, that the savage attempts to control by magic.

Magic therefore, far from being primitive science, is the outgrowth of clear recognition that science has its limits and that a human mind and human skill are at times impotent. For all its appearances of megalomania, for all that it seems to be the declaration of the "omnipotence of thought," as it has recently been defined by Freud, magic has greater affinity with an emotional outburst, with daydreaming, with strong, unrealizable desire.

To affirm with Frazer that magic is a pseudo-science would be to recognize that magic is not really primitive science. It would imply that magic has an affinity with science or at least that it is the raw material out of which science develops—implications which are untenable. The ritual of magic shows certain striking characteristics which have made it quite plausible for most writers from Grimm and Tylor to Freud and Lévy-Bruhl to affirm that magic takes the place of primitive science.

Magic unquestionably is dominated by the sympathetic principle: like produces like; the whole is affected if the sorcerer acts on a part of it; occult influences can be imparted by contagion. If one concentrates on the form of the ritual only, he can legitimately conclude with Frazer that the analogy between the magical and the scientific conceptions of

the world is close and that the various cases of sympathetic magic are mistaken applications of one or the other of two great fundamental laws of thought, namely, the association of ideas by similarity and the association of ideas by contiguity in space or time.

But a study of the function of science and the function of magic casts a doubt on the sufficiency of these conclusions. Sympathy is not the basis of pragmatic science, even under the most primitive conditions. The savage knows scientifically that a small pointed stick of hard wood rubbed or drilled against a piece of soft, brittle wood, provided they are both dry, gives fire. He also knows that strong energetic, increasingly swift motion has to be employed, that tinder must be produced in the action, the wind kept off, and the spark fanned immediately into a glow and this into a flame. There is no sympathy, no similarity, no taking the part instead of the legitimate whole, no contagion. The only association or connection is the empirical, correctly observed and correctly framed concatenation of natural events. The savage knows that a strong bow well handled releases a swift arrow, that a broad beam makes for stability and a light, well-shaped hull for swiftness in his canoe. There is here no association of ideas by similarity or contagion or *pars pro toto*. The native puts a yam or a banana sprout into an appropriate piece of ground. He waters or irrigates it unless it be well drenched by rain. He weeds the ground around it, and he knows quite well that barring unexpected calamities the plant will grow. Again there is no principle akin to that of sympathy contained in this activity. He creates conditions which are perfectly scientific and rational and lets nature do its work. Therefore in so far as magic consists in the enactment of sympathy, in so far as it is governed by an association of ideas, it radically differs from science; and on analysis the similarity of form between magic and science is revealed as merely apparent, not real.

The sympathetic rite although a very prominent element in magic functions always in the context of other elements. Its main purpose always consists in the generation and transference of magical force and accordingly it is performed in the atmosphere of the supernatural. As Hubert and Mauss have shown, acts of magic are always set apart, regarded as different, conceived and carried out under distinct conditions. The time when magic is performed is often determined by tradition rather than by the

sympathetic principle, and the place where it is performed is only partly determined by sympathy or contagion and more by supernatural and mythological associations. Many of the substances used in magic are largely sympathetic but they are often used primarily for the physiological and emotional reaction which they elicit in man. The dramatic emotional elements in ritual enactment incorporate, in magic, factors which go far beyond sympathy or any scientific or pseudo-scientific principle. Mythology and tradition are everywhere embedded, especially in the performance of the magical spell, which must be repeated with absolute faithfulness to the traditional original and during which mythological events are recounted in which the power of the prototype is invoked. The supernatural character of magic is also expressed in the abnormal character of the magician and by the temporary taboos which surround its execution.

In brief, there exists a sympathetic principle: the ritual of magic contains usually some reference to the results to be achieved; it foreshadows them, anticipates the desired events. The magician is haunted by imagery, by symbolism, by associations of the result to follow. But he is quite as definitely haunted by the emotional obsession of the situation which has forced him to resort to magic. These facts do not fit into the simple scheme of sympathy conceived as misapplication of crude observations and half-logical deductions. The various apparently disjointed elements of magical ritual—the dramatic features, the emotional side, the mythological allusions, and the anticipation of the end—make it impossible to consider magic a sober scientific practice based on an empirical theory. Nor can magic be guided by experience and at the same time be constantly harking back to myth.

The fixed time, the determined spot, the preliminary isolating conditions of magic, the taboos to be observed by the performer, as well as his physiological and sociological nature, place the magical act in an atmosphere of the supernatural. Within this context of the supernatural the rite consists, functionally speaking, in the production of a specific virtue or force and of the launching, directing, or impelling of this force to the desired object. The production of magical force takes place by spell, manual and bodily gesticulation, and the proper condition of the officiating magician. All these elements exhibit a tendency to a formal assimilation toward the desired end or toward the ordinary means of producing this end. This for-

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mal resemblance is probably best defined in the statement that the whole ritual is dominated by the emotions of hate, fear, anger, or erotic passion, or by the desire to obtain a definite practical end.

The magical force or virtue is not conceived as a natural force. Hence the theories propounded by Preuss, Marett, and Hubert and Mauss, which would make the Melanesian mana or the similar North American concepts the clue to the understanding of all magic, are not satisfactory. The mana concept embraces personal power, natural force, excellence and efficiency alongside the specific virtue of magic. It is a force regarded as absolutely *sui generis*, different either from natural forces or from the normal faculties of man.

The force of magic can be produced only and exclusively within traditionally prescribed rites. It can be received and learned only by due initiation into the craft and by the taking over of the rigidly defined system of conditions, acts, and observances. Even when magic is discovered or invented it is invariably conceived as true revelation from the supernatural. Magic is an intrinsic, specific quality of a situation and of an object or phenomenon within the situation, consisting in the object being amenable to human control by means which are specifically and uniquely connected with the object and which can be handled only by appropriate people. Magic therefore is always conceived as something which does not reside in nature, that is, outside man, but in the relation between man and nature. Only those objects and forces in nature which are very important to man, on which he depends and which he cannot yet normally control elicit magic.

A functional explanation of magic may be stated in terms of individual psychology and of the cultural and social value of magic. Magic is to be expected and generally to be found whenever man comes to an unbridgeable gap, a hiatus in his knowledge or in his powers of practical control, and yet has to continue in his pursuit. Forsaken by his knowledge, baffled by the results of his experience, unable to apply any effective technical skill, he realizes his impotence. Yet his desire grips him only the more strongly. His fears and hopes, his general anxiety, produce a state of unstable equilibrium in his organism, by which he is driven to some sort of vicarious activity. In the natural human reaction to frustrated hate and impotent anger is found the *materia prima* of black magic. Unrequited love provokes spontaneous acts of prototype magic. Fear moves every human

being to aimless but compulsory acts; in the presence of an ordeal one always has recourse to obsessive daydreaming.

The natural flow of ideas under the influence of emotions and desires thwarted in their full practical satisfaction leads one inevitably to the anticipation of the positive results. But the experience upon which this anticipatory or sympathetic attitude rests is not the ordinary experience of science. It is much more akin to daydreaming, to what the psychoanalysts call wish fulfillment. When the emotional state reaches the breaking point at which man loses control over himself, the words which he utters, the gestures to which he gives way, and the physiological processes within his organism which accompany all this allow the pent-up tension to flow over. Over all such outbursts of emotion, over such acts of prototype magic, there presides the obsessive image of the desired end. The substitute action in which the physiological crisis finds its expression has a subjective value: the desired end seems nearer satisfaction.

Standardized, traditional magic is nothing else but an institution which fixes, organizes and imposes upon the members of a society the positive solution in those inevitable conflicts which arise out of human impotence in dealing with all hazardous issues by mere knowledge and technical ability. The spontaneous, natural reaction of man to such situations supplies the raw material of magic. This raw material implies the sympathetic principle in that man has to dwell both on the desired end and on the best means of obtaining it. The expression of emotions in verbal utterances, in gestures, in an almost mystical belief that such words and gestures have a power, crops up naturally as a normal, physiological reaction. The elements which do not exist in the *materia prima* of magic but are to be found in the developed systems are the traditional, mythological elements. Human culture everywhere integrates a raw material of human interests and pursuits into standardized, traditional customs. In all human tradition a definite choice is made from within a variety of possibilities. In magic also the raw material supplies a number of possible ways of behavior. Tradition chooses from among them, fixes a special type and endues it with a hallmark of social value.

Tradition also reinforces the belief in magical efficacy by the context of special experience. Magic is so deeply believed in because its pragmatic truth is vouched for by its psychological or even physiological efficacy, since in its form and in its ideology and

structure magic corresponds to the natural processes of the human organism. The conviction which is implied in these processes extends obviously to standardized magic. This conviction is useful because it raises the efficiency of the person who submits to it. Magic possesses therefore a functional truth or a pragmatic truth, since it arises always under conditions where the human organism is disintegrated. Magic corresponds to a real physiological need.

The seal of social approval given to the standardized reactions, selected traditionally out of the raw material of magic, gives it an additional backing. The general conviction that this and only this rite, spell or personal preparation enables the magician to control chance makes every individual believe in it through the ordinary mechanism of molding or conditioning. The public enactment of certain ceremonies, on the one hand, and the secrecy and esoteric atmosphere in which others are shrouded add again to their credibility. The fact also that magic usually is associated with intelligence and strong personality raises its credit in the eyes of any community. Thus a conviction that man can control by a special, traditional, standardized handling the forces of nature and human beings is not merely subjectively true through its physiological foundations, not merely pragmatically true in that it contributes to the reintegration of the individual, but it carries an additional evidence due to its sociological function.

Magic serves not only as an integrative force to the individual but also as an organizing force to society. The fact that the magician by the nature of his secret and esoteric lore has also the control of the associated practical activities causes him usually to be a person of the greatest importance in the community. The discovery of this was one of the great contributions of Frazer to anthropology. Magic, however, is of social importance not only because it gives power and thus raises a man to a high position. It is a real organizing force. In Australia the constitution of the tribe, of the clan, of the local group, is based on a system of totemic ideas. The main ceremonial expression of this system consists in the rites of magical multiplication of plants and animals and in the ceremonies of initiation into manhood. Both of these rites underlie the tribal framework and they are both the expression of a magical order of ideas based on totemic mythology. The leaders who arrange the tribal meetings, who conduct them, who direct the initiation and are the protagonists in dramatic representations of myth and in the public magical

ceremonies, play this part because of their traditional magical filiation. The totemic magic of these tribes is their main organizing system.

To a large extent this is also true of the Papuan tribes of New Guinea, of the Melanesians and of the people of the Indonesian archipelagoes, where magical rites and ideas definitely supply the organizing principle in practical activities. The secret societies of the Bismarck Archipelago and West Africa, the rain makers of the Sudan, the medicine men of the North American Indians—all combine magical power with political and economic influence. Sufficient details to assess the extent and the mechanism by which magic enters and controls secular and ordinary life are often lacking. But among the Masai or Nandi in East Africa the evidence reveals that the military organization of the tribe is associated with war magic and that the guidance in political affairs and general tribal concerns depends on rain magic. In New Guinea garden magic, overseas trading expeditions, fishing and hunting on a big scale show that the ceremonial significance of magic supplies the moral and legal framework by which all practical activities are held together.

Sorcery in its major forms is usually specialized and institutionalized; that is, either the sorcerer is a professional whose services can be bought or commanded or sorcery is vested in a secret society or special organization. In all cases sorcery is either in the same hands as political power, prestige and wealth or else it can be purchased or demanded by those who can afford to do so. Sorcery thus is invariably a conservative force used at times for intimidation but usually for the enforcement of customary law or of the wishes of those in power. It is always a safeguard for the vested interests, for the organized, established privileges. The sorcerer who has behind him the chief or a powerful secret society can make his art felt more poignantly than if he were working against them or on his own.

The individual and sociological function of magic is thus made more efficient by the very mechanisms through which it works. In this and in the subjective aspect of the calculus of probability, which makes success overshadow failure, while failure again can be explained by counter-magic, it is clear that the belief is not so ill founded nor due to such extravagant superstitiousness of the primitive mind as might at first appear. A strong belief in magic finds its public expression in the running mythology of magical miracles which is always found in company

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with all important types of magic. The competitive boasting of one community against another, the fame of outstanding magical success, the conviction that extraordinary good luck has probably been due to magic, create an ever nascent tradition which always surrounds famous magicians or famous systems of magic with a halo of supernatural reputation. This running tradition usually culminates retrospectively in a primeval myth, which gives the charter and credentials to the whole magical system. Myth of magic is definitely a warrant of its truth, a pedigree of its filiation, a charter of its claims to validity.

This is true not only of magical mythology. Myth in general is not an idle speculation about the origins of things or institutions. Nor is it the outcome of the contemplation of nature and rhapsodical interpretation of its laws. The function of myth is neither explanatory nor symbolic. It is the statement of an extraordinary event, the occurrence of which once for all had established the social order of a tribe or some of its economic pursuits, its arts and crafts or its religious or magical beliefs and ceremonies. Myth is not simply a piece of attractive fiction which is kept alive by the literary interest in the story. It is a statement of primeval reality which lives in the institutions and pursuits of a community. It justifies by precedent the existing order and it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, of sociological discriminations and burdens and of magical belief. In this consists its main cultural function. For all its similarity of form myth is neither a mere tale or prototype of literature or of science nor a branch of art or history nor an explanatory pseudo-theory. It fulfills a function *sui generis* closely connected with the nature of tradition and belief, with the continuity of culture, with the relation between age and youth and with the human attitude toward the past. The function of myth is to strengthen tradition and to endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural and more effective reality of initial events.

The place of religion must be considered in the scheme of culture as a complex satisfaction of highly derived needs. The various theories of religion ascribe it to either a religious "instinct" or a specific religious sense (McDougall, Hauer) or else explain it as a primitive theory of animism (Tylor) or preanimism (Marett) or ascribe it to the emotions of fear (Wundt) or to aesthetic raptures and lapses of speech (Max Müller) or the self-revelation of society (Durkheim). These theories make religion something superim-

posed on the whole structure of human culture, satisfying some needs perhaps, but needs which are entirely autonomous and have nothing to do with the hard-worked reality of human existence. Religion, however, can be shown to be intrinsically although indirectly connected with man's fundamental, that is, biological, needs. Like magic it comes from the curse of forethought and imagination, which fall on man once he rises above brute animal nature. Here there enter even wider issues of personal and social integration than those arising out of the practical necessity of hazardous action and dangerous enterprise. A whole range of anxieties, forebodings and problems concerning human destinies and man's place in the universe opens up once man begins to act in common not only with his fellow citizens but also with the past and future generations. Religion is not born out of speculation or reflection, still less out of illusion or misapprehension, but rather out of the real tragedies of human life, out of the conflict between human plans and realities.

Culture entails deep changes in man's personality; among other things it makes man surrender some of his self-love and self-seeking. For human relations do not rest merely or even mainly on constraint coming from without. Men can only work with and for one another by the moral forces which grow out of personal attachments and loyalties. These are primarily formed in the processes of parenthood and kinship but become inevitably widened and enriched. The love of parents for children and of children for their parents, that between husband and wife and between brothers and sisters, serve as prototypes and also as a nucleus for the loyalties of clanship, of neighborly feeling, and of tribal citizenship. Co-operation and mutual assistance are based, in savage and civilized societies, on permanent sentiments.

The existence of strong personal attachments and the fact of death, which of all human events is the most upsetting and disorganizing to man's calculations, are perhaps the main sources of religious belief. The affirmation that death is not real, that man has a soul and that this is immortal, arises out of a deep need to deny personal destruction, a need which is not a psychological instinct but is determined by culture, by co-operation and by the growth of human sentiments. To the individual who faces death the belief in immortality and the ritual of extreme unction, or last comforts (which in one form or another is almost universal), confirm his hope that there is a hereafter, that it is per-

haps not worse than the present life and may be better. Thus the ritual before death confirms the emotional outlook which a dying man has come to need in his supreme conflict. After death the bereaved are thrown into a chaos of emotion, which might become dangerous to each of them individually and to the community as a whole were it not for the ritual of mortuary duties. The religious rites of wake and burial—all the assistance given to the departed soul—are acts expressing the dogma of continuity after death and of communion between dead and living. Any survivor who has gone through a number of mortuary ceremonials for others becomes prepared for his own death. The belief in immortality, which he has lived through ritually and practiced in the case of his mother or father, of his brothers and friends, makes him cherish more firmly the belief in his own future life. The belief in human immortality therefore, which is the foundation of ancestor worship, of domestic cults, or mortuary ritual and of animism, grows out of the constitution of human society.

Most of the other forms of religion when analyzed in their functional character correspond to deep although derived needs of the individual and of the community. Totemism, for example, when related to its wider setting affirms the existence of an intimate kinship between man and his surrounding world. The ritual side of totemism and nature worship consists to a large extent in rites of multiplication or of propitiation of animals or in rites of enhancing the fertility of vegetable nature which also establish links between man and his environment. Primitive religion is largely concerned with the sacralization of the crises of human life. Conception, birth, puberty, marriage, as well as the supreme crisis death, all give rise to sacramental acts. The fact of conception is surrounded by such beliefs as that in reincarnation, spirit entry and magical impregnation. At birth a wealth

of animistic ideas concerning the formation of the human soul, the value of the individual to his community, the development of his moral powers, the possibility of forecasting his fate, become associated with and expressed in birth ritual. Initiation ceremonies, prevalent in puberty, have a developed mythological and dogmatic context. Guardian spirits, tutelary divinities, culture heroes, or a tribal All-Father are associated with initiation ceremonies. The contractual sacraments, such as marriage, entry into an age grade, or acceptance into a magical or religious fraternity, entail primarily ethical views but very often are also the expression of myths and dogmas.

Every important crisis of human life implies a strong emotional upheaval, mental conflict and possible disintegration. The hopes of a favorable issue have to struggle with anxieties and forebodings. Religious belief consists in the traditional standardization of the positive side in the mental conflict and therefore satisfies a definite individual need arising out of the psychological concomitants of social organization. On the other hand, religious belief and ritual, by making the critical acts and the social contracts of human life public, traditionally standardized, and subject to supernatural sanctions, strengthen the bonds of human cohesion.

Religion in its ethics sanctifies human life and conduct and becomes perhaps the most powerful force of social control. In its dogmatics it supplies man with strong cohesive forces. It grows out of every culture, because knowledge which gives foresight fails to overcome fate; because lifelong bonds of cooperation and mutual interest create sentiments, and sentiments rebel against death and dissolution. The cultural call for religion is highly derived and indirect but is finally rooted in the way in which the primary needs of man are satisfied in culture.

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