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MODERN MYTHOLOGY

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Содержание

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of John Fergus McLennan.

INTRODUCTION

It may well be doubted whether works of controversy serve any useful purpose. 'On an opponent,' as Mr. Matthew Arnold said, 'one never does make any impression,' though one may hope that controversy sometimes illuminates a topic in the eyes of impartial readers. The pages which follow cannot but seem wandering and desultory, for they are a reply to a book, Mr. Max Müller's *Contributions to the Science of Mythology*, in which the attack is of a skirmishing character. Throughout more than eight hundred pages the learned author keeps up an irregular fire at the ideas and methods of the anthropological school of mythologists. The reply must follow the lines of attack.

Criticism cannot dictate to an author how he shall write his own book. Yet anthropologists and folk-lorists, 'agriologists' and 'Hottentotic' students, must regret that Mr. Max Müller did not state their general theory, as he understands it, fully and once for all. Adversaries rarely succeed in quite understanding each other; but had Mr. Max Müller made such a statement, we could have cleared up anything in our position which might seem to him obscure.

Our system is but one aspect of the theory of evolution, or is but the application of that theory to the topic of mythology. The archæologist studies human life in its material remains; he tracks progress (and occasional degeneration) from the rudely

chipped flints in the ancient gravel beds, to the polished stone weapon, and thence to the ages of bronze and iron. He is guided by material 'survivals' – ancient arms, implements, and ornaments. The student of Institutions has a similar method. He finds his relics of the uncivilised past in agricultural usages, in archaic methods of allotment of land, in odd marriage customs, things rudimentary – fossil relics, as it were, of an early social and political condition. The archæologist and the student of Institutions compare these relics, material or customary, with the weapons, pottery, implements, or again with the habitual law and usage of existing savage or barbaric races, and demonstrate that our weapons and tools, and our laws and manners, have been slowly evolved out of lower conditions, even out of savage conditions.

The anthropological method in mythology is the same. In civilised religion and myth we find rudimentary survivals, fossils of rite and creed, ideas absolutely incongruous with the environing morality, philosophy, and science of Greece and India. Parallels to these things, so out of keeping with civilisation, we recognise in the creeds and rites of the lower races, even of cannibals; but *there* the creeds and rites are *not* incongruous with their environment of knowledge and culture. There they are as natural and inevitable as the flint-headed spear or marriage by capture. We argue, therefore, that religions and mythical faiths and rituals which, among Greeks and Indians, are inexplicably incongruous have lived on from an age in which they were natural

and inevitable, an age of savagery.

That is our general position, and it would have been a benefit to us if Mr. Max Müller had stated it in his own luminous way, if he wished to oppose us, and had shown us where and how it fails to meet the requirements of scientific method. In place of doing this once for all, he often assails our evidence, yet never notices the defences of our evidence, which our school has been offering for over a hundred years. He attacks the excesses of which some sweet anthropological enthusiasts have been guilty or may be guilty, such as seeing totems wherever they find beasts in ancient religion, myth, or art. He asks for definitions (as of totemism), but never, I think, alludes to the authoritative definitions by Mr. McLennan and Mr. Frazer. He assails the theory of fetishism as if it stood now where De Brosses left it in a purely pioneer work – or, rather, where he understands De Brosses to have left it. One might as well attack the atomic theory where Lucretius left it, or the theory of evolution where it was left by the elder Darwin.

Thus Mr. Max Müller really never conies to grips with his opponents, and his large volumes shine rather in erudition and style than in method and system. Anyone who attempts a reply must necessarily follow Mr. Max Müller up and down, collecting his scattered remarks on this or that point at issue. Hence my reply, much against my will, must seem desultory and rambling. But I have endeavoured to answer with some kind of method and system, and I even hope that this little book may be useful as a kind of supplement to Mr. Max Müller's, for it contains

exact references to certain works of which he takes the reader's knowledge for granted.

The general problem at issue is apt to be lost sight of in this guerilla kind of warfare. It is perhaps more distinctly stated in the preface to Mr. Max Müller's *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. iv. (Longmans, 1895), than in his two recent volumes. The general problem is this: Has language – especially language in a state of 'disease,' been the great source of the mythology of the world? Or does mythology, on the whole, represent the survival of an old stage of thought – not caused by language – from which civilised men have slowly emancipated themselves? Mr. Max Müller is of the former, anthropologists are of the latter, opinion. Both, of course, agree that myths are a product of thought, of a kind of thought almost extinct in civilised races; but Mr. Max Müller holds that language caused that kind of thought. We, on the other hand, think that language only gave it one means of expressing itself.

The essence of myth, as of fairy tale, we agree, is the conception of the things in the world as all alike animated, personal, capable of endless interchanges of form. Men may become beasts; beasts may change into men; gods may appear as human or bestial; stones, plants, winds, water, may speak and act like human beings, and change shapes with them.

Anthropologists demonstrate that the belief in this universal kinship, universal personality of things, which we find surviving only in the myths of civilised races, is even now to some degree

part of the living creed of savages. Civilised myths, then, they urge, are survivals from a parallel state of belief once prevalent among the ancestors of even the Aryan race. But how did this mental condition, this early sort of false metaphysics, come into existence? We have no direct historical information on the subject. If I were obliged to offer an hypothesis, it would be that early men, conscious of personality, will, and life – conscious that force, when exerted by themselves, followed on a determination of will within them – extended that explanation to all the exhibitions of force which they beheld without them. Rivers run (early man thought), winds blow, fire burns, trees wave, as a result of their own will, the will of personal conscious entities. Such vitality, and even power of motion, early man attributed even to inorganic matter, as rocks and stones. All these things were beings, like man himself. This does not appear to me an unnatural kind of nascent, half-conscious metaphysics. 'Man never knows how much he anthropomorphises.' He extended the only explanation of his own action which consciousness yielded to him, he extended it to explain every other sort of action in the sensible world. Early Greek philosophy recognised the stars as living bodies; all things had once seemed living and personal. From the beginning, man was eager *causas cognoscere rerum*. The only cause about which self-consciousness gave him any knowledge was his own personal will. He therefore supposed all things to be animated with a like will and personality. His mythology is a philosophy of things, stated in stories based on

the belief in universal personality.

My theory of the origin of that belief is, of course, a mere guess; we have never seen any race in the process of passing from a total lack of a hypothesis of causes into that hypothesis of universally distributed personality which is the basis of mythology.

But Mr. Max Müller conceives that this belief in universally distributed personality (the word 'Animism' is not very clear) was the result of an historical necessity – not of speculation, but of language. 'Roots were all, or nearly all, expressive of action… Hence a river could only be called or conceived as a runner, or a roarer, or a defender; and in all these capacities always as something active and animated, nay, as something masculine or feminine.'

But *why* conceived as 'masculine or feminine'? This necessity for endowing inanimate though active things, such as rivers, with sex, is obviously a necessity of a stage of thought wholly unlike our own. *We* know that active inanimate things are sexless, are neuter; *we* feel no necessity to speak of them as male or female. How did the first speakers of the human race come to be obliged to call lifeless things by names connoting sex, and therefore connoting, not only activity, but also life and personality? We explain it by the theory that man called lifeless things male or female – by using gender-terminations – as a result of his habit of regarding lifeless things as personal beings; that habit, again, being the result of his consciousness of himself as a living will.

Mr. Max Müller takes the opposite view. Man did not call lifeless things by names denoting sex because he regarded them as persons; he came to regard them as persons because he had already given them names connoting sex. And why had he done that? This is what Mr. Max Müller does not explain. He says:

'In ancient languages every one of these words' (sky, earth, sea, rain) 'had necessarily' (why necessarily?) 'a termination expressive of gender, and this naturally produced in the mind the corresponding idea of sex, so that these names received not only an individual but a sexual character.' [1]

It is curious that, in proof apparently of this, Mr. Max Müller cites a passage from the *Printer's Register*, in which we read that to little children '*everything* is *alive*… The same instinct that prompts the child to personify everything remains unchecked in the savage, and grows up with him to manhood. Hence in all simple and early languages there are but two genders, masculine and feminine.'

The *Printer's Register* states our theory in its own words. First came the childlike and savage belief in universal personality. Thence arose the genders, masculine and feminine, in early languages. These ideas are the precise reverse of Mr. Max Müller's ideas. In his opinion, genders in language caused the belief in the universal personality even of inanimate things. The *Printer's Register* holds that the belief in universal personality, on the other hand, caused the genders. Yet for thirty years, since

[1] *Chips*, iv. 62.

1868, Mr. Max Müller has been citing his direct adversary, in the *Printer's Register*, as a supporter of his opinion! We, then, hold that man thought all things animated, and expressed his belief in gender-terminations. Mr. Max Müller holds that, because man used gender-terminations, therefore he thought all things animated, and so he became mythopœic. In the passage cited, Mr. Max Müller does not say *why* 'in ancient languages every one of these words had *necessarily* terminations expressive of gender.' He merely quotes the hypothesis of the *Printer's Register*. If he accepts that hypothesis, it destroys his own theory – that gender-terminations caused all things to be regarded as personal; for, *ex hypothesi*, it was just because they were regarded as personal that they received names with gender-terminations. Somewhere – I cannot find the reference – Mr. Max Müller seems to admit that personalising thought caused gender-terminations, but these later 'reacted' on thought, an hypothesis which multiplies causes *præter necessitatem*.

Here, then, at the very threshold of the science of mythology we find Mr. Max Müller at once maintaining that a feature of language, gender-terminations, caused the mythopœic state of thought, and quoting with approval the statement that the mythopœic state of thought caused gender-terminations.

Mr. Max Müller's whole system of mythology is based on reasoning analogous to this example. His *mot d'ordre*, as Professor Tiele says, is 'a disease of language.' This theory implies universal human degradation. Man was once, for all we

know, rational enough; but his mysterious habit of using gender-terminations, and his perpetual misconceptions of the meaning of old words in his own language, reduced him to the irrational and often (as we now say) obscene and revolting absurdities of his myths. Here (as is later pointed out) the objection arises, that all languages must have taken the disease in the same way. A Maori myth is very like a Greek myth. If the Greek myth arose from a disease of Greek, how did the wholly different Maori speech, and a score of others, come to have precisely the same malady?

Mr. Max Müller alludes to a Maori parallel to the myth of Cronos. [2] 'We can only say that there is a rusty lock in New Zealand, and a rusty lock in Greece, and that, surely, is very small comfort.' He does not take the point. The point is that, as the myth occurs in two remote and absolutely unconnected languages, a theory of disease of language cannot turn the wards of the rusty locks. The myth is, in part at least, a nature-myth – an attempt to account for the severance of Heaven and Earth (once united) by telling a story in which natural phenomena are animated and personal. A disease of language has nothing to do with this myth. It is cited as a proof against the theory of disease of language.

The truth is, that while languages differ, men (and above all early men) have the same kind of thoughts, desires, fancies, habits, institutions. It is not that in which all races formally differ – their language – but that in which all early races are

[2] *Chips*, iv. p. xxxv.

astonishingly the same – their ideas, fancies, habits, desires – that causes the amazing similarity of their myths.

Mythologists, then, who find in early human nature the living ideas which express themselves in myths will hardily venture to compare the analogous myths of all peoples. Mythologists, on the other hand, who find the origin of myths in a necessity imposed upon thought by misunderstood language will necessarily, and logically, compare only myths current among races who speak languages of the same family. Thus, throughout Mr. Max Müller's new book we constantly find him protesting, on the whole and as a rule, against the system which illustrates Aryan myths by savage parallels. Thus he maintains that it is perilous to make comparative use of myths current in languages – say, Maori or Samoyed – which the mythologists confessedly do not know. To this we can only reply that we use the works of the best accessible authorities, men who do know the languages – say, Dr. Codrington or Bishop Callaway, or Castren or Egede. Now it is not maintained that the myths, on the whole, are incorrectly translated. The danger which we incur, it seems, is ignorance of the original sense of savage or barbaric divine or heroic names – say, Maui, or Yehl, or Huitzilopochhtli, or Heitsi Eibib, or Pundjel. By Mr. Max Müller's system such names are old words, of meanings long ago generally lost by the speakers of each language, but analysable by 'true scholars' into their original significance. That will usually be found by the philologists to indicate 'the inevitable Dawn,' or Sun, or Night, or the like,

according to the taste and fancy of the student.

To all this a reply is urged in the following pages. In agreement with Curtius and many other scholars, we very sincerely doubt almost all etymologies of old proper names, even in Greek or Sanskrit. We find among philologists, as a rule, the widest discrepancies of interpretation. Moreover, every name must mean *something*. Now, whatever the meaning of a name (supposing it to be really ascertained), very little ingenuity is needed to make it indicate one or other aspect of Dawn or Night, of Lightning or Storm, just as the philologist pleases. Then he explains the divine or heroic being denoted by the name – as Dawn or Storm, or Fire or Night, or Twilight or Wind – in accordance with his private taste, easily accommodating the facts of the myth, whatever they may be, to his favourite solution. We rebel against this kind of logic, and persist in studying the myth in itself and in comparison with analogous myths in every accessible language. Certainly, if divine and heroic names – Artemis or Pundjel —*can* be interpreted, so much is gained. But the myth may be older than the name.

As Mr. Hogarth points out, Alexander has inherited in the remote East the myths of early legendary heroes. We cannot explain these by the analysis of the name of Alexander! Even if the heroic or divine name can be shown to be the original one (which is practically impossible), the meaning of the name helps us little. That Zeus means 'sky' cannot conceivably explain scores of details in the very composite legend of Zeus – say, the

story of Zeus, Demeter, and the Ram. Moreover, we decline to admit that, if a divine name means 'swift,' its bearer must be the wind or the sunlight. Nor, if the name means 'white,' is it necessarily a synonym of Dawn, or of Lightning, or of Clear Air, or what not. But a mythologist who makes language and names the fountain of myth will go on insisting that myths can only be studied by people who know the language in which they are told. Mythologists who believe that human nature is the source of myths will go on comparing all myths that are accessible in translations by competent collectors.

Mr. Max Müller says, 'We seldom find mythology, as it were, *in situ* – as it lived in the minds and unrestrained utterances of the people. We generally have to study it in the works of mythographers, or in the poems of later generations, when it had long ceased to be living and intelligible.' The myths of Greece and Rome, in Hyginus or Ovid, 'are likely to be as misleading as a *hortus siccus* would be to a botanist if debarred from his rambles through meadows and hedges.' [3]

Nothing can be more true, or more admirably stated. These remarks are, indeed, the charter, so to speak, of anthropological mythology and of folklore. The old mythologists worked at a *hortus siccus*, at myths dried and pressed in thoroughly literary books, Greek and Latin. But we now study myths 'in the unrestrained utterances of the people,' either of savage tribes or of the European Folk, the unprogressive peasant class. The

[3] *Chips*, iv. pp. vi. vii.

former, and to some extent the latter, still live in the mythopœic state of mind – regarding bees, for instance, as persons who must be told of a death in the family. Their myths are still not wholly out of concord with their habitual view of a world in which an old woman may become a hare. As soon as learned Jesuits like Père Lafitau began to understand their savage flocks, they said, 'These men are living in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.' They found mythology *in situ*! Hence mythologists now study mythology *in situ* – in savages and in peasants, who till very recently were still in the mythopœic stage of thought. Mannhardt made this idea his basis. Mr. Max Müller says, [4] very naturally, that I have been 'popularising the often difficult and complicated labours of Mannhardt and others.' In fact (as is said later), I published all my general conclusions before I had read Mannhardt. Quite independently I could not help seeing that among savages and peasants we had mythology, not in a literary *hortus siccus*, but *in situ*. Mannhardt, though he appreciated Dr. Tylor, had made, I think, but few original researches among savage myths and customs. His province was European folklore. What he missed will be indicated in the chapter on 'The Fire-Walk' – one example among many.

But this kind of mythology *in situ*, in 'the unrestrained utterances of the people,' Mr. Max Müller tells us, is no province of his. 'I saw it was hopeless for me to gain a knowledge at first hand of innumerable local legends and customs;' and it is to be

[4] *Ibid*. iv. p. xv.

supposed that he distrusted knowledge acquired by collectors: Grimm, Mannhardt, Campbell of Islay, and an army of others. 'A scholarlike knowledge of Maori or Hottentot mythology' was also beyond him. We, on the contrary, take our Maori lore from a host of collectors: Taylor, White, Manning ('The Pakeha Maori'), Tregear, Polack, and many others. From them we flatter ourselves that we get – as from Grimm, Mannhardt, Islay, and the rest – mythology *in situ*. We compare it with the dry mythologic blossoms of the classical *hortus siccus*, and with Greek ritual and temple legend, and with *Märchen* in the scholiasts, and we think the comparisons very illuminating. They have thrown new light on Greek mythology, ritual, mysteries, and religion. This much we think we have already done, though we do not know Maori, and though each of us can hope to gather but few facts from the mouths of living peasants.

Examples of the results of our method will be found in the following pages. Thus, if the myth of the fire-stealer in Greece is explained by misunderstood Greek or Sanskrit words in no way connected with robbery, we shall show that the myth of the theft of fire occurs where no Greek or Sanskrit words were ever spoken. *There*, we shall show, the myth arose from simple inevitable human ideas. We shall therefore doubt whether in Greece a common human myth had a singular cause – in a 'disease of language.'

It is with no enthusiasm that I take the opportunity of Mr. Max Müller's reply to me 'by name.' Since *Myth*, *Ritual*, *and Religion*

(now out of print, but accessible in the French of M. Marillier) was published, ten years ago, I have left mythology alone. The general method there adopted has been applied in a much more erudite work by Mr. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, by Mr. Farnell in *Cults of the Greek States*, by Mr. Jevons in his *Introduction to the History of Religion*, by Miss Harrison in explanations of Greek ritual, by Mr. Hartland in *The Legend of Perseus*, and doubtless by many other writers. How much they excel me in erudition may be seen by comparing Mr. Farnell's passage on the Bear Artemis [5] with the section on her in this volume.

Mr. Max Müller observes that 'Mannhardt's mythological researches have never been fashionable.' They are now very much in fashion; they greatly inspire Mr. Frazer and Mr. Farnell. 'They seemed to me, and still seem to me, too exclusive,' says Mr. Max Müller. [6] Mannhardt in his second period was indeed chiefly concerned with myths connected, as he held, with agriculture and with tree-worship. Mr. Max Müller, too, has been thought 'exclusive' – 'as teaching,' he complains, 'that the whole of mythology is solar.' That reproach arose, he says, because 'some of my earliest contributions to comparative mythology were devoted exclusively to the special subject of solar myths.' [7] But Mr. Max Müller also mentions his own complaints, of 'the omnipresent sun and the inevitable dawn appearing in ever so

[5] *Cults of the Greek States*, ii. 435-440.

[6] *Chips*, iv. p. xiv.

[7] *Chips*, iv. p. xiii.

many disguises.'

Did they really appear? Were the myths, say the myths of Daphne, really solar? That is precisely what we hesitate to accept. In the same way Mannhardt's preoccupation with vegetable myths has tended, I think, to make many of his followers ascribe vegetable origins to myths and gods, where the real origin is perhaps for ever lost. The corn-spirit starts up in most unexpected places. Mr. Frazer, Mannhardt's disciple, is very severe on solar theories of Osiris, and connects that god with the corn-spirit. But Mannhardt did not go so far. Mannhardt thought that the myth of Osiris was solar. To my thinking, these resolutions of myths into this or that original source – solar, nocturnal, vegetable, or what not – are often very perilous. A myth so extremely composite as that of Osiris must be a stream flowing from many springs, and, as in the case of certain rivers, it is difficult or impossible to say which is the real fountain-head.

One would respectfully recommend to young mythologists great reserve in their hypotheses of origins. All this, of course, is the familiar thought of writers like Mr. Frazer and Mr. Farnell, but a tendency to seek for exclusively vegetable origins of gods is to be observed in some of the most recent speculations. I well know that I myself am apt to press a theory of totems too far, and in the following pages I suggest reserves, limitations, and alternative hypotheses. *Il y a serpent et serpent*; a snake tribe may be a local tribe named from the Snake River, not a totem kindred. The history of mythology is the history of rash, premature,

and exclusive theories. We are only beginning to learn caution. Even the prevalent anthropological theory of the ghost-origin of religion might, I think, be advanced with caution (as Mr. Jevons argues on other grounds) till we know a little more about ghosts and a great deal more about psychology. We are too apt to argue as if the psychical condition of the earliest men were exactly like our own; while we are just beginning to learn, from Prof. William James, that about even our own psychical condition we are only now realising our exhaustive ignorance. How often we men have thought certain problems settled for good! How often we have been compelled humbly to return to our studies! Philological comparative mythology seemed securely seated for a generation. Her throne is tottering:

> Our little systems have their day,
> They have their day and cease to be,
> They are but broken lights from Thee,
> And Thou, we trust, art more than they.

But we need not hate each other for the sake of our little systems, like the grammarian who damned his rival's soul for his 'theory of the irregular verbs.' Nothing, I hope, is said here inconsistent with the highest esteem for Mr. Max Müller's vast erudition, his enviable style, his unequalled contributions to scholarship, and his awakening of that interest in mythological science without which his adversaries would probably never have existed.

Most of Chapter XII. appeared in the 'Contemporary Review,' and most of Chapter XIII. in the 'Princeton Review.'

REGENT MYTHOLOGY

Mythology in 1860-1880

Between 1860 and 1880, roughly speaking, English people interested in early myths and religions found the mythological theories of Professor Max Müller in possession of the field. These brilliant and attractive theories, taking them in the widest sense, were not, of course, peculiar to the Right Hon. Professor. In France, in Germany, in America, in Italy, many scholars agreed in his opinion that the science of language is the most potent spell for opening the secret chamber of mythology. But while these scholars worked on the same general principle as Mr. Max Müller, while they subjected the names of mythical beings – Zeus, Helen, Achilles, Athênê – to philological analysis, and then explained the stories of gods and heroes by their interpretations of the meanings of their names, they arrived at all sorts of discordant results. Where Mr. Max Müller found a myth of the Sun or of the Dawn, these scholars were apt to see a myth of the wind, of the lightning, of the thunder-cloud, of the *crépuscule*, of the upper air, of what each of them pleased. But these ideas – the ideas of Kuhn, Welcker, Curtius (when he appeared in the discussion), of Schwartz, of Lauer, of Bréal, of many others –

were very little known – if known at all – to the English public. Captivated by the graces of Mr. Max Müller's manner, and by a style so pellucid that it accredited a logic perhaps not so clear, the public hardly knew of the divisions in the philological camp. They were unaware that, as Mannhardt says, the philological school had won 'few sure gains,' and had discredited their method by a 'muster-roll of variegated' and discrepant 'hypotheses.'

Now, in all sciences there are differences of opinion about details. In comparative mythology there was, with rare exceptions, no agreement at all about results beyond this point; Greek and Sanskrit, German and Slavonic myths were, in the immense majority of instances, to be regarded as mirror-pictures on earth, of celestial and meteorological phenomena. Thus even the story of the Earth Goddess, the Harvest Goddess, Demeter, was usually explained as a reflection in myth of one or another celestial phenomenon – dawn, storm-cloud, or something else according to taste.

Again, Greek or German myths were usually to be interpreted by comparison with myths in the Rig Veda. Their origin was to be ascertained by discovering the Aryan root and original significance of the names of gods and heroes, such as Saranyu – Erinnys, Daphne – Dahanâ, Athene – Ahanâ. The etymology and meaning of such names being ascertained, the origin and sense of the myths in which the names occur should be clear.

Clear it was not. There were, in most cases, as many opinions as to the etymology and meaning of each name and myth, as there

were philologists engaged in the study. Mannhardt, who began, in 1858, as a member of the philological school, in his last public utterance (1877) described the method and results, including his own work of 1858, as 'mainly failures.'

But, long ere that, the English cultivated public had, most naturally, accepted Mr. Max Müller as the representative of the school which then held the field in comparative mythology. His German and other foreign brethren, with their discrepant results, were only known to the general, in England (I am not speaking of English scholars), by the references to them in the Oxford professor's own works. His theories were made part of the education of children, and found their way into a kind of popular primers.

For these reasons, anyone in England who was daring enough to doubt, or to deny, the validity of the philological system of mythology in general was obliged to choose Mr. Max Müller as his adversary. He must strike, as it were, the shield of no Hospitaler of unsteady seat, but that of the Templar himself. And this is the cause of what seems to puzzle Mr. Max Müller, namely the attacks on *his* system and *his* results in particular. An English critic, writing for English readers, had to do with the scholar who chiefly represented the philological school of mythology in the eyes of England.

Autobiographical

Like other inquiring undergraduates in the sixties, I read such works on mythology as Mr. Max Müller had then given to the world; I read them with interest, but without conviction. The argument, the logic, seemed to evade one; it was purely, with me, a question of logic, for I was of course prepared to accept all of Mr. Max Müller's dicta on questions of etymologies. Even now I never venture to impugn them, only, as I observe that other scholars very frequently differ, *toto cælo*, from him and from each other in essential questions, I preserve a just balance of doubt; I wait till these gentlemen shall be at one among themselves.

After taking my degree in 1868, I had leisure to read a good deal of mythology in the legends of all races, and found my distrust of Mr. Max Müller's reasoning increase upon me. The main cause was that whereas Mr. Max Müller explained Greek myths by etymologies of words in the Aryan languages, chiefly Greek, Latin, Slavonic, and Sanskrit, I kept finding myths very closely resembling those of Greece among Red Indians, Kaffirs, Eskimo, Samoyeds, Kamilaroi, Maoris, and Cahrocs. Now if Aryan myths arose from a 'disease' of Aryan languages, it certainly did seem an odd thing that myths so similar to these abounded where non-Aryan languages alone prevailed. Did a kind of linguistic measles affect all tongues alike, from Sanskrit to Choctaw, and everywhere produce the same ugly scars in

religion and myth?

The Ugly Scars

The ugly scars were the problem! A civilised fancy is not puzzled for a moment by a beautiful beneficent Sun-god, or even by his beholding the daughters of men that they are fair. But a civilised fancy *is* puzzled when the beautiful Sun-god makes love in the shape of a dog. [8] To me, and indeed to Mr. Max Müller, the ugly scars were the problem.

He has written – 'What makes mythology mythological, in the true sense of the word, is what is utterly unintelligible, absurd, strange, or miraculous.' But he explained these blots on the mythology of Greece, for example, as the result practically of old words and popular sayings surviving in languages after the original, harmless, symbolical meanings of the words and sayings were lost. What had been a poetical remark about an aspect of nature became an obscene, or brutal, or vulgar myth, a stumbling block to Greek piety and to Greek philosophy.

To myself, on the other hand, it seemed that the ugly scars were remains of that kind of taste, fancy, customary law, and incoherent speculation which everywhere, as far as we know, prevails to various degrees in savagery and barbarism. Attached to the 'hideous idols,' as Mr. Max Müller calls them, of early

[8] Suidas, *s.v.* τελμισσεις; he cites Dionysius of Chalcis, B.C. 200.

Greece, and implicated in a ritual which religious conservatism dared not abandon, the fables of perhaps neolithic ancestors of the Hellenes remained in the religion and the legends known to Plato and Socrates. That this process of 'survival' is a *vera causa*, illustrated in every phase of evolution, perhaps nobody denies.

Thus the phenomena which the philological school of mythology explains by a disease of language we would explain by survival from a savage state of society and from the mental peculiarities observed among savages in all ages and countries. Of course there is nothing new in this: I was delighted to discover the idea in Eusebius as in Fontenelle; while, for general application to singular institutions, it was a commonplace of the last century. [9] Moreover, the idea had been widely used by Dr. E. B. Tylor in *Primitive Culture*, and by Mr. McLennan in his *Primitive Marriage* and essays on Totemism.

My Criticism of Mr. Max Müller

This idea I set about applying to the repulsive myths of civilised races, and to *Märchen*, or popular tales, at the same time combating the theories which held the field – the theories of the philological mythologists as applied to the same matter. In journalism I criticised Mr. Max Müller, and I admit that, when comparing the mutually destructive competition of varying

[9] See Goguet, and Millar of Glasgow, and Voltaire.

etymologies, I did not abstain from the weapons of irony and *badinage*. The opportunity was too tempting! But, in the most sober seriousness, I examined Mr. Max Müller's general statement of his system, his hypothesis of certain successive stages of language, leading up to the mythopœic confusion of thought. It was not a question of denying Mr. Max Müller's etymologies, but of asking whether he established his historical theory by evidence, and whether his inferences from it were logically deduced. The results of my examination will be found in the article 'Mythology' in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and in *La Mythologie*. [10] It did not appear to me that Mr. Max Müller's general theory was valid, logical, historically demonstrated, or self-consistent. My other writings on the topic are chiefly *Custom and Myth*, *Myth*, *Ritual*, *and Religion* (with French and Dutch translations, both much improved and corrected by the translators), and an introduction to Mrs. Hunt's translation of Grimm's *Märchen*.

Success of Anthropological Method

During fifteen years the ideas which I advocated seem to have had some measure of success. This is, doubtless, due not to myself, but to the works of Mr. J. G. Frazer and of Professor Robertson Smith. Both of these scholars descend

[10] Translated by M. Parmentier.

intellectually from a man less scholarly than they, but, perhaps, more original and acute than any of us, my friend the late Mr. J. F. McLennan. To Mannhardt also much is owed, and, of course, above all, to Dr. Tylor. These writers, like Mr. Farnell and Mr. Jevons recently, seek for the answer to mythological problems rather in the habits and ideas of the folk and of savages and barbarians than in etymologies and 'a disease of language.' There are differences of opinion in detail: I myself may think that 'vegetation spirits,' the 'corn spirit,' and the rest occupy too much space in the systems of Mannhardt, and other moderns. Mr. Frazer, again, thinks less of the evidence for Totems among 'Aryans' than I was inclined to do. [11] But it is not, perhaps, an overstatement to say that explanation of myths by analysis of names, and the lately overpowering predominance of the Dawn, and the Sun, and the Night in mythological hypothesis, have received a slight check. They do not hold the field with the superiority which was theirs in England between 1860 and 1880. This fact – a scarcely deniable fact – does not, of course, prove that the philological method is wrong, or that the Dawn is not as great a factor in myth as Mr. Max Müller believes himself to have proved it to be. Science is inevitably subject to shiftings of opinion, action, and reaction.

[11] See 'Totemism,' *infra*.

Mr. Max Müller's Reply

In this state of things Mr. Max Müller produces his *Contributions to the Science of Mythology*, [12] which I propose to criticise as far as it is, or may seem to me to be, directed against myself, or against others who hold practically much the same views as mine. I say that I attempt to criticise the book 'as far as it is, or may seem to me to be, directed against' us, because it is Mr. Max Müller's occasional habit to argue (apparently) *around* rather than *with* his opponents. He says 'we are told this or that' – something which he does not accept – but he often does not inform us as to *who* tells us, or where. Thus a reader does not know whom Mr. Max Müller is opposing, or where he can find the adversary's own statement in his own words. Yet it is usual in such cases, and it is, I think, expedient, to give chapter and verse. Occasionally I find that Mr. Max Müller is honouring me by alluding to observations of my own, but often no reference is given to an opponent's name or books, and we discover the passages in question by accident or research. This method will be found to cause certain inconveniences.

[12] Longmans.

THE STORY OF DAPHNE

Mr. Max Müller's Method in Controversy

As an illustration of the author's controversial methods, take his observations on my alleged attempt to account for the metamorphosis of Daphne into a laurel tree. When I read these remarks (i. p. 4) I said, 'Mr. Max Müller vanquishes me *there*,' for he gave no reference to my statement. I had forgotten all about the matter, I was not easily able to find the passage to which he alluded, and I supposed that I had said just what Mr. Max Müller seemed to me to make me say – no more, and no less. Thus:

> 'Mr. Lang, as usual, has recourse to savages, most useful when they are really wanted. He quotes an illustration from the South Pacific that Tuna, the chief of the eels, fell in love with Ina and asked her to cut off his head. When his head had been cut off and buried, two cocoanut trees sprang up from the brain of Tuna. How is this, may I ask, to account for the story of Daphne? Everybody knows that "stories of the growing of plants out of the scattered members of heroes may be found from ancient Egypt to the wigwams of the Algonquins," but these stories seem hardly applicable to Daphne, whose members, as far as I know, were never either severed or scattered.'

I thought, perhaps hastily, that I must have made the story of Tuna 'account for the story of Daphne.' Mr. Max Müller does not actually say that I did so, but I understood him in that sense, and recognised my error. But, some guardian genius warning me, I actually hunted up my own observations. [13] Well, I had never said (as I conceived my critic to imply) that the story of Tuna 'accounts for the story of Daphne.' That was what I had not said. I had observed, 'As to interchange of shape between men and women and *plants*, our information, so far as the lower races are concerned, is less copious' – than in the case of stones. I then spoke of plant totems of one kin with human beings, of plant-souls, [14] of Indian and Egyptian plants animated by *human* souls, of a tree which became a young man and made love to a Yurucari girl, of metamorphosis into vegetables in Samoa, [15] of an Ottawa myth in which a man became a plant of maize, and then of the story of Tuna. [16] Next I mentioned plants said to have sprung from dismembered gods and heroes. *All* this, I said, *all* of it, proves that savages mythically regard human life as on a level with vegetable no less than with animal life. 'Turning to the mythology of Greece, we see that the same rule holds good. Metamorphosis into plants and flowers is extremely common,' and I, of course, attributed

[13] *M. R. R.* i. 155-160.

[14] Tylor's *Prim. Cult.* i. 145.

[15] Turner's *Samoa*, p. 219.

[16] Gill's *Myths and Songs*, p. 79.

the original idea of such metamorphoses to 'the general savage habit of "levelling up,"' of regarding all things in nature as all capable of interchanging their identities. I gave, as classical examples, Daphne, Myrrha, Hyacinth, Narcissus, and the sisters of Phaethon. Next I criticised Mr. Max Müller's theory of Daphne. But I never hinted that the isolated Mangaian story of Tuna, or the stories of plants sprung from mangled men, 'accounted,' by themselves, 'for the story of Daphne.'

Mr. Max Müller is not content with giving a very elaborate and interesting account of how the story of Tuna arose (i. 5-7). He keeps Tuna in hand, and, at the peroration of his vast work (ii. 831), warns us that, before we compare myths in unrelated languages, we need 'a very accurate knowledge of their dialects.. to prevent accidents like that of Tuna mentioned in the beginning.' What accident? That I explained the myth of Daphne by the myth of Tuna? But that is precisely what I did not do. I explained the Greek myth of Daphne (1) as a survival from the savage mental habit of regarding men as on a level with stones, beasts, and plants; or (2) as a tale 'moulded by poets on the same model.' [17] The latter is the more probable case, for we find Daphne late, in artificial or mythographic literature, in Ovid and Hyginus. In Ovid the river god, Pentheus, changes Daphne into a laurel. In Hyginus she is not changed at all; the earth swallows her, and a laurel fills her place.

Now I really did believe – perhaps any rapid reader would have

[17] *M. R. R.* ii. 160.

believed – when I read Mr. Max Müller, that I must have tried to account for the story of Daphne by the story of Tuna. I actually wrote in the first draft of this work that I had been in the wrong. Then I verified the reference which my critic did not give, with the result which the reader has perused. Never could a reader have found out what I did really say from my critic, for he does not usually when he deals with me give chapter and verse. This may avoid an air of personal bickering, but how inconvenient it is!

Let me not be supposed to accuse Mr. Max Müller of consciously misrepresenting me. Of that I need not say that he is absolutely incapable. My argument merely took, in his consciousness, the form which is suggested in the passage cited from him.

Tuna and Daphne

To do justice to Mr. Max Müller, I will here state fully his view of the story of Tuna, and then go on to the story of Daphne. For the sake of accuracy, I take the liberty of borrowing the whole of his statement (i. 4-7): —

'I must dwell a little longer on this passage in order to show the real difference between the ethnological and the philological schools of comparative mythology.

'First of all, what has to be explained is not the growing up of a tree from one or the other member of a god or hero, but the total

change of a human being or a heroine into a tree, and this under a certain provocation. These two classes of plant-legends must be carefully kept apart. Secondly, what does it help us to know that people in Mangaia believed in the change of human beings into trees, if we do not know the reason why? This is what we want to know; and without it the mere juxtaposition of stories apparently similar is no more than the old trick of explaining ignotum per ignotius. It leads us to imagine that we have learnt something, when we really are as ignorant as before.

'If Mr. A. Lang had studied the Mangaian dialect, or consulted scholars like the Rev. W. W. Gill – it is from his "Myths and Songs from the South Pacific" that he quotes the story of Tuna – he would have seen that there is no similarity whatever between the stories of Daphne and of Tuna. The Tuna story belongs to a very well known class of ætiological plant-stories, which are meant to explain a no longer intelligible name of a plant, such as Snakeshead, Stiefmütterchen, &c.; it is in fact a clear case of what I call disease of language, cured by the ordinary nostrum of folk-etymology. I have often been in communication with the Rev. W. W. Gill about these South Pacific myths and their true meaning. The preface to his collection of Myths and Songs from the South Pacific was written by me in 1876; and if Mr. A. Lang had only read the whole chapter which treats of these Tree-Myths (p. 77 seq.), he would easily have perceived the real character of the Tuna story, and would not have placed it in the same class as the Daphne story; he would have found that the white kernel

of the cocoanut was, in Mangaia, called the "brains of Tuna," a name like many more such names which after a time require an explanation.

'Considering that "cocoanut" was used in Mangaia in the sense of head (*testa*), the kernel or flesh of it might well be called the brain. If then the white kernel had been called Tuna's brain, we have only to remember that in Mangaia there are two kinds of cocoanut trees, and we shall then have no difficulty in understanding why these twin cocoanut trees were said to have sprung from the two halves of Tuna's brain, one being red in stem, branches, and fruit, whilst the other was of a deep green. In proof of these trees being derived from the head of Tuna, we are told that we have only to break the nut in order to see in the sprouting germ the two eyes and the mouth of Tuna, the great eel, the lover of Ina. For a full understanding of this very complicated myth more information has been supplied by Mr. Gill. Ina means moon; Ina-mae-aitu, the heroine of our story, means Ina-who-had-a-divine (*aitu*) lover, and she was the daughter of Kui, the blind. Tuna means eel, and in Mangaia it was unlawful for women to eat eels, so that even now, as Mr. Gill informs me, his converts turn away from this fish with the utmost disgust. From other stories about the origin of cocoanut trees, told in the same island, it would appear that the sprouts of the cocoanut were actually called eels' heads, while the skulls of warriors were called cocoanuts.

'Taking all these facts together, it is not difficult to imagine

how the story of Tuna's brain grew up; and I am afraid we shall have to confess that the legend of Tuna throws but little light on the legend of Daphne or on the etymology of her name. No one would have a word to say against the general principle that much that is irrational, absurd, or barbarous in the Veda is a survival of a more primitive mythology anterior to the Veda. How could it be otherwise?'

Criticism of Tuna and Daphne

Now (1), as to Daphne, we are not invariably told that hers was a case of 'the total change of a heroine into a tree.' In Ovid [18] she is thus changed. In Hyginus, on the other hand, the earth swallows her, and a tree takes her place. All the authorities are late. Here I cannot but reflect on the scholarly method of Mannhardt, who would have examined and criticised all the sources for the tale before trying to explain it. However, Daphne was not mangled; a tree did not spring from her severed head or scattered limbs. She was metamorphosed, or was buried in earth, a tree springing up from the place.

(2) I think we do know *why* the people of Mangaia 'believe in the change of human beings into trees.' It is one among many examples of the savage sense of the intercommunity of all nature. 'Antiquity made its division between man and the world in a

[18] *Metam*. i. 567.

very different sort than do the moderns.' [19] I illustrate this mental condition fully in *M. R. R.* i. 46-56. *Why* savages adopt the major premise, 'Human life is on a level with the life of all nature,' philosophers explain in various ways. Hume regards it as an extension to the universe of early man's own consciousness of life and personality. Dr. Tylor thinks that the opinion rests upon 'a broad philosophy of nature.' [20] M. Lefébure appeals to psychical phenomena as I show later (see 'Fetishism'). At all events, the existence of these savage metaphysics is a demonstrated fact. I established it [21] before invoking it as an explanation of savage belief in metamorphosis.

(3) 'The Tuna story belongs to a very well known class of ætiological plant-stories' (ætiological: assigning a cause for the plant, its peculiarities, its name, &c.), 'which are meant to explain a no longer intelligible name of a plant, &c.' I also say, 'these myths are nature-myths, so far as they attempt to account for a fact in nature – namely, for the existence of certain plants, and for their place in ritual.' [22]

The reader has before him Mr. Max Müller's view. The white kernel of the cocoanut was locally styled 'the brains of Tuna.' That name required explanation. Hence the story about the fate of Tuna. Cocoanut was used in Mangaia in the sense of

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[19] Grimm, cited by Liebrecht in *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 17.

[20] *Primitive Culture*, i. 285.

[21] *Op. cit.* i. 46-81.

[22] *M. R. R.* i. 160.

'head' (*testa*). So it is now in England.

See *Bell's Life*, *passim*, as 'The Chicken got home on the cocoanut.'

The Explanation

On the whole, either cocoanut kernels were called 'brains of Tuna' because 'cocoanut'='head,' and a head has brains – and, well, somehow I fail to see why brains of *Tuna* in particular! Or, there being a story to the effect that the first cocoanut grew out of the head of the metamorphosed Tuna, the kernel was called his brains. But why was the story told, and why of Tuna? Tuna was an eel, and women may not eat eels; and Ina was the moon, who, a Mangaian Selene, loved no Latmian shepherd, but an eel. Seriously, I fail to understand Mr. Max Müller's explanation. Given the problem, to explain a no longer intelligible plant-name – brains of Tuna – (applied not to a plant but to the kernel of a nut), this name is explained by saying that the moon, Ina, loved an eel, cut off his head at his desire, and buried it. Thence sprang cocoanut trees, with a fanciful likeness to a human face – face of Tuna – on the nut. But still, why Tuna? How could the moon love an eel, except on my own general principle of savage 'levelling up' of all life in all nature? In my opinion, the Mangaians wanted a fable to account for the resemblance of a cocoanut to the human head – a resemblance noted, as I show, in our own popular slang. The Mangaians also knew the moon, in her mythical aspect, as

Ina; and Tuna, whatever his name may mean (Mr. Max Müller does not tell us), was an eel. [23] Having the necessary savage major premise in their minds, 'All life is on a level and interchangeable,' the Mangaians thought well to say that the head-like cocoanut sprang from the head of her lover, an eel, cut off by Ina. The myth accounts, I think, for the peculiarities of the cocoanut, rather than for the name 'brains of Tuna;' for we still ask, 'Why of Tuna in particular? Why Tuna more than Rangoa, or anyone else?'

'We shall have to confess that the legend of Tuna throws but little light on the legend of Daphne, or on the etymology of her name.'

I never hinted that the legend of Tuna threw light on the etymology of the name of Daphne. Mangaian and Greek are not allied languages. Nor did I give the Tuna story as an explanation of the Daphne story. I gave it as one in a mass of illustrations of the savage mental propensity so copiously established by Dr. Tylor in *Primitive Culture*. The two alternative explanations which I gave of the Daphne story I have cited. No mention of Tuna occurs in either.

Disease of Language and Folk-etymology

The Tuna story is described as 'a clear case of disease of

[23] Erratum: This is erroneous. See *Contributions*, &c., vol. i. p. 6, where Mr. Max Müller writes, 'Tuna means eel.' This shows why Tuna, *i.e.* Eel, is the hero. His connection, as an admirer, with the Moon, perhaps remains obscure.

language cured by the ordinary nostrum of folk-etymology.' The 'disease' showed itself, I suppose, in the presence of the Mangaian words for 'brain of Tuna.' But the story of Tuna gives no folk-etymology of the name Tuna. Now, to give an etymology of a name of forgotten meaning is the sole object of folk-etymology. The plant-name, 'snake's head,' given as an example by Mr. Max Müller, needs no etymological explanation. A story may be told to explain why the plant is called snake's head, but a story to give an etymology of snake's head is superfluous. The Tuna story explains why the cocoanut kernel is called 'brains of Tuna,' but it offers no etymology of Tuna's name. On the other hand, the story that marmalade (really *marmalet*) is so called because Queen Mary found comfort in marmalade when she was sea-sick – hence *Marie-malade*, hence *marmalade* – gives an etymological explanation of the origin of the *word* marmalade. Here is a real folk-etymology. We must never confuse such myths of folk-etymology with myths arising (on the philological hypothesis) from 'disease of language.' Thus, Daphne is a girl pursued by Apollo, and changed into a daphne plant or laurel, or a laurel springs from the earth where she was buried. On Mr. Max Müller's philological theory Daphne=Dahanâ, and meant 'the burning one.' Apollo may be derived from a Sanskrit form, *Apa-var-yan, or *Apa-val-yan (though how Greeks ever heard a Sanskrit word, if such a word as Apa-val-yan ever existed, we are not told), and may mean 'one who opens the gate of the

sky' (ii. 692-696). [24] At some unknown date the ancestors of the Greeks would say 'The opener of the gates of the sky (*Apa-val-yan, *i.e.* the sun) pursues the burning one (Dahanâ, *i.e.* the dawn).' The Greek language would retain this poetic saying in daily use till, in the changes of speech, *Apa-val-yan ceased to be understood, and became Apollo, while Dahanâ ceased to be understood, and became Daphne. But the verb being still understood, the phrase ran, 'Apollo pursues Daphne.' Now the Greeks had a plant, laurel, called *daphne*. They therefore blended plant, daphne, and heroine's name, Daphne, and decided that the phrase 'Apollo pursues Daphne' meant that Apollo chased a nymph, Daphne, who, to escape his love, turned into a laurel. I cannot give Mr. Max Müller's theory of the Daphne story more clearly. If I misunderstand it, that does not come from want of pains.

In opposition to it we urge that (1) the etymological equations, Daphne=Dahanâ, Apollo=*Apa-val-yan, are not generally accepted by other scholars. Schröder, in fact, derives Apollo 'from the Vedic Saparagenya, "worshipful," an epithet of Agni,' who is Fire (ii. 688), and so on. Daphne=Dahanâ is no less doubted. Of course a Greek simply cannot be 'derived' from a Sanskrit word, as is stated, though both may have a common origin, just as French is not 'derived from' Italian.

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[24] Phonetically there may be 'no possible objection to the derivation of Απολλων from a Sanskrit form, *Apa-var-yan, or *Apa-val-yan' (ii. 692); but, historically, Greek is not derived from Sanskrit surely!

(2) If the etymologies were accepted, no proof is offered to us of the actual existence, as a *vera causa*, of the process by which a saying. 'Apollo pursues Daphne,' remains in language, while the meaning of the words is forgotten. This process is essential, but undemonstrated. See the chapter here on 'The Riddle Theory.'

(3) These processes, if demonstrated, which they are not, must be carefully discriminated from the actual demonstrable process of folk-etymology. The Marmalade legend gives the etymology of a word, marmalade; the Daphne legend does not give an etymology.

(4) The theory of Daphne is of the kind protested against by Mannhardt, where he warns us against looking in most myths for a 'mirror-picture' on earth of celestial phenomena. [25] For these reasons, among others, I am disinclined to accept Mr. Max Müller's attempt to explain the story of Daphne.

Mannhardt on Daphne

Since we shall presently find Mr. Max Müller claiming the celebrated Mannhardt as a sometime deserter of philological comparative mythology, who 'returned to his old colours,' I observe with pleasure that Mannhardt is on my side and against the Oxford Professor. Mannhardt shows that the laurel (*daphne*) was regarded as a plant which, like our rowan tree, averts evil

[25] *Mythologische Forschungen*, p. 275.

influences. 'Moreover, the laurel, like the *Maibaum*, was looked on as a being with a spirit. This is the safest result which myth analysis can extract from the story of Daphne, a nymph pursued by Apollo and changed into a laurel. It is a result of the use of the laurel in his ritual.' [26] In 1877, a year after Mannhardt is said by Mr. Max Müller to have returned to his old colours, he repeats this explanation. [27] In the same work (p. 20) he says that 'there is no reason for accepting Max Müller's explanation about the Sun-god and the Dawn, *wo jeder thätliche Anhalt dafür fehlt*.' For this opinion we might also cite the Sanskrit scholars Whitney and Bergaigne. [28]

[26] *Baumkultus*, p. 297. Berlin: 1875.

[27] *Antike Wald– und Feldkulte*, p. 257. Referring to *Baumkultus*, p. 297.

[28] *Oriental and Linguistic Studies*, second series, p. 160. *La Religion Védique*, iii. 293.

THE QUESTION OF ALLIES

Athanasius

Mr. Max Müller protests, most justly, against the statement that he, like St. Athanasius, stands alone, *contra mundum*. If ever this phrase fell from my pen (in what connection I know not), it is as erroneous as the position of St. Athanasius is honourable. Mr. Max Müller's ideas, in various modifications, are doubtless still the most prevalent of any. The anthropological method has hardly touched, I think, the learned contributors to Roscher's excellent mythological Lexicon. Dr. Brinton, whose American researches are so useful, seems decidedly to be a member of the older school. While I do not exactly remember alluding to Athanasius, I fully and freely withdraw the phrase. But there remain questions of allies to be discussed.

Italian Critics

Mr. Max Müller asks, [29] 'What would Mr. Andrew Lang say if he read the words of Signer Canizzaro, in his "Genesi ed Evoluzione del Mito" (1893), "Lang has laid down his arms

[29] 1, viii. *cf*. i. 27.

before his adversaries"?' Mr. Lang 'would smile.' And what would Mr. Max Müller say if he read the words of Professor Enrico Morselli, 'Lang gives no quarter to his adversaries, who, for the rest, have long been reduced to silence'? [30] The Right Hon. Professor also smiles, no doubt. We both smile. *Solvuntur risu tabulæ*.

A Dutch Defender

The question of the precise attitude of Professor Tiele, the accomplished Gifford Lecturer in the University of Edinburgh (1897), is more important and more difficult. His remarks were made in 1885, in an essay on the Myth of Cronos, and were separately reprinted, in 1886, from the 'Revue de l'Histoire des Religions,' which I shall cite. Where they refer to myself they deal with *Custom and Myth*, not with *Myth*, *Ritual*, *and Religion* (1887). It seems best to quote, *ipsissimis verbis*, Mr. Max Müller's comments on Professor Tiele's remarks. He writes (i. viii.):

'Let us proceed next to Holland. Professor Tiele, who had actually been claimed as an ally of the victorious army, declares: – "Je dois m'élever, au nom de la science mythologique et de l'exactitude.. centre une méthode qui ne fait que glisser sur des problèmes de première importance." (See further on, p. 35.)

[30] *Riv. Crit. Mensile*. Geneva, iii. xiv. p. 2.

‘And again:

‘“Ces braves gens qui, pour peu qu’ils aient lu un ou deux livres de mythologie et d’anthropologie, et un ou deux récits de voyages, ne manqueront pas de se mettre à comparer à tort et à travers, et pour tout résultat produiront la confusion.”’

Again (i. 35):

‘Besides Signer Canizzaro and Mr. Horatio Hale, the veteran among comparative ethnologists, Professor Tiele, in his Le Mythe de Kronos (1886), has very strongly protested against the downright misrepresentations of what I and my friends have really written.

‘Professor Tiele had been appealed to as an unimpeachable authority. He was even claimed as an ally by the ethnological students of customs and myths, but he strongly declined that honour (1. c., p. 31): -

‘“M. Lang m’a fait 1’honneur de me citer,” he writes, “comme un de ses alliés, et j’ai lieu de croire que M. Gaidoz en fait en quelque mesure autant. Ces messieurs n’ont point entièrement tort. Cependant je dois m’élever, au nom de la science mythologique et de 1’exactitude dont elle ne peut pas plus se passer que les autres sciences, contre une méthode qui ne fait que glisser sur des problèmes de première importance,” &c.

‘Speaking of the whole method followed by those who actually claimed to have founded a new school of mythology, he says (p. 21): —

‘“Je crains toutefois que ce qui s’y trouve de vrai ne soit

connu depuis longtemps, et que la nouvelle école ne pèche par exclusionisme tout autant que les aînées qu'elle combat avec tant de conviction."

'That is exactly what I have always said. What is there new in comparing the customs and myths of the Greeks with those of the barbarians? Has not even Plato done this? Did anybody doubt that the Greeks, nay even the Hindus, were uncivilised or savages, before they became civilised or tamed? Was not this common-sense view, so strongly insisted on by Fontenelle and Vico in the eighteenth century, carried even to excess by such men as De Brosses (1709-1771)? And have the lessons taught to De Brosses by his witty contemporaries been quite forgotten? Must his followers be told again and again that they ought to begin with a critical examination of the evidence put before them by casual travellers, and that mythology is as little made up of one and the same material as the crust of the earth of granite only?'

Reply

Professor Tiele wrote in 1885. I do not remember having claimed his alliance, though I made one or two very brief citations from his remarks on the dangers of etymology applied to old proper names. [31] To citations made by me later in 1887 Professor Tiele cannot be referring. [32] Thus I find no proof of

[31] *Custom and Myth*, p. 3, citing *Revue de l'Hist. des Religions*, ii. 136.

[32] *M. R. R.* i. 24.

any claim of alliance put forward by me, but I do claim a right to quote the Professor's published words. These I now translate:[33]

'What goes before shows adequately that I am an ally, much more than an adversary, of the new school, whether styled ethnological or anthropological. It is true that all the ideas advanced by its partisans are not so new as they seem. Some of us – I mean among those who, without being vassals of the old school, were formed by it – had not only remarked already the defects of the reigning method, but had perceived the direction in which researches should be made; they had even begun to say so. This does not prevent the young school from enjoying the great merit of having first formulated with precision, and with the energy of conviction, that which had hitherto been but imperfectly pointed out. If henceforth mythological science marches with a firmer foot, and loses much of its hypothetical character, it will in part owe this to the stimulus of the new school.'

'Braves Gens'

Professor Tiele then bids us leave our cries of triumph to the *servum imitatorum pecus*, *braves gens*, and so forth, as in the passage which Mr. Max Müller, unless I misunderstand him,

[33] *Revue de l'Hist. des Religions*, xii. 256.

regards as referring to the 'new school,' and, notably, to M. Gaidoz and myself, though such language ought not to apply to M. Gaidoz, because he is a scholar. I am left to uncovenanted mercies.

Professor Tiele on Our Merits

The merits of the new school Professor Tiele had already stated: —[34]

'If I were reduced to choose between this method and that of comparative philology, I would prefer the former without the slightest hesitation. This method alone enables us to explain the fact, such a frequent cause of surprise, that the Greeks like the Germans.. could attribute to their gods all manner of cruel, cowardly and dissolute actions. This method alone reveals the cause of all the strange metamorphoses of gods into animals, plants, and even stones… In fact, this method teaches us to recognise in all these oddities the survivals of an age of barbarism long over-past, but lingering into later times, under the form of religious legends, the most persistent of all traditions… This method, *enfin*, can alone help us to account for the genesis of myths, because it devotes itself to studying them in their rudest and most primitive shape… '

[34] *Op. cit.* p. 253.

Destruction and Construction

Thus writes Professor Tiele about the constructive part of our work. As to the destructive – or would-be destructive – part, he condenses my arguments against the method of comparative philology. 'To resume, the whole house of comparative philological mythology is builded on the sand, and her method does not deserve confidence, since it ends in such divergent results.' That is Professor Tiele's statement of my destructive conclusions, and he adds, 'So far, I have not a single objection to make. I can still range myself on Mr. Lang's side when he' takes certain distinctions into which it is needless to go here. [35]

Allies or Not?

These are several of the passages on which, in 1887, I relied as evidence of the Professor's approval, which, I should have added, is only partial It is he who, unsolicited, professes himself 'much more our ally than our adversary.' It is he who proclaims that Mr. Max Midler's central hypothesis is erroneous, and who makes 'no objection' to my idea that it is 'builded on the sand.' It is he who assigns essential merits to our method, and I fail to find that he

[35] *Op. cit.* xii. 250.

'strongly declines the honour' of our alliance. The passage about 'braves gens' explicitly does not refer to us.

Our Errors

In 1887, I was not careful to quote what Professor Tiele had said against us. First, as to our want of novelty. That merit, I think, I had never claimed. I was proud to point out that we had been anticipated by Eusebius of Cæsarea, by Fontenelle, and doubtless by many others. We repose, as Professor Tiele justly says, on the researches of Dr. Tylor. At the same time it is Professor Tiele who constantly speaks of 'the new school,' while adding that he himself had freely opposed Mr. Max Müller's central hypothesis, 'a disease of language,' in Dutch periodicals. The Professor also censures our 'exclusiveness,' our 'narrowness,' our 'songs of triumph,' our use of parody (M. Gaidoz republished an old one, not to my own taste; I have also been guilty of 'The Great Gladstone Myth') and our charge that our adversaries neglect ethnological material. On this I explain myself later. [36]

Uses of Philology

Our method (says Professor Tiele) 'cannot answer all the questions which the science of mythology must solve, or, at least,

[36] P. 104, *infra*.

must study.' Certainly it makes no such pretence.

Professor Tiele then criticises Sir George Cox and Mr. Robert Brown, junior, for their etymologies of Poseidon. Indiscreet followers are not confined to our army alone. Now, the use of philology, we learn, is to discourage such etymological vagaries as those of Sir G. Cox. [37] *We* also discourage them – severely. But we are warned that philology really has discovered 'some undeniably certain etymologies' of divine names. Well, I also say, 'Philology alone can tell whether Zeus Asterios, or Adonis, or Zeus Labrandeus is originally a Semitic or a Greek divine name; here she is the Pythoness we must all consult.' [38] And is it my fault that, even in this matter, the Pythonesses utter such strangely discrepant oracles? Is Athene from a Zend root (Benfey), a Greek root (Curtius), or to be interpreted by Sanskrit *Ahanâ* (Max Müller)? Meanwhile Professor Tiele repeats that, in a search for the origin of myths, and, above all, of obscene and brutal myths, 'philology will lead us far from our aim.' Now, if the school of Mr. Max Müller has a *mot d'ordre*, it is, says Professor Tiele, 'to call mythology a disease of language.' [39] But, adds Mr. Max Müller's learned Dutch defender, mythologists, while using philology for certain purposes, 'must shake themselves free, of course, from the false hypothesis' (Mr. Max Müller's) 'which makes of mythology a mere *maladie du langage*.' This professor

[37] *Revue de l'Hist. des Religions*, xii. 259.

[38] *M. R. R.* i. 25.

[39] *Rev.* xii. 247.

is rather a dangerous defender of Mr. Max Müller! He removes the very corner-stone of his edifice, which Tiele does not object to our describing as founded on the sand. Mr. Max Müller does not cite (as far as I observe) these passages in which Professor Tiele (in my view, and in fact) abandons (for certain uses) *his* system of mythology. Perhaps Professor Tiele has altered his mind, and, while keeping what Mr. Max Müller quotes, *braves gens*, and so on, has withdrawn what he said about 'the false hypothesis of a disease of language.' But my own last book about myths was written in 1886-1887, shortly after Professor Tiele's remarks were published (1886) as I have cited them.

Personal Controversy

All this matter of alliances may seem, and indeed is, of a personal character, and therefore unimportant. Professor Tiele's position in 1885-86 is clearly defined. Whatever he may have published since, he then accepted the anthropological or ethnological method, as *alone* capable of doing the work in which we employ it. This method alone can discover the origin of ancient myths, and alone can account for the barbaric element, that old puzzle, in the myths of civilised races. This the philological method, useful for other purposes, cannot do, and its central hypothesis can only mislead us. I was not aware, I repeat, that I ever claimed Professor Tiele's 'alliance,' as he, followed by Mr. Max Müller, declares. They cannot point, as

a proof of an assertion made by Professor Tiele, 1885-86, to words of mine which did not see the light till 1887, in *Myth*, *Ritual*, *and Religion*, i. pp. 24, 43, 44. Not that I deny Professor Tiele's statement about my claim of his alliance before 1885-86. I merely ask for a reference to this claim. In 1887 [40] I cited his observations (already quoted) on the inadequate and misleading character of the philological method, when we are seeking for 'the origin of a myth, or the physical explanation of the oldest myths, or trying to account for the rude and obscene element in the divine legends of civilised races.' I added the Professor's applause of the philological method as applied to other problems of mythology; for example, 'the genealogical relations of myths… The philological method alone can answer here,' aided, doubtless, by historical and archæological researches as to the inter-relations of races. This approval of the philological method, I cited; the reader will find the whole passage in the *Revue*, vol. xii. p. 260. I remarked, however, that this will seem 'a very limited province,' though, in this province, 'Philology is the Pythoness we must all consult; in this sphere she is supreme, when her high priests are of one mind.' Thus I did not omit to notice Professor Tiele's comments on the *merits* of the philological method. To be sure, he himself does not apply it when he comes to examine the Myth of Cronos. 'Are the God and his myth original or imported? I have not approached this question because it does not seem to me ripe in

[40] *M. R. R.* i. 24.

this particular case.' [41] 'Mr. Lang has justly rejected the opinion of Welcker and Mr. Max Müller, that Cronos is simply formed from Zeus's epithet, κρονιων.' [42] This opinion, however, Mr. Max Müller still thinks the 'most likely' (ii. 507).

My other citation of Professor Tiele in 1887 says that our pretensions 'are not unacknowledged' by him, and, after a long quotation of approving passages, I add 'the method is thus *applauded* by a most competent authority, and it has been *warmly accepted*' (pray note the distinction) by M. Gaidoz. [43] I trust that what I have said is not unfair. Professor Tiele's objections, not so much to our method as to our manners, and to my own use of the method in a special case, have been stated, or will be stated later. Probably I should have put them forward in 1887; I now repair my error. My sole wish is to be fair; if Mr. Max Müller has not wholly succeeded in giving the full drift of Professor Tiele's remarks, I am certain that it is from no lack of candour.

The Story of Cronos

Professor Tiele now devotes fifteen pages to the story of Cronos, and to my essay on that theme. He admits that I was right in regarding the myth as 'extraordinarily old,' and that in

[41] *Rev*. xii. 277.

[42] *Rev*. xii. 264.

[43] *M. R. R*. i. 44, 45.

Greece it must go back to a period when Greeks had not passed the New Zealand level of civilisation. [Now, the New Zealanders were cannibals!] But 'we are the victims of a great illusion if we think that a mere comparison of a Maori and Greek myth explains the myth.' I only profess to explain the savagery of the myth by the fact (admitted) that it was composed by savages. The Maori story 'is a myth of the creation of light.' I, for my part, say, 'It is a myth of the severance of heaven and earth.' [44] And so it is! No Being said, in Maori, 'Fiat lux!' Light is not here *created*. Heaven lay flat on Earth, all was dark, somebody kicked Heaven up, the already existing light came in. Here is no *création de la lumière*. I ask Professor Tiele, 'Do you, sir, create light when you open your window-shutters in the morning? No, you let light in!' The Maori tale is also 'un mythe primitif de l'aurore,' a primitive dawn myth. Dawn, again! Here I lose Professor Tiele.

'Has the myth of Cronos the same sense?' Probably not, as the Maori story, to my mind, has not got it either. But Professor Tiele says, 'The myth of Cronos has precisely the opposite sense.' [45] What is the myth of Cronos? Ouranos (Heaven) married Gaea (Earth). Ouranos 'hid his children from the light in the *hollows* of Earth' (Hesiod). So, too, the New Zealand gods were hidden from light while Heaven (Rangi) lay flat on Papa (Earth). The children 'were concealed between the *hollows* of their parent's breasts.' They did not like it, for they dwelt in darkness. So

[44] *Custom and Myth*, p. 51.

[45] *Rev*. xii. 262.

Cronos took an iron sickle and mutilated Ouranos in such a way, *enfin*, as to divorce him *a thoro*. 'Thus,' I say, 'were Heaven and Earth practically divorced.' The Greek gods now came out of the hollows where they had been, like the New Zealand gods, 'hidden from the light.'

Professor Tiele on Sunset Myths

No, says Professor Tiele, 'the story of Cronos has precisely the opposite meaning.' The New Zealand myth is one of dawn, the Greek myth is one of sunset. The mutilated part of poor Ouranos is *le phallus du ciel*, *le soleil*, which falls into 'the Cosmic ocean,' and then, of course, all is dark. Professor Tiele may be right here; I am indifferent. All that I wanted to explain was the savage complexion of the myth, and Professor Tiele says that I have explained that, and (xii. 264) he rejects the etymological theory of Mr. Max Müller.

I say that, in my opinion, the second part of the Cronos myth (the child-swallowing performances of Cronos) 'was probably a world-wide *Märchen*, or tale, attracted into the cycle of which Cronos was the centre, without any particular reason beyond the law which makes detached myths crystallise round any celebrated name.'

Professor Tiele says he does not grasp the meaning of, or believe in, any such law. Well, why is the world-wide tale of the Cyclops told about Odysseus? It is absolutely out of keeping, and

it puzzles commentators. In fact, here was a hero and there was a tale, and the tale was attracted into the cycle of the hero; the very last man to have behaved as Odysseus is made to do. [46] But Cronos was an odious ruffian. The world-wide tale of swallowing and disgorging the children was attracted to *his* too notorious name 'by grace of congruity.' Does Professor Tiele now grasp my meaning (*saisir*)?

Our Lack of Scientific Exactness

I do not here give at full length Professor Tiele's explanation of the meaning of a myth which I do not profess to explain myself. Thus, drops of the blood of Ouranos falling on Earth begat the *Mélies*, usually rendered 'Nymphs of the Ash-trees.' But Professor Tiele says they were really *bees* (Hesychius, μελιαι=μελισσαι) – 'that is to say, stars.' Everybody has observed that the stars rise up off the earth, like the bees sprung from the blood of Ouranos. In *Myth*, *Ritual*, *and Religion* (i. 299-315) I give the competing explanations of Mr. Max Müller, of Schwartz (Cronos=storm god), Preller (Cronos=harvest god), of others who see the sun, or time, in Cronos; while, with Professor Tiele, Cronos is the god of the upper air, and also of the underworld and harvest; he 'doubles the part.' '*Il est l'un et l'autre*' – that is, '*le dieu qui fait mûrir le blé*' and also '*un dieu*

[46] *Odyssey*, book ix.

des lieux souterrains.' '*Il habite les profondeurs sous la terre*,' he is also *le dieu du ciel nocturne*.

It may have been remarked that I declined to add to this interesting collection of plausible explanations of Cronos. A selection of such explanations I offer in tabular form: —

Cronos was God of
Time (?) – Max Müller
Sun – Sayce
Midnight sky – Kuhn
Under-world }
Midnight sky} – Tiele
Harvest }
Harvest – Preller
Storm – Schwartz
Star-swallowing sky – Canon Taylor
Sun scorching spring – Hartung
Cronos was by Race
Late Greek (?) – Max Müller
Semitic – Böttiger
Accadian (?) – Sayce
Etymology of Cronos
Χρονος=Time (?) – Max Müller
Krāna (Sanskrit) – Kuhn
Karnos (Horned) – Brown κραινω – Preller

The pleased reader will also observe that the *phallus* of Ouranos is the sun (Tiele), that Cronos is the sun (Sayce), that

Cronos mutilating Ouranos is the sun (Hartung), just as the sun is the mutilated part of Ouranos (Tiele); *Or* is, according to others, the stone which Cronos swallowed, and which acted as an emetic.

My Lack of Explanation of Cronos

Now, I have offered no explanation at all of who Cronos was, what he was god of, from what race he was borrowed, from what language his name was derived. The fact is that I do not know the truth about these important debated questions. Therefore, after speaking so kindly of our method, and rejecting the method of Mr. Max Müller, Professor Tiele now writes thus (and *this* Mr. Max Müller does cite, as we have seen): —

> 'Mr. Lang and M. Gaidoz are not entirely wrong in claiming me as an ally. But I must protest, in the name of mythological science, and of the exactness as necessary to her as to any of the other sciences, against a method which only glides over questions of the first importance' (name, origin, province, race of Cronos), 'and which to most questions can only reply, with a smile, *C'est chercher raison où il n'y en a pas.'*

My Crime

Now, what important questions was I gliding over? In what questions did I not expect to find reason? Why in this savage

fatras about Cronos swallowing his children, about blood-drops becoming bees (Mr. Max Müller says 'Melian nymphs'), and bees being stars, and all the rest of a prehistoric *Märchen* worked over again and again by the later fancy of Greek poets and by Greek voyagers who recognised Cronos in Moloch. In all this I certainly saw no 'reason,' but I have given in tabular form the general, if inharmonious, conclusions of more exact and conscientious scholars, 'their variegated hypotheses,' as Mannhardt says in the case of Demeter. My error, rebuked by Professor Tiele, is the lack of that 'scientific exactitude' exhibited by the explanations arranged in my tabular form.

My Reply to Professor Tiele

I would reply that I am not engaged in a study of the *Cult* of Cronos, but of the revolting element in his *Myth*: his swallowing of his children, taking a stone emetic by mistake, and disgorging the swallowed children alive; the stone being on view at Delphi long after the Christian era. Now, such stories of divine feats of swallowing and disgorging are very common, I show, in savage myth and popular *Märchen*. The bushmen have Kwai Hemm, who swallows the sacred Mantis insect. He is killed, and all the creatures whom he has swallowed return to light. Such stories occur among Australians, Kaffirs, Red Men, in Guiana, in Greenland, and so on. In some cases, among savages. Night (conceived as a person), or one star which obscures

another star, is said to 'swallow' it. Therefore, I say, 'natural phenomena, explained on savage principles, might give the data of the swallowing myth, of Cronos' [47]

[47] *C. and M.* p. 56.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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