

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRIMITIVE MAGIC.*

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THE term magic is applied to any supposed supernatural science or art, especially the pretended art of controlling the actions of spiritual forces and superhuman beings. The wise men of the East—the priests of the Medes and Persians—were called *magi*, and were reputed to be skilled in the art of enchantment. Belief in magic exists among all primitive peoples. It is surprising to us, when we stop to consider it, that magic is a matter of living faith and practice to-day among probably more than half of the human race. From this fact there is brought to us, with overwhelming force, the realization that, notwithstanding our boasted science and civilization, the greater part of our fellow men dwell in unfathomable darkness.

Magic, in general, embraces many human interests, among which may be mentioned cure of disease, forecast of events, control of all natural forces for weal or woe, in short, the gratifying of all desires otherwise unattainable. The various forms of divination, of astrology and alchemy, were outgrowths of varying types of magic. Originally magic is of a rudimentary and purely traditional character, but with the rise of literature it soon became formulated into elaborate systems among the various peoples. In modern times the term is more familiarly understood as relating to such actions as appear to be beyond the ordinary connections of cause and effect, comprising the common stock of tricks, thimble-rigging and legerdemain.

The beliefs and practices of magic arise from the psychological effort on the part of man to comprehend and determine human experiences, particularly in relation to the mysterious forces of nature. Where knowledge does not exist, indigenous fancies always take its place. And since self-preservation is the first law of life, the will to live has incited the ignorant mind with all manner of agencies which experience and the imagination might suggest as instruments

* The descriptive material of this article is chiefly taken from Frazer, *The Golden Bough*. References are omitted.

thereto. Primitive man stands trembling and powerless before the awful forces of nature. Battling haphazardly with such unknown forces, man is immediately conscious of his frailty and impotency. His life is threatened in a thousand ways by earthquake, flood and storm, wild beasts and human enemies. In his sense of helplessness *fear* seizes upon him and becomes perhaps the most powerful impulse in his efforts for life. It is written that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and certain it is that the fear of the subtle powers of nature has planted in the human mind the seeds of desire for knowledge which have ultimately flowered into the natural sciences—the instruments of man's triumph over nature.

In magic, primitive man has sought to answer the same question as the modern scientist, namely, what is the cause of, and how to gain control over, any given phenomena. The first problem of philosophy concerned the nature of the immutable *being* back of the eternal process of generation, action and *becoming*. But it was the fact that all things were in action, in eternal mutation, that gave rise to this question. Likewise to primitive man, action is the thing that impresses him most intensely, and how to explain action is his first intelligent effort. The universal answer given to this question by early man is also the most natural and simple one. That is, man has within himself an immediate consciousness of his power of action in the energizing of his own spirit, and knowing nothing else in nature he also explains its activities as the operations of immanent spirits. Both early magic and science were *hylozoistic*. Furthermore, primitive man is immediately conscious of his superiority to nature and of his ability to rule and triumph over natural forces to at least quite a degree. Accordingly we find that *magic aims to control nature directly*, that is, by giving the spiritual the ruling power over nature. This direct control of nature by the spirit was regarded by Hegel as the characteristic distinguishing magic from religion, which aims to control nature *indirectly* through appeal to powerful supernatural beings.

The savage hardly conceives the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, however, and to him the world is operated by supernatural agents, that is, personal beings acting on impulses and motives like his own, liable like himself to be moved by appeals to their pity, hopes and fears. Hence, by such means, primitive man seeks to limit the course of nature to his own advantage. By prayers, promises, threats, he expects to secure fine weather, abundant crops, cure of diseases and like benefits, from the gods. But when a god becomes incarnate in his own person, then he needs

appeal to no higher beings. In this manner the savage assumes to possess within himself all the powers necessary to the furthering of his own well-being and that of his fellow men. This, likewise, is the process by which the idea of a man-god is reached. This supposed power of individuals to rule over nature directly is magic or sorcery. Thus magic is the oldest form of religion, the wildest, most barbarous. Not a god in the magician, but the magician himself, is the conjurer and conqueror of nature. Out of magic, also, the religion of magic is developed.

In general, magic may be classified as: 1. *Theoretical* magic, or magic as a pseudo-science. In this case it assumes certain conceptions and principles, presuppositions and theories, as the implications of magical belief and practices. It may be said to be the dim intellectual background, or spiritual foundation of the magic art. 2. *Practical* magic, or magic as a pseudo-art. Such art naturally pertains to all the devices of the actual practice of magic, which undergoes almost endless variation in relation to the different peoples of the world. Practical magic may again be divided into: (a) *Positive* magic, or *sorcery*; and (b) *negative* magic, or *taboo*. These principles of classification are sufficiently exhaustive, although actual magic takes on so many forms it is impossible to organize them into specific and exclusive divisions.

The principles of thought on which *positive magic* or *sorcery* is based have been reduced to two, namely: 1. *Similarity*. The assumption is that like produces like, and that effects resemble their causes. This principle may be called the *law of similarity*. From this law the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires by merely imitating it. Charms based on the law of similarity have been called *homœopathic* or *imitative magic*. 2. *Contact*. Here the assumption is that things which have once been in contact with each other, continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. This may be called the *law of contact* or the *law of contagion*. From this law the magician infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not. Charms based on the law of contact have been called *contagious magic*.

These principles which the magician applies in his art are believed by him to likewise regulate the operations of inanimate nature: that is, he holds that the principles of similarity and contact are of universal application and not limited to human actions. This makes magic to be a sort of *spurious system of natural law* as well as a

fallacious guide of conduct. It is false science as well as abortive art. Nevertheless, we must recognize that the motive and aim of magic is identically the same as that of natural science, namely, an understanding and control of the forces of nature and of life. Of course, the logic of the magician is implicit; he is only dimly conscious even of his intellectual processes; in fact, magic is always an *art* to him, never a science, and the very idea of science is lacking in his undeveloped mind.

Psychologically analysis makes it appear that the two dominating principles of magic, similarity and contact, are but the *mis-application of the association of ideas*. It is the simplest principle that the mind naturally associates what is similar. The whole science of organic classification depends on this principle. And again the mind associates whatever is contiguous in space and time. These two principles of association are the most prominent ones so far as classification and association of sense-objects are concerned. They are the associations used by both the magician and the scientist. The magician, however, because of his ignorance of natural laws, commits the mistake of assuming that things which resemble each other are the same: and that things which have once been in contact with each other are always in contact. In practice the two principles are combined, or, to be more exact, contagious magic is generally found to involve an application of the imitative principle, whereas the imitative magic may be practised by itself. Both of these branches of magic are generally conveniently termed *sympathetic magic*, since both assume that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy, the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of a kind of invisible ether, or mystic agency, not unlike that which is postulated by modern science for a precisely similar purpose, namely, so things can act on one another at a distance and through empty space.

It remains now to illustrate these various types of magic in the concrete expressions of them. And in this only suggestions can be made, since they have had almost unlimited exemplification among all primitive peoples without exception. We may, therefore, seek merely to present certain types of magic and taboo which strikingly illustrate these principles.

IMITATIVE MAGIC.

One of the most familiar applications of the principle of similarity, or that like produces like, is the attempt which has been made by many primitive peoples in many ages to injure or destroy

an enemy by injuring or destroying an image of him, in the belief that, just as the image suffers, so does the man, and that when the image perishes the man must perish. This practice has been widely diffused over the world and has persisted through the ages. Thousands of years ago it was known to ancient India, Babylon and Egypt, as well as to Greece and Rome, and at the present day is resorted to by cunning and malignant savages in Africa, Australia and elsewhere. The ancient books of the Hindus testify to the use of similar enchantments among their remote ancestors. Indeed, the antiquity of these magic practices is impressive. To destroy his foe, a man would fashion a figure of him in clay and transfix it with an arrow which had been barbed with a thorn and winged with an owl's feather; or he would mould the figure in wax and melt it in the fire. Sometimes effigies of soldiers, horses and chariots, elephants and other implements of a hostile army were moulded in dough, and then pulled into pieces as a measure of defense. In modern India these practices have only been modified in detail.

In Japan, if an Ainu desires to compass the destruction of an enemy, he will also make a likeness of him out of mugwort or the guilder-rose and bury it in a hole upside down or under the trunk of a rotten tree, with a prayer to a demon to carry off the soul of the man or to make his body rot away with the decaying tree. In this practice we find magic mixed with religious rite. The Chinese also are aware that you can harm your enemy by maltreating or cursing an image of him, especially if you have taken care to write on it his name and horoscope. In the Chinese *Book of Rewards and Penalties*, translated by Stanislas Julien, we find illustrated the literary and ancient form of such efforts at magic. We read: "Kong-sun-tcho, having died suddenly, some time after he had succeeded to the post of treasurer, appeared in a dream to the governor of his district and said unto him: 'I have been the victim of an odious crime, and am come, my lord, to pray you to avenge me. My time to die had not yet come; but my servants gave me the nightmare, and I was choked in my sleep. If you will send secretly some dauntless soldiers, not one of the varlets will escape you. Under the seventh tile of the roof of my house will be found my image carved in wood. Fetch it and punish the criminals.' The governor found the image bristling all over with nails. Bit by bit the wood changed into flesh and uttered inarticulate cries when struck." The servants, we are told, suffered the extreme penalty of the law. In this story both 'magic and superstition are

interwoven, and there is exemplified the effort of literature to embody folk myth and magic.

In order to see the universality of such imitative magic let us turn to the American Indians. When an Ojibway Indian desires to work evil on any one, he makes a little wooden image of his enemy and runs a needle into his head or heart, or he shoots an arrow into it, believing that wherever the needle pierces or the arrow strikes the image, his foe will the same instant be seized with a sharp pain in the corresponding part of the body; but if he intends to kill the person outright, he burns or buries the puppet, uttering certain magic words as he does so. Others believe that by drawing the figure of a person in the sand, in ashes or clay, or by considering any object as his body, and pricking it with a sharp stick or doing it other injury, they inflict a corresponding injury upon the person represented. The Peruvian Indians moulded images of fat mixed with grain to imitate the persons whom they disliked or feared, and then burned the effigy on the road were the intended victim was to pass. This they called burning his soul. But they drew a delicate distinction between the kinds of materials to be used in the manufacture of these images, according as the victim was to be an Indian or a Spaniard. To kill an Indian, they employed maize and the fat of the llama; to kill a Spaniard, they used wheat and the fat of a pig, because the Spaniard did not eat llamas and preferred wheat to maize. That is, the image was to be of the same substance as the Indian or Spaniard were respectively supposed to be—a striking example of the principle of similarity in magic.

If imitative magic, working by means of images, has been commonly practised for the spiteful purpose of putting obnoxious people out of the world, it has also, but far more rarely, been employed with the benevolent intention of helping others into the world, and in general for *beneficent* ends. It has been common among all tribes throughout the world to make doll-like images, over which are performed certain secret rites, for the women to place under pillows and thereby facilitate childbirth and offspring. Often there is a ceremony simulating birth at the adoption of a child, and in the eyes of primitive law and philosophy the child thus becomes really a natural child to all intents and purposes. The make-believe, so dear to children, is thus practised by primitive peoples.

When a Cora Indian, of Mexico, wants to multiply his flocks, he models a figure of the animal he wants in wax or clay, or carves

it from tuff, and deposits it in a cave of the mountains, which he believes to be the masters of all riches, including cattle and sheep. Sympathetic magic has been used, in general, to insure the food supply. Thus, in the barren regions of Central Australia the tribes are divided into a number of totem clans. The great majority of the totems are edible animals and plants, and the magic ceremonies are supposed to supply the tribes with food and other necessities. Often these rites consist in the imitation of the effects which the people desire to produce. In such manner, the Arunta go through a pantomime representing the fully developed witchetty grub, which they eat, in the act of emerging from the chrysalis. This is supposed to multiply their number. Imitations of the emu, the kangaroo, cockatoo and other creatures, are similarly performed. These totem practices are mainly crude, almost childish, attempts to satisfy the primary wants of man in the hard conditions to which he is subject in those deserts—and the want of food first of all. In all such examples we see the use of magic for benevolent purposes.

Magical images have also been employed for the amiable purpose of winning love. The ancient Hindu would shoot an arrow into the heart of a clay image as a means of securing a woman's affection; only, the bowstring must be of hemp, the shaft of the arrow must be of black ala wood, its plume of owl's feather, and its barb a thorn. The Chippewa Indians had little images of the persons whom they desired to win, and pricking the hearts of the images, they inserted magical powders in the punctures, while they addressed the effigies by the names of the persons whom they represented. Ancient wizards melted wax in the fire in order to make the hearts of their sweethearts melt of love. And the natives of New Caledonia make use of effigies to maintain or restore harmony between husband and wife. The spindle-shaped bundles are tied together firmly to symbolize and assure the amity of the couple.

One of the most universal beneficent uses of imitative magic is the healing or prevention of *sickness*. In ancient Greece, when a man died of dropsy, the children were made to sit with their feet in water, until his body was burned. This was supposed to prevent the disease from attacking them. Such practices find almost limitless variation throughout the world. One of the great merits of imitative magic is that it enables the cure to be performed on the person of the doctor instead of the patient, who is relieved of all trouble and inconvenience, while he sees his medicine-man writhe in anguish before him. Thus a Dyak medicine-man who has been fetched in a case of illness, will lie down and pretend to be dead:

virtue of one or the other of these laws; and if the consequences of a particular act appear to him likely to prove disagreeable, he is naturally careful not to act in that way lest he should incur danger. Whatever he believes dangerous is tabooed. Taboo, then, is a negative application of practical magic. It has as extensive a system as sorcery, but a few examples must suffice for our present purpose. In ancient Italy, women were forbidden to spin on the highways, or to carry their spindles openly, as they were supposed to injure and twist the corn. Among the Huzuls of the Carpathian Mountains, the wife of a hunter may not spin while her husband is eating his meals, or, when he is on the chase, the game will turn and wind like the spindle and the hunter will be unable to hit it. With certain tribes, when you have caught fish and strung them on a line, you may not cut the line, or next time you go fishing your line will be sure to break. The Malays, in searching for camphor, eat their food dry and take care not to pound the salt fine; the reason is that camphor is found in the form of small grains deposited in the cracks of the tree, and fine salt means small camphor.

Among the taboos observed by savages none perhaps are more numerous and important than the prohibitions not to eat certain foods. In abstaining from them they practise negative magic. Thus, in Madagascar, a soldier may not eat of hedgehog as it is feared that the animal, from its propensity of coiling up into a ball when alarmed, will impart a timid shrinking disposition to those who partake of it. A soldier should not partake of an ox knee, lest he become weak in the knee so he could not march; he should not partake of a cock that has died fighting or anything that has been speared to death; and no male animal may be killed in his house while he is away at the wars; for all these suggest that he will meet with the suggested similar fate.

CONTAGIOUS MAGIC.

The principle involved in contagious magic is, as we have seen, the notion that things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterward, even when quite dissevered from each other, in such sympathetic relation that whatever is done to the one must similarly affect the other. In both imitative and contagious magic the thought is that effects resemble causes, and both rest on a false association of ideas. The physical basis in both cases is the conception of a material medium of some sort which, like the ether of modern physics, is assumed to unite distant objects and to convey impressions from one to the other.

The most familiar example of contagious magic is the sympathy which is supposed to exist between a man and any severed part of his person, such as his hair or nails; so that whoever gets possession of human hair, nails, etc., may work his will, at any distance, upon the person from whom they were cut. This notion is likewise world-wide. Incidentally this superstition has done much sanitary good in causing the removal of refuse and tending to a species of cleanliness which might never have been adopted on rational grounds. Particles of clothing, footprints, anything whatever at any time in contact with the person serves as an agent in working the charm on the intended victim. For this reason some natives sweep their floors and remove every vestige of possible substance in their course to prevent all possible magical charms being effective against them.

Every part of the body has been involved in the development of this form of contagious magic. In Australia it is a common practice to knock out one or more of a boy's teeth at the ceremonies of initiation into full manhood. The extracted tooth might be placed under the bark of a tree near a river; if the bark grew over the tooth, or it fell into the water, all was well; but if it were exposed and the ants ran over it, the natives believed that the boy would suffer from a disease of the mouth. Doubtless the prevalence of such disease itself gave rise to this barbarous method of prevention. Similar practices prevail among many tribes. It is a prevalent custom among civilized peasants to put an extracted tooth into the hole of a rat where the rat will run over it, believing that the rodent having strong teeth will make new teeth grow for the subject. Teeth of squirrels, foxes, beavers, etc., have been used for similar purposes.

A curious application of the contagious magic is the relation commonly believed to exist between a wounded man and the agent of the wound, so that whatever is done to the agent must correspondingly affect the patient for good or evil. Pliny tells us that if you have wounded a man, and are sorry for it, you have only to spit on the hand that gave the wound, and the pain of the sufferer will be instantly alleviated. In Melanesia, if a man's friends get possession of an arrow which wounded him, they keep it in a damp place or in cool leaves, for then the inflammation will be trifling and will soon subside. Meantime the enemy, who shot the arrow, is hard at work to aggravate the wound, by drinking hot and burning juices and chewing irritating leaves, for this will clearly inflame and irritate the wound. They also keep the bow near the fire to make the wound hot. Among some Indians it is believed that the anointing of the

weapon that made the wound would heal it. In Suffolk, England, even now, if a man cuts himself with a scythe, he takes care to see that the tool is kept bright and oils it to keep the wound from festering.

Magic sympathy is also supposed to exist between a person and his clothes, so that whatever is done to the clothes will be felt by himself, even though he be far away at the time. In Tanna, New Hebrides, a man who has a grudge at another and desires his death, gets a cloth which has touched the sweat of his enemy's body. He rubs this cloth with leaves and twigs of a certain tree, rolls all together into a bundle, and burns it slowly in the fire. As the bundle is consumed the victim falls ill, and when it is reduced to ashes, he dies. Such practices are carried out with great variations.

Contagious magic may also be wrought upon a man through the impressions left by his body in the sand or earth, particularly through his footprints. The superstition among the savages is that, by injuring the footprints, you injure the person or feet of those who made it. The natives of southeastern Australia think they can lame a man by placing sharp pieces of glass or charcoal in his footprints. Rheumatic pains are often by them attributed to this cause. A tribe in western Australia has a magical instrument made of resin and rats' teeth which they call the sun, because it is supposed to contain the solar heat. By placing it on a man's tracks they think they can throw him into a violent fever which will soon burn him up. Such magic is used by savage hunters also for the capture of game. Before leaving a camping-place, some of the natives of New Guinea are careful to stab the ground thoroughly with spears, in order to prevent a sorcerer from making use of a drop of sweat or anything of the imprints which they may leave behind: From this we can understand a maxim of the Pythagoreans that in rising from bed we should smooth away the impression left by our bodies, a precaution against magic which existed among the Greek forefathers long before the rite was fathered on Pythagoras.

It is interesting to note that the practice of magic is primarily self-preservative in its motive. In its manifold aspects the wish is always father to the thought. As example, there is the subjective desire to wreak vengeance on the enemy, and the savage mind satisfies this subjective desire in motor discharge upon the vicarious substitute for the real enemy upon whom he would like to effect

his will. And since like acts are supposed to produce like results, he associated these ideas in this magical manner.

But, we may ask, what can possibly have given rise to all these fancies, and particularly, what could have made them persevere in the face of constant experience to the contrary? The answer is that, to the ignorant mind, a single coincidence is more forceful and impressive than many failures, which assume certain conditions to be lacking; it is the natural disposition of the human mind to affirm something positively, rather than wait in doubt and negation; and finally, the evident credulity of the untutored savage mind must be considered. Like elements exist, at present, in relation to the patent-medicine dispensation. A man is sick; he takes a bottle of some nostrum; he gets well; hence the nostrum cured him. But all this takes no account of the fact that hundreds of others took the nostrum and died. And the dispensary prints no testimonials of the dead. In like manner, if the savage secures any desire by magic rite, the effectiveness of that coincidence gives it great reputation, which is passed on by tradition. It is a familiar fact among us that even scientists often assert as positive truth what may be no more than conjecture, or, at best, only tentative hypothesis. Like the scientist, the savage asserts beliefs in lieu of knowledge. And so far as credulity is concerned, it is found in an astonishing degree among all classes of even cultured men. One of the early Church Fathers is reputed to have said concerning a difficult dogma: "I believe it because it is impossible."

THE MAGICIAN'S FUNCTION.

In savage society there is commonly to be found, not only private magic, but what may be called *public magic*, that is, sorcery practised for the benefit of the whole community. In such a case, the magician ceases to be a private practitioner and becomes to some extent a public functionary. This fact is of great significance for the political and religious evolution of society; for, since the good of the tribe is supposed to depend on the performance of these rites, the magician rises into a position of much influence and repute, and may readily acquire the rank of a chief or *king*. Magic accordingly draws into its ranks some of the ablest and most ambitious men of the tribe, because it holds out to them a prospect of honor, wealth and power, such as hardly any other career could offer. They may be honest, but the acute are liable to be knaves and deceivers. But the pitfalls are many and one's life is safe only by steering shrewdly between the difficulties. The tendency would

be for supreme power to fall into the hands of the ablest and most unscrupulous men. Furthermore, it is evident that the elevation of magicians to power tends to substitute a monarchy for that of primitive democracy, or rather oligarchy of old men, which is characteristic of savage society. Thus it appears that the rise of monarchy is the general condition of the emergence of mankind from savagery.

The notion that the savage is the freest of mankind is just the reverse of the truth. He is a slave, not indeed to a visible master, but to the past, to the spirits of his dead ancestors, who haunt his steps from birth to death and rule him with a rod of iron. Superstition will allow no change for the better; the ablest man is dragged down by the weakest and dullest, who necessarily set the standard, since they cannot rise while the abler can fall. This means a dead level in society and that the lowest level, namely, savagery. The rise of an influential talented savage may carry his tribe forward in a generation more than previous ages have done. Magic, then, has been one of the roads by which the ablest men have risen to supreme power, and has contributed to emancipate mankind from the thralldom of tradition and to elevate them into a larger and freer life. And this is no small service, combined with the fact that magic has led also to science itself.

We have seen that the magician may become king. His social position becomes that of primate or *prince*. Accordingly regalia take on the significance of fetishes and talismans, the possession of which carries with it the right to the throne. In Celebes, Indian Archipelago, the royal authority is embodied in the regalia, and the princes owe all their authority and the respect which they enjoy to the possession of these precious objects. The regalia reign, and the princes are only their representatives. In all parts of the world the emblems of royalty have been viewed in a similar light and have had a similar origin. In ancient Egypt the two royal crowns, the red and the white, were supposed to be endowed with magical virtues, indeed to be themselves divinities, embodiments of the sun-god. The belief that kings possess magical or supernatural powers to control the course of nature for the good of their subjects seems to have been shared by the ancestors of all the Aryan races from India to Ireland. Swedish and Danish, as well as Irish kings were slain because they were supposed to cause famines and pestilence. A relic of such belief may be seen in the notion that English kings can heal scrofula, or king's evil, by their touch. But kings have gradually exchanged the magical for the

religious profession, and now are often the head of the church or religion of the nation. They have become priests instead of sorcerers.

The conception of men as gods was slow in arising, but it was only a step from magic to this end. Human gods have reigned in all antiquity, and at the present reign among savages. Kings especially arrogated to themselves majesty, or at least divine origin. The emperors of China and Japan pretend to be sons of heaven, and the lamas claim descent through the transmigration of human deities. There is the development of the sacred king out of the magician. But there are two types of man-god, the magical and the religious. Both serve a function according to the kind of reference. Magical control of the wind, weather; rain, sun, etc., are among the important functions. Imitation of the rain, dry conditions, the winds, etc., were supposed to be effective for producing the desired result. In desert lands rain-magic took on chief importance; and in all countries the environment to be controlled determines the magical practices. Out of such conceptions have come the lingering sentiments concerning the magical seasons, yuletide, spring and harvest, with their mystical rituals. Magic has diverged into the vagaries of astrology, alchemy, divinations and auguries of every kind, which were compiled into books of such supposed wisdom in the ancient Assyrian library at Nineveh. Dream-books, fortune-telling, forecasts of the future, are harmless survivals of such past beliefs; and the prophecies concerning the weather by means of the goose-bone, fat of kidneys, the ground-hog, etc., are little more scientific.

We have seen that the magician may assume to be a god. But when he assumes to control the gods, he then passes from the sphere of magic to that of primitive religion. It is notable that when religion enters, magic tends to decline. There is a real hostility of religion to magic in later history. Yet even at the present day there is a universality of belief in magic among the ignorant classes, and this latent superstition is in a way a menace to civilization. With the growth of knowledge, the inefficiency of magic is recognized. In religion the early gods were viewed as magicians. And it may be observed that, in so far as religion assumes the world to be directed by conscious agents, who may be turned from their purpose by persuasion, it stands in fundamental antagonism to magic as well as science, both of which take for granted that the course of nature is determined, not by the passions or caprice of personal beings, but by immutable laws acting mechanically. In magic, this assumption is implicit; in science, it is explicit. Spir-

itual forces in magic are treated the same as inanimate agents, that is, they coerce, and are not conciliated or propitiated.

In the nature of the case it is but a step from primitive magic to primitive religion. Just as soon as the human mind passes from the conception of its immediate control of nature to that of mediate control through the intervention of a universal superhuman agency, it has passed from the sphere of pure magic to that of religion. But in this process it is evident that many elements of the magical will be absorbed into the expression of religion. Thus magic steals up into the higher plane of religion in the form of witches, devils and the supposed magical power of prayers, incantations and like religious forces and agencies. Religions of magic are very prevalent in Africa and among the Mongols and Chinese; not, however, in their absolute original crudeness, for the religious element of mediation has come in more or less, and the spiritual has begun to assume an objective form of self-consciousness.

It is worth our while to emphasize the profound human significance of both magic and the religion of magic. In view of primitive humanity's titanic struggle for existence, and its blind groping in the darkness of ignorance to find its way to the infinite Light, who would not be moved by the pathos of its childish expressions of supposed wisdom relative to the fixed and eternal truth! The most barbarous superstitions, the most infantile magic, have in them an exalted nobility when we go back of all crudity of expression and all hypocrisy in practice to the profound human striving for knowledge and understanding which they embody. Philosophically we must regard every expression of primitive magic and primitive religion as the innocent babblings of the childhood of the race, just as we regard the prattle of children concerning things of which they are not only ignorant but incapable of having knowledge. The stumblings of ignorance are always pathetic. Ancient philosophy is full of fallacy, and the whole course of the genesis of science is one of trial and error. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that elements of the magical and miraculous should have come down into the expressions of even the Christian religion. For, in fact, some of the conceptions lying at the base of even the profoundest speculations in the philosophy of religion are, at last, matters of perplexity and wonder, and are liable to remain speculative beliefs rather than real knowledge. The relation of God to man, man's freedom or determined action of will, his immortality, are examples of such mooted questions. Existence itself is an abiding mystery.