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Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER

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THE GHOST DANCE: PRAYER (After Mooney)

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MYSTICISM AND ASSOCIATIVE SYMBOLS OF THOUGHT REVEALED IN INDIAN COMPOSITIONS

GEO. H. DAUGHERTY, JR.

ANY analysis of Indian ideas should be made with the understanding that the tribes did not by any means speak the same language. At the time of the first white invasions there were fifty-eight separate linguistic families on the continent, split up into a much larger number of tribes.[1] The members of each of these linguistic stocks spoke a language more distinct from that of any other stock than English and German.[2] It is not important to discuss all these linguistic families in detail. In the present volume reference will be made only to tribes of the Iroquoian, Algonquian, Siouan, and Piman families. Recent investigations reveal underlying similarities in the psychology and substructure of most of the fifty-eight languages. All evidence now points more strongly than ever to the original unity of the race. The latest developments indicate three basic groups of languages. Further research may even reduce these to one. The subsequent diversity of languages can be accounted for by the same influences which have largely made for variations in culture: i. e., different environments, and the isolation caused by the mutual hostility of the tribes.

It is remarkable that the present utterances of the Indians, coming as they do from widely separated tribes, convey even in their translated form a curiously unified impression. Few of them have any great degree of literary merit; yet even in the scientific translations there are many extraordinarily powerful and beautiful passages. In them one catches a faint echo of the thoughts and feel-

[1] A tribe among the North American Indians consisted of a body of individuals bound by blood ties, speaking a common dialect, with similar customs, ceremonies, beliefs, and organizations, both religious and political, and occupying a more or less definite territorial area. (Abridged from J. N. B. Hewitt, "Tribe," *Hodge*, II, p. 814.

[2] Frederick Burton, *American Primitive Music*, New York, 1909, pp. 3-4.

ings of our own forgotten ancestors. These crude, brief songs reflect a grim and awful wilderness pressing closely on all sides, the lurking place of ferocious human enemies and of dread animals with more than human power and cunning. All these primitive utterances express the fear of unknown, mysterious powers masked behind all natural objects: the lightning flash, a huge bird of fire who destroyed whole villages, with one mighty beat of his wings; "other fire-producing creatures, enormous horned serpents, who in turn shot the blue, harmless lightning upward. . . . Besides there were long serpents who lived in the waters and who, rearing their huge lengths straight upward at intervals, would allow themselves to fall over with a gigantic splash. There were the sharp-breasted snakes, suggested to native imagination by the tracks of lightning, snakes supposed to run straight along the surface of the ground cutting through roots and bushes as they went. There were bodiless snakes which rose whirling into the air on still mornings. . . . There were very little people who sometimes deprived travelers of their senses, and very big people who ate them."[3] All these mysterious, demon forces had to be placated with magic song and ritual, and rigid taboo, and they were of necessity invoked if any success was to be attained against enemy tribes. These manidos were quick to anger; their vengeance was more to be feared than that of the strongest warrior-nations.

It must not be thought, however, that the soul of the Indian was dominated by fear. He sang and chanted of the mysteries of life and death, of the joys and sorrows of his daily life. Always he exulted in his own might; boasting his deeds of valor, treachery, or rapine against the ever-present enemy. These songs and grandiloquent proclamations of war and peace made to the majestic red warriors grouped about the flaring council fire have a double value. They occasionally contain real poetry; and, when properly interpreted, they reveal the Indian much better than any number of crumbling stone tools or mouldy feathers in a museum.

In order to understand these ideas it is necessary to understand the terms in which the Indian thought. He did not think, as we do, in vocables expressed by arbitrary denotive characters; he thought in connotive or associative symbols, characteristic of all prescuptorial human culture. To the civilized man these symbols seem incongruous, extravagant, bizarre. To the Indian, however, there was a direct association between such unrelated things (to the civilized

[3] J. R. Swanton, "Tokulki of Tulsa," *American Indian Life,* pp. 142-143.

understanding) as directions, or points of the compass, and colors. As a result, directions and colors became synonymous in his understanding.[4]

To illustrate: the following is a translation of a Cherokee witch doctor's magical formula for securing victory to a war party. For the proper fee of blankets, guns, or other Indian valuables, the medicine man repeated this formula to make the warriors unvulnerable. In the original setting, the effect must have been weird in the extreme. One can imagine the line of grim and hideously painted braves, who hearkened motionless in the firelight to the wailing chant through the black, whispering woods:

"Huyi! Yu! Listen
Now, instantly we have lifted up the red war club.
Quickly his soul shall be without motion.
There under the earth
Where the black war clubs shall be moving about like ball sticks in the game,
There his soul shall be, never to reappear.
We cause it to be so.
He shall never go and lift up the war club.
We cause it to be so.
There under the earth the black war club
And the black fog have come together as one for their covering.
The black fog shall never be lifted from them.
We cause it to be so."

The preceding incantation was supposed to paralyze the enemy. For the benefit of his own men the shaman went on:

"Instantly shall their souls be moving about there in the seventh heaven.
Their souls shall never break in two.
So shall it be.
Quickly we have moved their souls on high
Where they shall be going about in peace.
You have shielded yourselves with the red war club.
Their souls shall never be knocked about.
Cause it to be so.

. . . . .

[4] J. W. Powell, "Administrative Report," *Thirteenth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1891-2, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

Let them shield themselves with the white war whoop.
Instantly grant that they shall never become blue.
Yu!" [5]

The explanation of this extraordinary rigamarole lies first in the color symbolism. In the first part the shaman identifies himself with the warriors in lifting up the red war club, red being the symbol of success. The souls of his friends the shaman raises above to the regions of light where they shall be in peace, shielded by the red war club of success, and never touched by the blows of the enemy. "Breaking the soul in two" is equivalent to snapping the thread of life, the soul being regarded as an intangible something having length like a string or rod. The color red was always associated with the east, abode of red spirits, possibly being connected with the color of dawn. It acted as a weapon to strike the enemy, and also as a shield. Beads used in conjuring for long life, success in love or anything else were always red.

Black was typical of death, and the evil spirits in the west. In this case the shaman curses the enemy and puts their doomed souls into lower regions where the black war clubs continually knock them about. He also envelops them in a black fog which shall never lift. In some incantations the shaman tears out a man's soul, carries it far into the west, places it in a black coffin buried deep in black mud, with a black serpent coiled around it. This certainly reveals a poetic sombreness of soul quite worthy of Edgar Allen Poe.

Blue was emblematic of failure, disappointment, unsatisfied desire. "They shall never become blue," means that they shall never fail. In a love charm, the lover figuratively covered himself with red and prayed that his rival be blue. Blue spirits lived in the north. White denoted peace and happiness. On ceremonial or festival occasions, as at the green corn dance or the ball game, the people figuratively ate white food and afterwards returned on a white path to white houses. White was the color of the stone pipe of peace. White spirits lived in the south. The colors brown and yellow were used occasionally. The meaning of brown is not clear; but yellow was symbolic of trouble. Neither color referred to any particular point of the compass.[6]

[5] James Mooney, "Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees," *Seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, pp. 388ff. It should be understood that to the Indian much of the importance of such a formula as this is lost in the translation. The very sound of the words and their order are important in magical formulae. The order of words and phrases in the present translation corresponds only roughly to the measures of the original as chanted or spoken.

[6] Mooney, *op. cit.*, pp. 390ff.

The second point of the symbolism in the preceding selection refers to the Indian game of ball, the souls of the enemy being doomed to infernal regions where they are knocked about like balls in a hockey game.[7]

Since directions and colors were habitually enumerated in a certain order, the smaller numerals were added to this associative system. Because it was highly important that every individual in the group should remember the connotive symbolism, most or all the tribes arranged themselves in a definite order when sitting about the camp fire in the family group. Thus even the littlest Indian came to know which numbers and colors were to be feared, or regarded as sources of help. The system, however, was much more complex in its further elaboration. In speaking particularly of the American Indians, J. W. Powell explains further: ". . . individual names are applied connotively in such manner as to indicate order or rank, which is synonymous with position in the camping group; and among many peoples tradition is crystallized and preserved . . . by means of a far-reaching connotive association in which direction, color, number, and names all play important parts. In many instances organs of the body enter into the system. . . . By means of this symbolism the social organization, the traditions, the myths, the ceremonials, the language, the industrial arts, and indeed all the activities of the American Indians are interwoven. . . ."[8] The symbolism of number and position is seen in the division of the Iowa tribe and others into two halves, the summer people and the winter people, each charged with duties appropriate to their seasons. Still other tribes symbolized their divisions as the earth people and the sky people.[9] Another instance of number symbolism occurs in the importance attached to the number four, which was identified with the points of the compass and the deities who changed the seasons and the weather. It was even represented by the symbol of the cross "whose four arms we see portrayed on the altar tablet of Palenque, on the robes of Mexican priests, in the hieroglyphs of

[7] The game of ball was played by large gangs of warriors. The equipment included bats (carried by each player) four feet long with a net at one end. The field was a half mile long. The ball was first thrown up in the middle; then both gangs tried to carry it past the opposite post. It was a wild game, usually attended with great excitement and numerous casualties. (William W. Warren, "History of the Ojibway Nation," *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Vol. V., St. Paul, 1897, pp. 202-3.

[8] J. W. Powell, *op. cit.*, pp. xxivff.

[9] J. O. Dorsey, "Siouan Sociology," *Fifteenth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, pp. 238-9. See also Francis La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe," *Thirty-six Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, pp. 51-52, and Clark Wissler, *The American Indians*, p. 158.

the Algonkins, and in countless other connections."[10]

In this fashion everything the Indian saw or did was symbolic; and all his songs and stories were likewise symbolic. Space permits the enumeration here of only a few instances of this symbolism. Others will be pointed out as they may occur in the songs. All adornment, such as paint and feathers, had an esoteric meaning. Most of the tribes were expert in pictography; yet "to the Indian they [representations of men and animals] were mainly, if not wholly symbolic; for everything indicates that the primitive citizen had not yet broken the shackles of fetichistic symbolism, and had little concept of artistic portrayal for its own sake."[11] Names of things also had fetichistic powers.[12]

Among the Omaha tribe the highest honor for valor in war was the "Crow," the mark of which was a certain headdress of feathers of various sorts. This decoration was intended to symbolize an entire field of battle. The fluttering feathers represented birds fighting over dead bodies; certain arrow shafts in the decoration stood for lifeless enemies with arrows still remaining in them; and an eagle skin was associated with war and destruction and thunderstorms. Also attached to the decoration were the skin of a crow and the tail of a wolf. The wolf, the crow, and the eagle were among the symbolic animal deities of the Omaha, and were invoked for aid in war.

An extended explanation of the peculiar zoömorphic concepts of the Indians would require a separate volume. Indeed, it is doubted if any white man has ever completely fathomed them. The basis for these ideas is, however, not far to seek. As among us the lion is symbolic of strength and courage, and the fox of cunning, so various animals were considered by the Indian to possess certain paramount characteristics. Furthermore, the Indian regarded the animals as his fellow creatures, equal, even superior to himself in strength and intelligence. Certainly their hunting, mating, and other habits were not greatly different from his own. In addition they were provided with fur, claws, and other attributes which seemed to the savage distinctly superior.

[10] Brinton, *The American Race*, p. 53. Another example of this is the well-known Indian sign of the "swastika."

[11] McGee, "The Siouan Indians," *Fifteenth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, p. 176.

[12] "Le nom est mystique, comme l'image est mystique, parce que la perception des objets, orientée autrement que la notre par les representations collectives est mystique." (Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Societes Inferieurs*, pp. 45-46.

The following quotation from an Ojibway council talk illustrates this attitude. Yellow-Otter, an old Indian chief is complaining to the government inspector that the government issue of clothes and food has been withheld and that the gold medal once given the chief is not an adequate substitute:

". . . Me—Yellow-Otter,
I'm going mak'um big-talk, 'Specto- Jone'.'

* * * * *

Before de w'ite man come across big-water,
In olden tam', de Eenzhun[13] got-um plenty clothes:
He mak'-um plenty suits wit' skins,—no holes.
Even Shing-oo's, dose weasel, Wah-boo's, dose rabbit,
Dey got-um better luck—two suits every year—
Summer, brown-yellow suit; winter, w'ite suit—
No got-um holes.
Ah-deek, dose caribou, dose deer, and moose,
In spring dey t'row away deir horns;
In summer dey get-um nice new hat—
No got-um holes.
Me—I'm big—smart man, smarter dan —weasel,
Smarter dan moose and fox and beaver—
I got-um golden medal on chest from big knife chief;[14]
Me—I'm only got-um one suit clothes
In two year—no-good clothes, no-good hats!"[15]

This speech is, of course, modern. The statement of Yellow-Otter that he is smarter than the animals is a reflection of missionary teachings, and is made to impress the inspector with the injustice of the situation. A primitive Indian would not have asserted his superiority so confidently, perhaps for fear of offending the animal named. It is doubtful whether this speaker actually believed that he was superior.

To the Indian the animals were even more than mere yellow-creatures. They possessed supernatural powers, were themselves the agents of still greater and more mysterious forces. The four stages of philosophic belief have been formidably defined:

[13] Indians.
[14] The president.
[15] Quoted from Lew Sarett, *The Box of God*, New York, pp. 63-65. Mr. Sarett assures me that the broken English dialect employed here reproduces the Indian ideas much better than would a smoother translation.

I. Hecastotheism, or the assigning of extra-natural or mysterious potencies to objects animate and inanimate.

II. Zootheism, the exaggeration and amplification to the supernatural of the powers of animate objects. This includes the deification of animals.

III. Physitheism, or the personification to omnipotence of the forces of nature. Greek mythology represents the highest type of this sort of belief.

IV. Psychotheism, including spiritual concepts and the development of belief in abstractions.

These terms are not so difficult as they sound. In the first stage the believer finds mysterious properties everywhere. Some objects, particularly those possessing the qualities of strength, hardness, and sharpness are considered especially potent and are used for charms. Out of belief in charms and fetiches arose the "medicine man," who controlled these charms. In the zootheistic stage the primitive man assigns exceptional powers to self-moving animals, which he considers as the tutelary daemons of an all-powerful set of supernatural forces back of everything in nature. The ultimate phase of this stage includes a hierarchy of animal gods (usually composed of the most notable animals in the immediate locale). Ancient animals are thought to have been stronger and wiser than those of the present. The leading beast-god even becomes a creator. Physitheism arises from noting analogies between characteristics of the beasts and those of various forces of nature, as the snake and lightning, the bear and thunder. It is perceived that natural agencies are stronger than animals. Finally the zooic concept fades and the sun becomes the chief anthropomorphic deity, perhaps with a dazzling mask. Eventually all leading agencies in nature are personified in anthropomorphic form.[16] Psychotheism is born of physitheism as the anthropomorphic concept of nature fades. None of the Ameri-

[16] The following quotation concerning the Tusayan Indians of the Southwest is illustrative: "By simple observation the untutored mind recognizes that rain follows lightning, and what more natural than that it should be looked upon as the effect? He therefore worships lightning because of this power. The course of the lightning in the sky is zig-zag as that of the snake, both kill when they strike. The lightning comes from the sky, the abode of the sun and rain god, and the simple reason of the Tusayan Indian supposes some connection between the lightning, snake, and rain. The sustenance of the primitive agriculturist comes from the earth, and if the soil is non-productive, the sun and rain are of no avail. The Tusayan Indian thus recognizes the potency of the earth and symbolically deifies it as the mother." (J. W. Fewkes, *The Tusayan Ritual, a Study of the Influence of Environment on Aboriginal Cults.* Reprinted from the Smithsonian Report for 1895, p. 691.)

can aborigines had reached this stage (before they were Christianized).[17]

These four stages of development overlap, blend, and coexist in all peoples, especially among the aborigines. No Indian tribe was discovered without zootheistic concepts, though among some of them hecastotheism was dominant. None were in the zootheistic stage without hecastotheistic vestiges. In all tribes at any stage traces of the previous stages are visible.[18]

When the Indian had recognized his soul through dreams and other psychical phenomena, he "immediately extended his concept to animals, plants, stones, all things, and thus everything was thought to have an intangible double soul. Man sought to ally himself with some one of these souls; if a hunter, some animal spirit, for instance, as an aid. This became his totem. . . ."[19] In the attempt to get in touch with some spirit ally the Indians attached great importance to dreams. Animals, inanimate fetiches, or even songs, perceived in dreams, were considered to be magic aids.[20] In some cases the Indian would not kill any animal belonging to the species of his "totem." More often, especially if the totem was of an edible variety, he would kill the animal, then apologize profusely for doing so, even offering a sacrifice to its spirit.[21]

[17] W. J. McGee, *The Siouan Indians*, pp. 178-182. Christianity, of course, represents the transition between the anthropomorphic and the purely psychotheistic stage.

[18] *Ibid.* A most interesting dissertation might be written on hecastotheistic beliefs still strongly prevalent among civilized white people. The habit of wearing "good luck" rings, now widely sold, is an instance. For further elaboration of this material, see J. W. Powell, "Introduction," in *Seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1885-6, pp. xxxiv-xl; D. G. Brinton, *The American Race*, pp. 52-53; J. W. Fewkes, *The Tusayan Ritual, a Study of the Influence of Environment on Aboriginal Cults*, Washington, 1896, pp. 683-700.

[19] J. W. Fewkes, *op. cit.*, p. 688.

[20] Miss Frances Densmore, noted student of Indian lore and music, reports an Indian statement on this point: "The bear is quick-tempered and is fierce in many ways, and yet he pays attention to herbs which no other animal notices at all. . . . The bear is the only animal which eats roots from the earth and is also especially fond of acorns, June berries, and cherries. These three are frequently compounded in making medicine, and if a person is fond of cherries we say he is a bear. We consider the bear as chief of all animals in regard to herb medicine, and therefore it is understood that if a man dreams of a bear he will be expert in the use of herbs for curing illness." (Densmore, "Teton Sioux Music," *Bulletin 61, Bureau of American Ethnology*, p. 195.

[21] See Jones, *Ojibway Texts*, No. 58, p. 495ff. According to Indian belief, the game returns to its former self. "Though he has killed the moose and eaten its flesh, yet the moose still lives and moves and continues its life as before." (*Ibid.*, p. 595, note 5.)

In recounting his dream of elks and certain birds, an Indian said: "After this dream, my stronghold was in the east, but the west was also a source from which I could get help. All the birds and insects which I had seen in my

In the light of the preceding explanations the following ritual chant of the puma is significant. This chant is part of the initiation ritual of the Rite of the Chiefs, formerly the most important secret society of the Osage tribe. Among the Osages the puma was the ancestral totem of one of the leading gentes (family divisions) of the tribe. This animal was closely associated with the sun, the great life symbol, and the relentless fire of which charcoal is emblatic. In the ritual he is revealed as one manifestations of a mysterious supernatural being, "the one who had made of the puma his body." The power of the puma was related to that of the "great red boulder," also symbolic of strength. Other and lesser manifestations of this same supernatural deity or power were the black bear, related to the "great black boulder" and the power of night; the great white swan, related to the male star of the morning, and to the white boulder; and the male elk, drawing power from the yellow boulder and the evening star. This chant illustrates very well the zoomorphic and fetichistic concepts of the Indian, and the complex and symbolic interrelation of all the phenomena of his environment.

"Verily, at that time and place, it has been said, in this house,
The Hon-ga, a people who possess seven fireplaces,
Spake to the one who had made of the Puma his body,
Saying: O, grandfather,
We have nothing that is fit to use as a symbol.
The Puma quickly replied: O, little ones,
You say you have nothing that is fit to use as a symbol.
I am one who is fitted for use as a symbol.
Behold the male puma, that lieth upon the earth.
Verily, I am a person who has made of the male puma his body.
The knowledge of my courage has spread over the land.
Behold the god of day, that sitteth in the heavens.
Verily, I am a person who sitteth in the heavens.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
They shall always be free from all causes of death as they travel the path of life.

dream were things on which I knew I should keep my mind and learn their ways. . . . The elk is brave, always helping the women [females], and in that way the elk has saved a large proportion of his tribe. In this I should follow the elk, remembering that the elk, the birds, and the insects are my helpers. I never killed an elk, nor ate of its flesh. The birds that continually fly in the air I would not kill. I may kill water birds and grass birds if suitable for food, but only these." (Densmore, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

"Behold the great red boulder, that sitteth upon the earth.
Verily, I am a person who draws to himself the power of the great boulder.
Behold the great red boulder, that sitteth upon the earth.
Even the great gods themselves
Stumble over me as I sit immovable as the great red boulder.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the great gods shall stumble over them and fall.
Even the great gods themselves
As they move over the earth pass around me as I sit immovable as the great red boulder.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the great gods themselves
Shall pass around them in forked lines as they travel the path of life.
Even the great gods themselves
Fear to stare me in the face with insolence.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the gods themselves
Shall fear to stare them in the face as they travel the path of life.

"Verily, at that time and place, it has been said, in this house,
He said to them: Behold the Black Bear, that is without a blemish, that lieth upon the earth.
Verily, I am a person who has made of the Black Bear his body.
Behold the god of night, that sitteth in the heavens.
Verily, I am a person who maketh the Black Bear to draw from the god of night its power.
Behold the great black boulder, that sitteth upon the earth.
Verily, I am a person who sitteth close to the great black boulder.
Behold the great black boulder, that sitteth upon the earth.
When the little ones make of the great black boulder their bodies,
Even the great gods themselves
Shall stumble over them and fall.
Even the gods themselves
As they move over the earth pass around me in forked lines as I sit immovable as the great black boulder.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the gods themselves
Shall pass around them in forked lines as they travel the path of life.

"Verily, at that time and place, it has been said, in this house,
He said to them: Behold the great white swan
Verily, I am a person who has made of the great white swan his body.
Behold, the god of night (the Wa-tse Do-ga, The Male Star, the morning star).
Verily, I am a person who has made of the god of night his body.
Behold the great white boulder, that sitteth upon the earth.
Verily, I am a person who has made of the great white boulder his body.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the gods themselves
Shall stumble over them and fall.
Even the gods themselves
As they move over the earth pass around me as I sit immovable as the great white boulder.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the gods themselves
Shall pass around them as they pass around the great white boulder.

"Verily, at that time and place, it has been said, in this house,
He said to them: Behold the male elk, that lieth upon the earth.
Behold the yellow boulder, that sitteth upon the earth.
Verily, I am a person who maketh the male elk to draw from the yellow boulder its power.
Behold Wa-tse Miga (the Female Star, the evening star).
Verily, I am a person who maketh the yellow boulder to draw from the evening star its power.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the gods themselves
Shall stumble over them and fall.
Even the gods themselves
As they move over the earth pass around me as I sit immovable as the great yellow boulder.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
Even the gods themselves
Shall pass around them as they pass around the great yellow boulder.
Even the gods themselves
Fear to set teeth upon me in anger.
When the little ones make of me their bodies,
The gods themselves shall fear to set teeth upon them in anger."[22]

[22] Francis La Flesche, "The Osage Tribe," *Thirty-sixth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology,* pp. 107-110.

The attempt of the Indian to communicate with the animals was not limited to mental experiences in dreams. It is on record that the warriors held long conversations with animals and received advice from them. A certain Ponca chief solemnly stated that leaders of war parties often relied on crows or wolves to foretell events. He related the following story about a chief who led a party against the Pawnee:

"One evening a wolf was heard howling and Shudegaxe (one of the chiefs) listened to it for a long time, when he said to his warriors, 'The wolf which you have heard howling has promised me success if I would vow to feast with him. I now give such vow and I will eat a part of the flesh of any enemy we may slay'." The story further relates that the party was successful and the chief ate some human flesh wrapped in buffalo fat.[23]

The foregoing chant of the puma illustrates also the superstitious attitude of the Indian toward the inanimate objects of his environment. He did not actually *worship* the objects which he held as fetiches or mentioned in his ceremonies. These objects, and the forces of nature—sun, earth, moon, stars, winds, water—all were exponents of mysterious, all-encompassing powers. These objects, as visible manifestations of these powers sometimes apprehended in human form, filled him with fears and the desire to propitiate them and induce friendly relations.[24]

One old chief expressed himself on this point as definitely as any Indian could: "Everything as it moves, now and then, here and there, makes stops. The bird as it flies stops in one place to make its nest, and in another to rest in its flight. A man when he goes forth stops where he wills. So the god has stopped. The moon, the stars, and the winds he has been with. The trees, the animals are all where he has stopped, and the Indian thinks of these places and sends his prayers there to reach the place where the god has stopped, and win help and a blessing.' . . . 'The tree is like a human being, for it has life and grows; so we pray to it and put our offerings on it that the god may help us'."[25]

[23] Alice C. Fletcher, "The Omaha Tribe," *Twenty-seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, Part I, pp. 446ff. With all this veneration for animals there is something comic, and at the same time pathetic, in the impulse that led the primitive hunters to pluck out their beards. They considered that hair on the face made them look like animals; and they wished to differentiate themselves to that small extent, at least. (J. A. Mason, "The Chief Singers of the Tepecano," in *American Indian Life*, ed. by E. C. Parsons, New York, 1922, p. 212.

[24] Fletcher, *Peabody Museum Reports*, Vol. III, p. 276, note 1.

[25] Fletcher, *op. cit., loc. cit.*

"Matter to the Indian was not something which had given birth to mind, but something which had formerly been mind, something from which mind had been withdrawn, was quiescent, and out of which it might again be aroused. This mind was visibly manifested in the so-called 'living things,' as plants, and still more so animals. . . . Not that mind was attributed to one individuality, but that it was recognized as everywhere of the same nature.

"Its manifestations were not in all cases equally powerful. Its manifestation in the panther, bear, and bison was more powerful than the one in the raccoon, the rabbit, and the squirrel. Some 'inorganic' powers—as, for instance, the wind, the rivers, and the sea—were, however, even more powerful. Peculiarly powerful were the thunder and lightning. . . ."[26]

It is a mistake to suppose that the Indian had any idea of a Supreme Creator, in the Christian sense. When he spoke of the "Great Spirit," he was usually making a concession to the omnipresent missionaries. "Very far removed from this tremendous conception of one all-powerful deity was the Indian belief in a multitude of spirits that dwelt in animate and inanimate objects, to propitiate which was the chief object of his supplications and sacrifices. To none of his deities did the Indian ascribe moral good or evil. His religion was practical. The spirits were the source of good or bad fortune, whether on the hunting path or the war trail, in the pursuit of a wife, or in a ball game. If successful, he adored, offered sacrifices, and made valuable presents. If unsuccessful, he cast his manitou away and offered his faith to more powerful or more friendly deities.

"In this world of spirits the Indian dwelt in perpetual fear. He feared to offend the spirits of the mountains, of the dark wood, of the lake, of the prairie. The real Indian was a different creatures from the joyous and untrammeled savage pictured and envied by the poet and philosopher."[27]

Storms and lightning, to choose another instance of association, were related to war; and the god or spirit of thunder was the god of war. In the attempt to be friendly with this horrific power, the Indian was wont to claim relationship, as in the following Omaha chant to the thunder, here referred to as "grandfather."

[26] The personification of lightning in various forms of bird and serpent has already been referred to, pp. 10-12.

[27] H. W. Henshaw, "Popular Fallacies," *Hodge* II, p. 284.

"Behold how fearful your Grandfather appears!
Your Grandfather is fearful, terrible to see!
Behold how fearful is he, your Grandfather!
He lifts his long club, fearful is he.
Your Grandfather gives fear to see!
Behold how fearful to see, fearful to see!" [28]

Obviously there is something of the spirit here which prompted the concept of Jove and Thor, except that the Omahas did not definitely visualize the thunder in human form. They merely called him "grandfather" to be polite.[29]

This desire to propitiate the forces of nature gives a clue to a great deal in Indian life and thought. Everything was a mystery to be feared and propitiated by ritual, taboo, fasting, prayer, song, or any other fantastic observance he could think of. Every cult had two parts, the belief, or mythology, and the ritual, or act by which the mysterious supernatural power was controlled. "This livid strand runs through all supernatural ideas from those of the savage to the civilized man."[30]

The particular type of ceremony and the particular hierarchy of gods varied according to the environment. Zoomorphic forms were naturally chosen by the hunters; but among agricultural people, totems of corn, rain, and the like replaced the zoomorphic forms. "The forces of nature thus became totems, sun, moon, earth, some with animal, others with human personality. A totem of a family became a tutelary god and groups of tutelary gods with a regal head became a council of gods as among the old Greeks."[31] These beliefs roughly coincide with culture areas, although a few concepts migrated. The Eskimo lacks animal tales. In the eastern Allegheny region, meteors were personified by the Iroquois and Algonquian tribes as fire-dragons and flaming heads. In the northwest, among the Haida and Tlingit tribes, the raven was important; among the Nez Perces, the coyote.[32] Ritual proceedings reflected the dif-

[28] A. C. Fletcher, "The Omaha Tribe," *Twenty-seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, pp. 433-6.

[29] Fletcher, *Peabody Reports*, III, p. 276, note 1.

[30] Dr. J. W. Fewkes, *The Tusayan Ritual*, pp. 683-4.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 688-9.

[32] W. H. Miner, *The American Indians North of Mexico*, p. 142ff. Among all Indian tribes those animaals were considered important who seemed to be successful in the struggle for existence, even when not harmful, or particularly powerful. Thus the crows always feasted on the slain after the battle or the hunt, though they had not shared in the toil of the slaughter. The wolf was

ferent beliefs." Thus the Pawnee had a human sacrifice and a whole yearly cycle of ceremonies centering around the cultivation of maize. On the lower Mississippi were temples to the sun. . . . In the plains area, beyond the encroachments of maize culture, we have the sun dance festival."[33]

Formal ceremonies were by no means the extent of the Indian's endeavor to ally himself with the unknown and terrible forces around him. His entire life was regulated by a series of extraordinary taboos, acts of self-torture, and personal sacrifice. The question of taboos fortunately lies without the bounds of this discussion.[34] Some mention must be made, however, of the "Shamans," "medicine men," or "witch doctors," individuals in every group who had greater ability than the rest to control the supernatural. These gentry were always willing to sell their superior spells and incantations for a consideration, usually a high one.[35] Occasionally these primitive priests achieved an organization, crude prototype of the great religious organizations of a more sophisticated culture. It is highly probable that in many or most of their performances and frauds they hypnotized themselves.[36] Since disease was always assigned to a demoniac cause, curing was entirely in the hands of the shamans. Their practices being usually most unhealthful, and it is a wonder that any seriously sick Indian ever survived. It is to be noted, however, that "medicine men who persistently failed to make cures were sometimes killed by the angry relatives of their deceased patients."[37]

In concluding this brief review of Indian ideas regarding the supernatural, it must be added that these included belief in a future

esteemed for similar reasons, and also for his presumed qualities of ferocity, with superstitious veneration, if they existed in sufficient numbers, or had some marked characteristic. There are many stories, for instance, with the rabbit as the hero—sometimes in the role of scape-goat, sometimes as trickster.

[33] Clark Wissler, *The American Indian*, p. 183. Two and a half centuries of association with the white man have not served completely to break down the old religious organizations of the Indian. Among the Ojibway the Midewiwin society still exists. Outwardly Christianized, many Indians even at the present day still cling stubbornly to the old beliefs, and put more faith in the medicine man than in the Christian missionary. (W. J. Hoffman, "The Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine Society of the Ojibway," *Seventh Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, p. 151ff.) The difficulty of obtaining the secretly cherished religious rituals has already been alluded to (p. 5).

[34] For discussion of taboos see W. J. McGee, "The Siouan Indians," *Fifteenth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, pp. 176ff.

[35] See A. M. Stephen, "When John the Jeweler was Sick," in *American Indian Life*, pp. 153-157.

[36] J. A. Mason, "The Chief Singer of the Tepecano," *American Indian Life*, p. 216ff.

[37] A. L. Kroeber, "Earth Tounge, a Mojave," *American Indian Life*, p. 197.

existence. In most cases the nature and location of the land of the dead was but vaguely imagined; but mortuary rituals and articles placed with the deceased for future use indicate that the tribesman was presumed to continue a life analogous to his former one.[38] Furthermore, it does not appear "that belief in a future life had any marked influence on the daily life and conduct of the individual. The American Indian seems not to have evolved the idea of hell and a future punishment."[39] That refinement of self-torture was invented by the more ingenious white man.

One of the finest pieces of Indian literature which I have been able to discover is the following Iroquois song in commemoration of a warrior slain in battle. It expresses excellently the Indian's attitude toward death, his uncertainty as to the future of the soul:

"Oh, our brother! alas! he is dead—
He has gone; he will never return!
Friendless he died on the field of the slain,
Where his bones are yet lying unburied!
No tears of his sisters were there!
He fell in his prime, when his arm was most needed to keep us from danger!
Oh, where is his spirit? His spirit went naked,
And hungry it wanders, and thirsty,
And wounded it groans to return!
Oh, helpless and wretched our brother has gone!
No blanket nor food to nourish and warm him;
Nor candles to light him, nor weapons of war!
Oh, none of these comforts had he!
But well we remember his deeds!
The deer he could take on in the chase!
The panther shrunk back at the sight of his strength!
His enemies fell at his feet!
He was brave and courageous in war!
As the fawn he was harmless; his friendship was ardent;
His temper was gentle; his pity was great!
Oh, our friend, our companion is dead!
Our brother, our brother! alas, he is gone!
But why do we grieve for his loss?
In the strength of a warrior, undaunted, he left us,
To fight by the side of the chiefs!

[38] Brinton, *The American Race*, p. 54ff.
[39] H. W. Henshaw, "Popular Fallacies," *Hodge*, II, p. 289.

His war whoop was shrill!
His rifle well aimed laid his enemies low,
His tomahawk drank of their blood;
And his knife flayed their scalps while yet covered with gore!
And why do we mourn?
Though he fell on the field of the slain,
With glory he fell;
And his spirit went up to the land of his fathers in war!
Then why do we mourn?
With transports of joy they received him,
And fed him, and clothed him, and welcomed him there!
Oh, friends, he is happy; then dry up your tears.
His spirit has seen our distress,
And sent us a helper, whom with pleasure we greet.
Deh-he-wa-mis has come; then let us receive her with joy!
She is handsome and pleasant!
Oh, she is our sister, and gladly we welcome her here.
In the place of our brother she stands in our tribe.
With care we will guard her from trouble;
And may she be happy till her spirit shall leave us."[40]

If anything, this Iroquois song is more cheerful and positive about future welfare than most. Very vivid also is the unmoral nature of the philosophy here expressed. All the merits of the dead were the practical ones of strength, ferocity against enemies, and gentleness and loyalty to his friends. The whole piece has a truly Roman spirit. Particularly characteristic of the Iroquois is the latter part, in which the newly-adopted member of the tribe is welcomed. In all their literature the Iroquois expressed a practical resolution and determination of the living to carry on and perpetuate the tribal organization despite all misfortune, defeat, and death. One is reminded of the Romans in the face of Hannibal.

Somewhat more pessimistic but of the same general tone are the following Omaha war songs, here introduced for comparison. The Omahas, living in Nebraska near the Missouri river, were a much less advanced tribe than the New York and Pennsylvania Iroquois.

[40] Wm. Beauchamp, "Civil, Religious, and Mourning Councils and Ceremonies of Adoption of the New York Indians," *New York State Museum, Bulletin* 113, pp. 409-410, quoting James E. Seaver, *Deh-he-wa-mis; or the Life of Mary Jemison*, New York, 1842, pp. 57-59. It is well to recall that these flowing and metrical lines hardly represent true Indian *style*, though the ideas are undoubtedly genuine.

Nevertheless Omaha songs of death show a generic likeness to those of the Iroquois:

"There is no evading death.
The old men have not told that any one has found a way to pass around it.
The career of a leader is difficult of accomplishment."[41]
"No one has found a way to avoid death, to pass around it;
Those old men who have met it,
Who have reached the place where death stands waiting,
Have not pointed out a way to circumvent it.
Death is difficult to face!"[42]

The compositions quoted above indicate another phase of the Indian's point of view—his attitude toward himself. One can summarize it by saying that his world was strictly egocentric. "Among the Indians as among all prescriptorial peoples, the ego is paramount, and all things are described, much more largely than among cultured peoples, with reference to the describer and the place he occupies: Self, Here, and if need be, Now, and Then are the fundamental elements of primitive conception and description, and these elements are implied and exemplified rather than expressed in thought and utterance."[43]

I cannot forbear including one final selection to illustrate the egocentric attitude. It has been remarked (p. 28) that the Indian attached great importance to names, considering them to have magic power. It was the custom in the Omaha tribe for men on the war path to choose new and more bellicose names in order to augment their natural powers. Standing then, as it were, in the center of the Universe, the leader of the war party proclaimed aloud to the listening wilderness:

"Thou deity on either side, hear it; hear ye that he has taken another name. He is indeed speaking of having the name He-Fears-Not-a-Pawnee-When-He-Sees-Him. Ye deities on either side [darkness and the ground], I tell it and send it to you that you may hear it, haloo! O, Thunder, even you who are moving in a bad humor, I tell you and send it to you that you may hear it, haloo! O ye big rocks that move, I tell you and send it, etc. O ye big hills that move, I tell you, etc. O ye big trees that move I tell you, etc.

[41] Alice C. Fletcher, "The Omaha Tribe," p. 276.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 430-431.
[43] McGee, *The Siouan Indians*, p. 165.

O all ye big worms that move, O ye snakes that are in a bad humor, ye who move, I tell you, etc. All ye small animals, I tell you, etc."

To this address were added the following promises, and others of like nature:

"He speaks as he stands of striking down one in the very midst of the ranks of the foe, who shall stand in great fear of him!" "He is speaking of taking hold of one without a wound right in the midst of the foe!"[44]

Thus members of all tribes alike deified their animal associates, regarded the elements with mystic fear, assassinated and fought each other, fell in love, held councils, made harangues. Wherever the maize was cultivated there were corn songs and prayers for rain; wherever it rained, the thunder and lightning were apostrophied in various guises. Thus, among all the tribes there obtained a psychological unity, by which is meant similarity in procedure of thought.

[44] J. Owen Dorsey, "Omaha Sociology," *Third Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology*, p. 324ff. There is a certain grandiloquence to this that is faintly reminiscent of the *Benedicite Omnia Opera domini* of the Anglican prayer book.