

## Jung and Lévy-Bruhl

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**Abstract:** For his knowledge of ‘primitive’ peoples, C. G. Jung relied on the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), a French philosopher who in mid-career became an armchair anthropologist. In a series of books from 1910 on, Lévy-Bruhl asserted that ‘primitive’ peoples had been misunderstood by modern Westerners. Rather than thinking like moderns, just less rigorously, ‘primitives’ harbour a mentality of their own. ‘Primitive’ thinking is both ‘mystical’ and ‘prelogical’. By ‘mystical’, Lévy-Bruhl meant that ‘primitive’ peoples experience the world as identical with themselves. Their relationship to the world, including to fellow human beings, is that of *participation mystique*. By ‘prelogical’, Lévy-Bruhl meant that ‘primitive’ thinking is indifferent to contradictions. ‘Primitive’ peoples deem all things identical with one another yet somehow still distinct. A human is at once a tree and still a human being. Jung accepted unquestioningly Lévy-Bruhl’s depiction of the ‘primitive’ mind, even when Jung, unlike Lévy-Bruhl, journeyed to the field to see ‘primitive’ peoples firsthand. But Jung altered Lévy-Bruhl’s conception of ‘primitive’ mentality in three key ways. First, he psychologized it. Whereas for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is to be explained sociologically, for Jung it is to be explained psychologically: ‘primitive’ peoples think as they do because they live in a state of unconsciousness. Second, Jung universalized ‘primitive’ mentality. Whereas for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is ever more being replaced by modern thinking, for Jung ‘primitive’ thinking is the initial psychological state of all human beings. Third, Jung appreciated ‘primitive’ thinking. Whereas for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is false, for Jung it is true—once it is recognized as an expression not of how the world but of how the unconscious works. I consider, along with the criticisms of Lévy-Bruhl’s conception of ‘primitive’ thinking by his fellow anthropologists and philosophers, whether Jung in fact grasped all that Lévy-Bruhl meant by ‘primitive’ thinking.

**Key words:** Jung and Lévy-Bruhl, Lévy-Bruhl, *participation mystique*, ‘primitive’ mind, ‘primitive’ peoples

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\*For his knowledge of ‘primitive’ peoples, C. G. Jung relied almost wholly on the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), a celebrated French philosopher who in mid-career turned to anthropology. In a series of six books from 1910 on (Lévy-Bruhl 1923, 1928, 1935, 1938, 1983, 1985), Lévy-Bruhl asserted that ‘primitive’ peoples had been misunderstood by modern Westerners. Rather than thinking like moderns, just less rigorously, ‘primitives’ think wholly

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differently from moderns. Their thinking differs in two key ways: it is ‘mystical’, and it is ‘prelogical’. By ‘mystical’, Lévy-Bruhl means that ‘primitive’ peoples experience the world as identical with themselves rather than, like moderns, as distinct from themselves. ‘Primitive’ peoples do not merely conceive but also perceive, or experience, the world as one with themselves. Their relationship to the world, including that to fellow human beings, is one of *participation mystique*. By ‘prelogical’, Lévy-Bruhl means that ‘primitives’ are indifferent to contradictions rather than, like moderns, attentive to them. The ‘primitive’ mind deems all things identical with one another yet somehow still distinct—a logical contradiction. A human is simultaneously a tree and still a human being.

Jung accepted unquestioningly Lévy-Bruhl’s depiction of the ‘primitive’ mind. He did so even when he, unlike Lévy-Bruhl, actually journeyed to the field to see ‘native’ peoples firsthand. Yet Jung in fact misses the difference for Lévy-Bruhl between the mystical and the prelogical aspects of ‘primitive’ thinking. He conflates prelogical with mystical and thereby misses the more radical aspect of the ‘primitive’ mind for Lévy-Bruhl.

At the same time Jung alters Lévy-Bruhl’s conception of ‘primitive’ mentality in three ways. First, he psychologizes ‘primitive’ thinking. Where for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is to be explained sociologically, for Jung it is to be explained psychologically. ‘Primitive’ peoples think as they do, not because they live in society but because they live in unconsciousness. Second, Jung universalizes ‘primitive’ mentality. Where for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is ever more being replaced by modern thinking, for Jung ‘primitive’ thinking is the initial psychological state of all human beings. Third, Jung values ‘primitive’ thinking. Where for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is false, for Jung it is true—once it is recognized as an expression not of how the world but of how the unconscious works.

### Lévy-Bruhl

Lévy-Bruhl’s first and most important anthropological work, *How Natives Think*, was originally published in French in 1910 (*Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*) but was translated into English only in 1926—three years after the translation of his second and next most important anthropological work, *Primitive Mentality* (1923), originally published in 1922. In 1985, Princeton University Press published a reprint of the 1926 translation of *How Natives Think* with a new introduction by American anthropologist C. Scott Littleton.

Lévy-Bruhl never asserts that ‘primitive’ peoples are inferior to moderns. On the contrary, he means to be defending ‘primitive’ peoples *against* this charge, made above all by the pioneering British anthropologists E. B. Tylor and J. G. Frazer. Of Tylor and Frazer, he states: ‘Let us abandon the attempt to refer their mental activity to an inferior variety of our own’ (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 76). For

Tylor and Frazer, 'primitives' think the way moderns do. They just think less rigorously than moderns. For Tylor and Frazer, the difference between primitive and modern thinking is only one of degree. For Lévy-Bruhl, the difference is of kind.

Lévy-Bruhl attributes 'primitive' thinking to culture, not biology. In accord with other twentieth century anthropologists (see Boas 1965, pp. 43–44), he separates culture from race: 'Undoubtedly they ['primitives'] have the same senses as ours...and their cerebral structure is like our own. But we have to bear in mind that which their collective representations instil into all their perceptions' (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 43; see also Lévy-Bruhl 1923, pp. 21–33; 1952, p. 121; 1975, p. 49). By 'collective representations' (*représentations collectives*), a term taken from the French sociologist Émile Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl means group beliefs, ones inculcated in all members of a society. Those beliefs are the same across all 'primitive' societies. 'Primitive' representations, or *conceptions*, shape *perceptions*, or experiences (see Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 43–45, 106; see also Throop 2003, pp. 370–75).

According to Lévy-Bruhl, 'primitive' peoples believe that all phenomena, including humans and their artefacts, are part of—or 'participate in'—an impersonal sacred, or 'mystic', realm pervading the natural one: 'Primitive man, therefore, lives and acts in an environment of beings and objects, all of which, in addition to the [observable] properties that we recognize them to possess, are endowed with mystic attributes' (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 65). To take Lévy-Bruhl's most famous example, the Bororo of Brazil declare themselves red parakeets:

This does not merely signify that after their death they become araras [parakeets], nor that araras are metamorphosed Bororos. . . . It is not a name they give themselves, nor a relationship that they claim. What they desire to express by it is actual identity.

(Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 77)

Mysticism is the first of the two key characteristics of 'primitive' mentality. The second characteristic, prelogicality, builds on the first one but is more radical, for it violates the law of non-contradiction: the notion that something cannot simultaneously be both itself and something else. The belief that all things are mystically one is itself neither contradictory nor uniquely 'primitive'. As not only a belief but also a practice, mysticism is to be found in many cultures, including the West from ancient times through modern. But the belief that all things simultaneously remain distinct, that 'phenomena can be . . . both themselves and something other than themselves' (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 76), is uniquely 'primitive'. The Bororo believe that a human is really a parakeet yet still really a human being. They do not believe that a human and a parakeet are identical invisibly while distinct visibly. That belief would merely be a version of mysticism. Rather, the Bororo believe that humans and parakeets are at once identical and separate in the same respects and at the same time. Visibly as well as invisibly, humans and parakeets are at once the same and different.

Lévy-Bruhl does not conclude, as is conventionally said of him, that ‘primitive’ peoples cannot think logically, as if they are biologically deficient (see Radin 1957). Instead, he concludes that ‘primitives’, ruled as they are by their collective representations, regularly suspend the practice of logic: ‘primitive’ thought ‘is not *antilogical*; it is not *alogical* either. By designating it “prelogical” I merely wish to state that it does not bind itself down, as our thought does, to avoiding contradiction’ (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 78; see also Lévy-Bruhl 1983, p. 7). As painstakingly precise a writer as Lévy-Bruhl was, his choice of terms was often almost perversely misleading, and many readers mistook ‘prelogical’ for ‘illogical’. He thereby seemed to be making ‘primitive’ peoples even more hopelessly inferior to moderns than Tylor and Frazer had made them—the opposite of his intent. As unacceptable as the term ‘primitive’ has become, it was used unashamedly in Lévy-Bruhl’s day and is still used in French.<sup>1</sup>

In arguing relentlessly that ‘primitive’ thinking differs in nature from modern thinking, Lévy-Bruhl is not, however, arguing that it is equally true. In asserting that, as Littleton puts it, ‘primitive’ thinking ‘must be understood *on its own terms*’ (Littleton 1985, p. xiv; italics in original), he is not asserting that it must be *judged* on those terms. ‘Primitive’ thinking does make sense in light of its premises:

The fact that the ‘*patterns of thought*’ are different does not, once the premises have been given, prevent the ‘primitive’ from reasoning like us, and, in this sense, his thought is neither more nor less ‘logical’ than ours.

(Lévy-Bruhl 1952, p. 121; italics in original)

But the premises of ‘primitive’ thinking are still illogical. Therefore ‘primitive’ thinking, while logical once given its premises, is illogical because its premises are illogical: something cannot simultaneously be both itself and something else in the same respects. Where for Tylor and to a lesser extent Frazer ‘primitive’ thinking is rational but still false, for Lévy-Bruhl ‘primitive’ thinking is irrational and consequently false.

Put another way, Lévy-Bruhl is not a relativist. He is an absolutist. There are several varieties of relativism—conceptual, perceptual, and moral—and none fits Lévy-Bruhl. Conceptual relativism, which is what Littleton (1985) and others (see, for example, Needham 1972, pp. 181–83) wrongly ascribe to Lévy-Bruhl, denies the existence of objective criteria for assessing the diversity of *beliefs* about the world. Beliefs can supposedly be evaluated only within a culture, by only its own standards. Lévy-Bruhl is hardly a conceptual relativist: he deems mysticism and prelogicality outright false beliefs about the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *defence* of ‘primitive’, even ‘savage’, thinking: *La Pensée sauvage* [1962]: ‘This thirst for objective knowledge is one of the most neglected aspects of the thought of people we call “primitive”’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966, p. 3). And: ‘When we make the mistake of thinking that the Savage is governed solely by organic or economic needs...’ (Lévi-Strauss 1966, p. 3).

world. Perceptual relativism denies the possibility of evaluating objectively the diversity of *experiences* of the world. Conceptual relativism allows for common experiences that simply get interpreted differently. Perceptual relativism, which is bolder, maintains that experiences themselves differ. People 'occupy' different worlds, and there is no way to judge the differences. What to one culture is the experience of a god to another is a delusion. Lévy-Bruhl is hardly a perceptual relativist either: he deems the experience of oneness a delusion. Moral relativism, which denies that objective criteria exist for evaluating the undeniable diversity of *values* around the world, is not relevant to Lévy-Bruhl.

While Lévy-Bruhl takes the concept of collective representations from Durkheim, he stresses the differences rather than, like Durkheim, the similarities between 'primitive' and modern representations. For Lévy-Bruhl, 'primitive' representations alone come between 'primitives' and the world. The representations shape perceptions as well as conceptions, so that 'primitive' peoples experience, not merely think, the world as one as well as distinct. By contrast, modern representations shape only conceptions, not also perceptions, which convey the world to moderns rather than come between moderns and the world (see Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 375–76).

In a section of *How Natives Think* entitled 'The transition to the higher mental types' (pp. 361–86), Lévy-Bruhl writes of 'progress' and 'evolution' in cognition, which requires the filtering out of the emotional elements that colour 'primitive' perceptions (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 380–81). Only modern representations have been subjected to 'the test of experience' (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 380–81). In fact, only 'scientific theorizing' is abstract enough to be free of emotion and therefore of mystical and prelogical proclivities (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 382). The difference between 'primitive' peoples and moderns is not, then, that moderns think wholly logically. It is that 'primitive' peoples think wholly prelogically. For Lévy-Bruhl, the emotional allure of mystical participation makes its disappearance unlikely, and he cites example after example of the retention of prelogical thinking among moderns (see Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 382–83; also 1935, p. 33). Conversely, he traces the lessening of mystical ties even among 'primitive' peoples (see Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 365–79). The opposition that he draws is, then, between 'primitive' and modern *thinking*, not between 'primitives' and moderns *themselves*.

Many others no less absolutist than Lévy-Bruhl have been criticized much less severely. The reason, disputed by Littleton (1985, pp. xix–xx), is that, despite his undeniably neutral intent, Lévy-Bruhl in fact characterizes 'primitive' mentality much more negatively than even Tylor and Frazer do. Tylor (1958) and Frazer (1922) take for granted that 'primitive' peoples recognize not only the law of non-contradiction but most 'modern' distinctions as well: those between appearance and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, supernatural and natural, human and non-human, living and dead, individual and group, one time and another, and one space and another. True, for Tylor and Frazer, 'primitive' peoples fail to think sufficiently critically and thereby produce religion rather

than science, but not because of any missed distinctions. For Tylor and Frazer, 'primitive' peoples still think, and think logically and systematically. Religion, no less than science, is the product of observation, hypothesis, and generalization, not of acculturation.

For Lévy-Bruhl, 'primitive' peoples do not even have religion (see Lévy-Bruhl 1983, pp. 4, 10). What beliefs they do have come from their collective representations and not from any observations of the world, let alone from any rational responses to observations (see Lévy-Bruhl 1983, pp. 27–30). Far from thinking rationally, 'primitive' peoples, brainwashed by their mystical and prelogical beliefs, scarcely think at all.

To be sure, for Frazer (1922, chs. 3–4), the efficacy of magic, which for him constitutes a stage prior to that of religion, does presuppose the failure to make two distinctions: that between the literal and the symbolic—for otherwise a voodoo doll would merely symbolize, not affect, a person—and that between a part and the whole—for otherwise a severed strand of hair would merely have once been part of a person, not still affect that person. Furthermore, magic for Frazer presupposes a spider-like connection among all things, including that between a doll and a person and that between a part and the whole.

Still, Frazer never assumes that in even this stage 'primitive' peoples are oblivious to other distinctions, such as those between appearance and reality and between subjectivity and objectivity. And any distinctions missed are of conception, not of perception, which Frazer, together with Tylor, considers invariant. For both Tylor and Frazer, even 'primitive' peoples merely conceive, not perceive, the identity of a doll with a person. In Frazer's stage of religion as well as of magic, 'primitives' may get angry at a stone over which they have stumbled, as if the stone had tripped them, but they still experience it as a stone. Both Frazer and Tylor are conceptual absolutists—pre-scientific beliefs are false—but perceptual universalists—all perceptions are the same.

Like Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl considers magic a stage of culture prior to that of religion (see Lévy-Bruhl 1983, pp. 183–84). But he views magic far more radically. While he, following Frazer, refers to magic as 'sympathetic magic', he stresses less the imitation of the desired effect than participation in the imitation. Where for Frazer imitation means mere imitation, for Lévy-Bruhl imitation means becoming identical with whatever one imitates (see Lévy-Bruhl 1983, ch. 5).

In above all *How Natives Think* Lévy-Bruhl explicitly follows Durkheim's fundamental principle that 'primitive' beliefs not only are social, or 'collective', rather than individual in nature but also must therefore be explained socially rather than, as for Tylor and Frazer, individually: 'Collective representations are social phenomena . . . [S]ocial phenomena have their own laws, and laws which the analysis of the individual *qua* individual could never reveal' (Lévy-Bruhl 1985, p. 23). The explanation of 'primitive' thinking is thus to be found in sociology rather than in psychology. As the supposed study of the

individual in isolation, psychology is where Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim alike place both Tylor and Frazer. Collective beliefs, modern as well as 'primitive', result from socialization. Unlike Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl simply starts with collective representations rather than accounts for them. For him, they are the given.<sup>2</sup> Society rather than the mind is the source of 'primitive' beliefs, but he does not, like Durkheim, root the beliefs in social structure. In contrast to both Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl, Tylor and Frazer ignore any sociological aspect of group beliefs. For them, Robinson Crusoe could as likely have invented myth and religion as the magician or priest of a community.

For Lévy-Bruhl, again following Durkheim (see Durkheim 1965, pp. 21–33, 267–72, 476–96; Durkheim & Mauss 1963), moderns as well as 'primitive' peoples have collective representations; representations are primarily categorizations; without representations, individuals would have no thoughts rather than merely private ones; 'primitive' representations shape perception as well as conception; 'primitive' representations are laden with emotion, modern ones freer of emotion; 'primitive' representations constitute religion, modern ones science; science succeeds religion as the explanation of the world; and religion is false, science true.

Yet Durkheim castigates Lévy-Bruhl for exaggerating the differences between 'primitives' and moderns (see Durkheim 1965, pp. 267–72; 1975, pp. 169–73). For Durkheim, 'primitives' recognize the same categories as moderns and are therefore not prelogical. Indeed, science inherits these categories from 'primitive' religion. Without 'primitive' religion there would be no science, even though science subsequently bests religion. Admittedly, science for Durkheim is more nearly objective than religion. It is critical, unemotional, and testable. But it differs from religion in degree only (see Durkheim 1965, pp. 270, 477, 486, 493; 1975, p. 171).<sup>3</sup>

### Jung's use of Lévy-Bruhl

Jung enlists Lévy-Bruhl in the same way he enlists Richard Wilhelm, Karl Kerényi, and Paul Radin, who, ironically, was Lévy-Bruhl's nemesis. Jung uses them all for data, which he then 'psychologizes'. What is seemingly about the world is, properly grasped, really about the unconscious. The use to which Jung puts Lévy-Bruhl, whom he actually knew (see de Angulo 1977, p. 214), is typical.<sup>4</sup> That Lévy-Bruhl, following Durkheim, continually insists

<sup>2</sup> In defence of Lévy-Bruhl against the common charge that he assumes rather than explains collective representations, see Horton 1973, pp. 255–56. Yet Lévy-Bruhl himself acknowledges this failing: see Lévy-Bruhl 1952, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> Lévy-Bruhl never explicitly responded to Durkheim's criticisms. For a reconstruction of Lévy-Bruhl's tacit and not so tacit rejoinders, see Merllié 1998. See also Schmaus 1996, p. 430.

<sup>4</sup> On Jung and Lévy-Bruhl, see Progoff 1973, pp. 146–51, 233–38; de Angulo 1977, pp. 214–15, who reports that Jung lamented Lévy-Bruhl's posthumously published recantation of his views;

that the source of 'primitive' thinking is not psychological (see, for example, Lévy-Bruhl 1952, p. 121) is for Jung no impediment. Jung even labels Lévy-Bruhl 'an authority in the field of primitive *psychology*' (Jung 1970b, para. 106; italics added).

Jung cites Lévy-Bruhl's works throughout his writings, beginning with *Psychological Types* (1921; CW 6, para. 12, 123, 216, 692, 781). His fullest use of Lévy-Bruhl is in his three essays on 'primitive' peoples: 'Archaic man' (1931 in German; CW 10, para. 104–47), 'Mind and earth' (1927; CW 10, para. 49–103), and 'The spiritual problem of modern man' (1928; CW 10, para. 148–96). All three were translated and published in 1933 as part of Jung's collection *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*.

Jung relies on Lévy-Bruhl even when he goes to East Africa for five months to encounter 'primitive' peoples for himself (see Burleson 1997). He arrives smitten with Lévy-Bruhl's ideas and by no coincidence finds them confirmed everywhere. Lévy-Bruhl was his Baedeker. No encounter impels Jung to question his characterization of 'primitive' peoples. His three essays on 'primitive' peoples all come *after* his travels, yet still defer to Lévy-Bruhl. That Jung finds in 'primitive' peoples 'a potentiality of life which has been overgrown by civilization' (Jung 1963, p. 246) presupposes the accuracy for him of Lévy-Bruhl's depiction of them.

Jung acknowledges a debt to Lévy-Bruhl for the very concept of archetypes:

Archetypal statements are based upon instinctive preconditions and have nothing to do with reason; they are neither rationally grounded nor can they be banished by rational arguments. They have always been part of the world scene—*représentations collectives*, as Lévy-Bruhl rightly called them.

(Jung 1963, p. 353)

That Jung credits Lévy-Bruhl rather than Durkheim with the concept of collective representations means that the likely link between Durkheim's sociological concept and Jung's psychological concept came through Lévy-Bruhl (see Shamdasani 2003, pp. 288–93, 295–97).

### Jung's misreading of Lévy-Bruhl

As influential on Jung as Lévy-Bruhl was, Jung failed to recognize the more radical of Lévy-Bruhl's claims about 'primitive' peoples, which is not that they are mystical but that they are prelogical. Even if Lévy-Bruhl comes to give ever

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Adams 1996, pp. 54–60, who gets Lévy-Bruhl right; Dourley 2003, who relies wholly on Jung for knowledge of Lévy-Bruhl and therefore wrongly takes *participation mystique* rather than prelogical thinking to be the heart of 'primitive' mentality; and Burleson 1997 and 2005, who faults Jung for the amateurishness of his fieldwork in East Africa and for his uncritical acceptance of Lévy-Bruhl's views but who nevertheless commends Jung for his insight into the mystical character of 'primitive' peoples, even though that character is identical with the one depicted by Lévy-Bruhl.

more attention to the mystical than to the prelogical side, in his first and best-known book (1985) the prelogical aspect dominates, and 'prelogical' is the term that Jung most often associates with Lévy-Bruhl.<sup>5</sup>

From the outset of 'Archaic man' Jung invokes the authority of Lévy-Bruhl:

When we first come into contact with primitive peoples or read about primitive psychology in scientific works, we cannot fail to be deeply impressed with the strangeness of archaic man. Lévy-Bruhl himself, an authority in the field of primitive psychology, never wearies of emphasizing the striking difference between the 'prelogical' state of mind and our own conscious outlook. It seems to him, as a civilized man, inexplicable that the primitive should disregard the obvious lessons of experience, should flatly deny the most evident causal connections, and instead of accounting for things as simply due to chance or on reasonable grounds of causality, should take his 'collective representations' as being intrinsically valid. By 'collective representations' Lévy-Bruhl means widely current ideas whose truth is held to be self-evident from the start... While it is perfectly understandable to us that people die of advanced age or as the result of diseases that are recognized to be fatal, this is not the case with primitive man. When old persons die, he does not believe it to be the result of age. He argues that there are persons who have lived to be much older... To him, the real explanation is always magic. Either a spirit has killed the man, or it was sorcery.

(Jung 1970b, para. 106)

Jung then cites an example of 'prelogical' thinking that he in fact takes (without acknowledgment) from Lévy-Bruhl himself (1923, pp. 52–53): that of two anklets found in the stomach of a crocodile shot by a European. The 'natives' recognized that the anklets belonged to two women who had been eaten by a crocodile. But instead of concluding that the crocodile had on its own caught the two and eaten them, the 'natives' concluded that some sorcerer 'had summoned the crocodile, and had bidden it catch the two women and bring them to him'. Why assume sorcery? Because crocodiles never eat persons unless bidden to do so. The anklets were its reward (Jung 1970b, para. 106).

Jung calls this story 'a perfect example of that capricious way of explaining things which is characteristic of the "prelogical" state of mind' (Jung 1970b, para. 107). But it is not. For Lévy-Bruhl, 'prelogical' would mean the assumption of identity between the sorcerer, or witch, and the crocodile:

In districts where crocodiles are common... the witches are believed sometimes to turn into crocodiles, or to enter and actuate them, and so cause their victim's death by catching him.

(Mrs H. M. Bentley, quoted by Lévy-Bruhl 1923, p. 52)

For Lévy-Bruhl, magic is assumed to work because the witch *becomes* the crocodile. But as interpreted by Jung, magic means the sheer enlistment of the crocodile by the witch to kill the victim. The witch and the crocodile are

<sup>5</sup> On the shift in Lévy-Bruhl's emphasis, see O'Keefe 1982, pp. 86–88.

distinct.<sup>6</sup> For Lévy-Bruhl, magic is mystical because the magician and the agent are identical, and magic is prelogical because the two remain distinct. In Jung's rendition of the event, magic is neither mystical nor prelogical.

Jung's next example of 'primitive' thinking likewise turns out to come from Lévy-Bruhl (1923, pp. 49–50):

If three women go to the river to draw water, and a crocodile seizes the one in the middle and pulls her under, our view of things leads us to the verdict that it was pure chance that that particular woman was seized. . . . [P]rimitive man expects far more of an explanation. What we call pure chance is for him wilful intention. It was therefore the intention of the crocodile—as everyone could observe—to seize the middle one of the three women. If it had not had this intention, it would have taken one of the others. But why did the crocodile have this intention? Ordinarily these creatures do not eat human beings. . . . Considering their numbers, they kill astonishingly few people, and it is an unexpected and unnatural event when they devour a man. Such an event calls for an explanation. Of his own accord the crocodile would not take a human life. By whom, then, was he ordered to do so?

(Jung 1970b, paras. 115, 117)

Here Jung, like Lévy-Bruhl, deems 'primitive' the ascription of unfortunate events to malevolence rather than to chance, but for Lévy-Bruhl the malevolence again requires the magician becoming the crocodile, even while remaining a human being.

### Jung's psychologizing of 'primitive' thinking

Midway in 'Archaic man' Jung turns, without announcement, to the *psychology* of 'primitive' thinking. Where moderns have learned to differentiate what is inside from what is outside, at least about the physical world, 'primitive' peoples do not. They project themselves wholly onto the physical world, which is therefore the playing field of divine and semi-divine figures rather than the manifestation of impersonal laws of nature. As Jung puts it, 'For primitive man . . . the psychic and the objective coalesce in the external world'. What in fact is internal is projected outwardly and is therefore experienced as external: 'Primitive man is unpsychological. Psychic happenings take place outside him in an objective way' (Jung 1970b, para. 128)

The consequence of projection, notes Jung, is the identification of humans with everything else in the world:

A white man shoots a crocodile. At once a crowd of people come running from the nearest village and excitedly demand compensation. They explain that the crocodile was a certain old woman in their village who had died at the moment when the shot was fired. The crocodile was obviously her bush-soul.

(Jung 1970b, para. 129)

<sup>6</sup> Jung seems closer to the English anthropologist Evans-Pritchard (1937), for whom the atypicality of an unfortunate event spells magic without mystical identity.

Jung credits Lévy-Bruhl with ‘coin[ing] the expression *participation mystique* for these remarkable relationships’ (Jung 1970b, para. 130). While Jung regrets Lévy-Bruhl’s choice of the term ‘mystical’, he certainly accepts his characterization of the relationship between the crocodile and the woman, and he himself regularly uses the term *participation mystique*.<sup>7</sup> In Jung’s two prior examples the identity is between the magician and his agent (see Lévy-Bruhl 1923, p. 55). Now it is between the agent and its victim.

Jung then asserts that modern projection is the same as ‘primitive’ mystical participation: ‘We suppose that what is pleasing or desirable to us is the same to others, and that what seems bad to us must also seem bad to others’ (Jung 1970b, para. 130). But this modern version of identification is tame, for we are not here identifying *ourselves* with others, only our judgements with those of others. Better, then, is Jung’s equation of projection with *participation mystique*: ‘projection . . . is the same as *participation mystique*, which Lévy-Bruhl, to his great credit, emphasized as being an especially characteristic feature of primitive man’ (Jung 1970b, para. 131). We moderns ‘merely give it another name, and as a rule deny that we are guilty of it. Everything that is unconscious in ourselves we discover in our neighbour, and we treat him accordingly’ (Jung 1970b, para. 131). But by *participation mystique* Lévy-Bruhl means the ascription to others of what we *recognize*, not what we *deny*, in ourselves. He means the assumption of outright identity between us and others. And he means identity not merely between us and other human beings but even more between us and the rest of the world, and of the inanimate world as well as the animate one of the crocodile.<sup>8</sup> Above all, he means the sheer belief in *participation mystique* and not, as for Jung, the source of it. The source he would give is society, not the mind, and the means involved are for him acculturation, not projection.

Even in ‘Archaic man’ Jung takes any *modern* identification of a human being with a leopard to be merely metaphorical.<sup>9</sup> Jung cites the example of the identification of himself with a bear by the Pueblo Indians, whom he visited:

The Pueblo Indians declared in a matter-of-fact way that I belonged to the Bear Totem—in other words, that I was a bear—because I did not come down a ladder standing up like a man, but bunched up on all fours like a bear. If anyone in Europe said I had a bearish nature this would amount to the same thing, but with a rather different shade of meaning. . . . If we take our metaphors concretely we return to the ‘primitive’ point of view.

(Jung 1970b, para. 132)

<sup>7</sup> John Beebe has explained to me that Jung uses the term *participation mystique* to understand what today is called borderline personality.

<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere Jung himself notes this difference: ‘Among civilized peoples it [*participation mystique*] occurs between persons, seldom between a person and a thing’ (Jung 1971, para. 781).

<sup>9</sup> Ironically, this is the way that Evans-Pritchard, in criticism of Lévy-Bruhl, takes ‘primitive’ identification as well.

But even if Jung were to take the identification literally, it would still fall short of 'primitive' mentality for Lévy-Bruhl. For the Pueblos, according to Jung, are not calling him a bear yet still a human being. For Lévy-Bruhl, the witch is at once crocodile and still witch: 'between the wizard and the crocodile the relation is such that the wizard becomes the crocodile, without, however, actually being fused with him' (Lévy-Bruhl 1923, p. 55).

As mild as Jung's characterization of 'primitive' thinking is, he no less than Lévy-Bruhl is prepared to call it false. No more than Lévy-Bruhl is he a conceptual or perceptual relativist:

As we know, great minds have wrestled with the problem whether it is the glorious sun that illuminates the world, or the sunlike human eye. Archaic man believes it to be the sun, and civilized man believes it to be the eye . . . He [modern man] must de-psychize nature in order to dominate her; and in order to see his world objectively he must take back all his archaic projections.

(Jung 1970b, para. 135)

For both Lévy-Bruhl and Jung, 'primitives' and moderns do not merely think different things, as for Tylor and Frazer, but actually think differently. For Lévy-Bruhl, there is mystical thinking, which involves the ascription of mystical identity to the world, and scientific thinking, which sees the world as it is. For Jung, there is 'fantasy' thinking, which is like primary process thinking for Freud, and 'directed', or 'logical', thinking, which is like secondary process thinking for Freud. Where directed thinking is deliberate, organized, and purposeful, fantasy thinking is spontaneous, associative, and directionless:

What happens when we do not think directedly? Well, our thinking then lacks all leading ideas and the sense of direction emanating from them. We no longer compel our thoughts along a definite track, but let them float, sink or rise according to their specific gravity.

(Jung 1967, para. 18)

Fantasy thinking 'leads away from reality into fantasies of the past or future' (Jung 1967, para. 19). By contrast, directed thinking turns outward to the world. While Jung certainly does not, like Freud, maintain that fantasy thinking operates by the pleasure principle, he does, like Freud, maintain that directed thinking operates by the reality principle:

To that extent, directed or logical thinking is reality-thinking, a thinking that is adapted to reality, by means of which we imitate the successiveness of objectively real things, so that the images inside our mind follow one another in the same strictly causal sequence as the events taking place outside it. We also call this 'thinking with directed attention'.

(Jung 1967, para. 11)

For Jung, as for Freud, fantasy thinking is found most fully in dreams and myths. Jung even uses the phrase 'mythic thinking' interchangeably with fantasy thinking. Freud and Jung agree that myths go beyond dreams to project fantasy thinking onto the world. Myths transform the outer world into an extension of

the inner one. Mythic thinking is thus not merely a way of thinking but a way of thinking about the world—and in turn a way of experiencing the world:

We move in a world of fantasies which, untroubled by the outward course of things, well up from an inner source to produce an ever-changing succession of plastic or phantasmal forms. . . . Everything was conceived anthropomorphically or theriomorphically, in the likeness of man or beast. . . . Thus there arose a picture of the universe which was completely removed from reality, but which corresponded exactly to man's subjective fantasies.

(Jung 1967, para. 24)

For Jung, as for Lévy-Bruhl, 'primitive' peoples are ruled entirely by fantasy thinking. Although scarcely absent among moderns, fantasy thinking has been supplemented and considerably supplanted by directed thinking, which is to be found above all in science. Jung accepts the assumption of his day, summed up in Ernst Haeckel's Law of Recapitulation, that the biological development of the individual (ontogeny) duplicates that of the species (phylogeny): 'The supposition that there may also be in psychology a correspondence between ontogenesis and phylogenesis therefore seems justified. If this is so, it would mean that infantile thinking and dream-thinking are simply a recapitulation of earlier evolutionary stages' (Jung 1967, para. 26).<sup>10</sup> 'Primitives' are therefore the counterpart to children and moderns the counterpart to adults: 'These considerations tempt us to draw a parallel between the mythological thinking of ancient man and the similar thinking found in children, primitive peoples, and in dreams' (Jung 1967, para. 26). Just as the child is governed wholly by fantasy thinking and it is only the adult who is guided substantially by directed thinking, so the 'primitive' is governed completely by fantasy thinking and only the modern is guided significantly by directed thinking. Lévy-Bruhl, too, parallels 'primitive' thinking with that of children (see, for example, Lévy-Bruhl 1928, p. 16).

For Jung, myths serve primarily to open adults up to their unconscious, from which, in the course of growing up, they have ineluctably become severed. Myths 'compensate or correct, in a meaningful manner, the inevitable one-sidednesses and extravagances of the conscious mind' (Jung 1968b, para. 276). But for him it is only the ego consciousness of moderns that is sufficiently developed to be severed from the unconscious:

Since the differentiated consciousness of civilized man has been granted an effective instrument for the practical realization of its contents through the dynamics of his will, there is all the more danger, the more he trains his will, of his getting lost in one-sidedness and deviating further and further from the laws and roots of his being.

(Jung 1968b, para. 276)

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<sup>10</sup> On the rise and fall of Haeckel's Law, see Gould 1977, esp. pp. 1-9, 76-85, 167-206. On Jung's (as well as Freud's) acceptance of this principle, see Gould 1977, pp. 155-61 (on Freud) and 161-63 (on Jung).

By contrast, 'primitive' peoples hover so close to unconsciousness that their ego consciousness has barely begun to develop:

Primitive mentality differs from the civilized chiefly in that the conscious mind is far less developed in scope and intensity. Functions such as thinking, willing, etc. are not yet differentiated; they are pre-conscious, and in the case of thinking, for instance, this shows itself in the circumstances that the primitive does not think *consciously*, but that thoughts *appear*. . . . Moreover, he is incapable of any conscious effort of will . . . (Jung 1968b, para. 260)

'Primitive' myths are unrecognized projections onto the world. They are 'original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of physical processes' (Jung 1968b, para. 261):

All the mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective [i.e., external] occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection—that is, mirrored in the events of nature.

(Jung 1968a, para. 7)

Where moderns have withdrawn projections from the physical world and explain the world scientifically, 'primitives' experience the world as an extension of themselves.

In short, the 'primitive' mind is for Jung no less one-sided than the modern one. It is simply one-sidedly unconscious rather than, like the modern one, one-sidedly conscious. But then it, too, needs correction.

### Jung's valuing of 'primitive' thinking

Despite Jung's association of 'primitive' peoples with children, he is not denigrating 'primitives'. Nor is he denigrating their creation—myth. Indeed, he castigates Freudians for denigrating 'primitives' and myth by linking them to children:

The first attempts at myth-making can, of course, be observed in children, whose games of make-believe often contain historical echoes. But one must certainly put a large question-mark after the [Freudian] assertion that myths spring from the 'infantile' psychic life of the race. . . . [T]he myth-making and myth-inhabiting man was a grown reality and not a four-year-old child. Myth is certainly not an infantile phantasm, but one of the most important requisites of primitive life.

(Jung 1967, para. 29)<sup>11</sup>

Lévy-Bruhl no more than Jung means to be denigrating 'primitive' peoples by associating them with children.<sup>12</sup> The difference between Jung and Lévy-Bruhl

<sup>11</sup> On Freud's derogatory view of 'primitive' peoples, see Brinkman 2003.

<sup>12</sup> On Lévy-Bruhl's wariness of the parallel between 'primitive' peoples and children, see Jahoda 2000, pp. 220–21, 228–30.

is that for Jung moderns can learn from ‘primitives’ whereas for Lévy-Bruhl they cannot.

For both Jung and Lévy-Bruhl, moderns are modern to the extent that they have rejected ‘primitive’ thinking. But where Lévy-Bruhl uncompromisingly celebrates the liberation of moderns from ‘primitive’ thinking, Jung, while likewise celebrating that liberation, simultaneously laments the severance of moderns from their ‘primitive’ roots. For both Jung and Lévy-Bruhl, intellectual progress comes from exposing ‘primitive’ mischaracterizations of the external world. Progress comes from seeing the world as it is. The external world is really natural rather than supernatural, impersonal rather than personal. Science properly replaces myth and religion as the explanation of the world. There is no turning back.

For Lévy-Bruhl, the source of the mischaracterizations is false collective beliefs, which are simply to be discarded. For Jung, the source is the unconscious, which projects falsely onto the world but which itself is real and must be cultivated. The recognition of the source of the mischaracterizations helps redirect the focus away from the erroneous object—the external world—and onto the correct one—the unconscious.

For Jung, moderns are more advanced than ‘primitives’, but they have become modern only by disconnecting themselves from their ‘primitive’ roots—their unconscious. Modernity is better than primitivism, but it is not the ideal state. It is a stage along the way. Having disconnected themselves from their unconscious in order to develop their ego consciousness, moderns must now return to their unconscious and reconnect themselves to it. In this respect moderns have much to learn from ‘primitive’ peoples, though what they really have to learn is about themselves.<sup>13</sup> For Lévy-Bruhl, by contrast to Jung, modernity is the ideal state, and what remains to be done is only the further withdrawal of any lingering ‘primitive’ representations. Lévy-Bruhl acknowledges that the task will never be done, but he urges its continuation. For him, ‘primitive’ peoples are to be respected, even when compared with children, but moderns have nothing to learn from them.

### Criticisms of Lévy-Bruhl

From the publication of the first of his six books on, Lévy-Bruhl was attacked for his claim that a distinctively ‘primitive’ mentality exists. It was fieldworkers who, by dint of their firsthand knowledge of ‘primitive’ peoples, rebutted the portrayal of them by Lévy-Bruhl, who, to be sure, based his views on the firsthand accounts of other fieldworkers. The English anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who was in fact Lévy-Bruhl’s firmest defender, sums up the criticism this way:

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<sup>13</sup> On the trade-off for Jung between Europeans and Africans, see Adams 2004, ch. 7.

Most specialists who are also fieldworkers are agreed that primitive peoples are predominantly interested in practical economic pursuits; gardening, hunting, fishing, care of their cattle, and the manufacture of weapons, utensils, and ornaments, and in their social contacts; the life of household and family and kin, relations with friends and neighbours, with superiors and inferiors, dances and feasts, legal disputes, feuds and warfare. Behaviour of a mystical type in the main is restricted to certain situations in social life. Moreover, it is generally linked up with practical activities in such a way that to describe it by itself, as Lévy-Bruhl has done, deprives it of the meaning it derives from its social situation and its cultural accretions.

(Evans-Pritchard 1934, p. 11)<sup>14</sup>

The classic anthropological rebuttal to Lévy-Bruhl was American anthropologist Paul Radin's *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (1957), originally published in 1927 (see also Radin 1937, pp. 60–61, 269–74; 1953, pp. 49, 319). Like other anthropological critics, Radin denies that 'primitive' peoples miss the distinctions that Lévy-Bruhl declares them to be bereft of: cause and effect, subject and object, natural and supernatural, non-mystical and mystical, individual and group, and literal and symbolic. Yet Radin, unlike other anthropological critics, divides the members of any society, modern and primitive alike, into 'men of action', who may well fail to make some of Lévy-Bruhl's distinctions, and 'thinkers', who do not. By contrast, Lévy-Bruhl insists that the 'average man' as well as the 'cultured, scientific man' differs from 'primitive' man (see Lévy-Bruhl 1975, p. 49). Radin attacks not only Lévy-Bruhl himself but also those who accept his view—not least Jung (see Radin 1957, pp. 39, 63; 1933, pp. 15–16; 1937, p. 61; 1953, p. 306).

Against Lévy-Bruhl, the French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss similarly argues that 'primitive' peoples think no differently from moderns (see Lévi-Strauss 1966, especially ch. 1; 1969, pp. 1–32; 1978). They merely focus on the observable, qualitative aspects of phenomena rather than, like moderns, on the unobservable, quantitative ones. Colours and sounds, not mass and length, faze them. Far from pre-scientific, 'primitive' peoples attain a fully scientific knowledge of the world. Theirs is simply a 'science of the concrete' rather than of the abstract. Indeed, even if they do not, like moderns, separate abstractions from concrete cases, they do express abstractions through concrete cases.

Furthermore, their knowledge is basically taxonomic, so that 'primitive' peoples are quite capable of categorizing. In fact, their taxonomies take the form of oppositions, which, as the equivalent for Lévi-Strauss of contradictions, make 'primitive' peoples not only aware of contradictions but also intent on resolving them. Myths most of all evince the austere, rigorous, logic-chopping nature of 'primitive' thinking. Lévi-Strauss reads myths as the equivalent of mathematical puzzles (see Lévi-Strauss 1955).

<sup>14</sup> Evans-Pritchard also cites professional fieldworkers whose findings support Lévy-Bruhl's views: see Evans-Pritchard 1934, pp. 15–16; see also Evans-Pritchard 1981, p. 131.

Where Radin argues that most persons, modern and 'primitive' alike, are as indifferent to logic as Lévy-Bruhl claims that all 'primitive' peoples and only 'primitive' peoples are, Lévi-Strauss refuses to divide up human beings into types and instead asserts uncompromisingly that 'primitive' peoples collectively are as consummately logical as moderns collectively. Therefore the 'antinomy' claimed by Lévy-Bruhl between 'logical and prelogical mentality' is 'false'. 'The savage mind is logical in the same sense and the same fashion as ours ... [C]ontrary to Lévy-Bruhl's opinion, its thought proceeds through understanding, not affectivity, with the aid of distinctions and oppositions, not by confusion and participation' (Lévi-Strauss 1966, p. 268).<sup>15</sup>

The chief defender of Lévy-Bruhl against unfair charges was Evans-Pritchard. Yet even he faults Lévy-Bruhl for deeming 'primitive' thinking 'prelogical' (see Evans-Pritchard 1934; 1937; 1939; 1956, ch. 5; 1965, ch. 4; 1981, ch. 12). Where for Lévy-Bruhl 'primitive' magic takes the place of science, for Evans-Pritchard magic supplements proto-science: magic and proto-science coexist. To the Azande, the sheer physical features of a tree explain its ordinary, natural 'behaviour'. Witchcraft, Evans-Pritchard's most famous example of supernatural causality, explains only unfortunate events involving the tree: why one day it falls on one person or, to cite his most famous example, why a granary under which the Azande are sitting collapses when it does. For Lévy-Bruhl, by contrast, even events so regular and therefore so seemingly natural as birth, disease, and death get attributed to 'magic'—a term that he, unlike Evans-Pritchard and others, uses broadly to encompass all supernatural causes (see Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 293–98).<sup>16</sup>

Lévy-Bruhl grants that 'primitive' peoples must have practical, worldly skills to survive: "primitive" peoples who betray no apparent interest in the most obvious causal connections are quite able to utilize them to procure what is necessary to them, their food, for example, or some special tool' (Lévy-Bruhl 1923, p. 443). Similarly,

The Australian Aborigines, for instance, could never, with the few weapons and implements at their disposal, have developed their mastery over the animals which provide their diet—kangaroos, emus, possums, small marsupials, birds, fish—without becoming very minutely informed about their habitat, their pattern of behaviour, their seasonal migrations, and in general, everything about the way they live. Knowledge of these things may often be a matter of life or death.

(Lévy-Bruhl 1983, p. 66; see also Lévy-Bruhl 1923, p. 442; 1928, p. 19; 1952, p. 122)

Typically unfairly, Lévy-Bruhl is charged with overlooking this point—above all by the Polish-born anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1954, pp. 25ff.), but even by Evans-Pritchard (see, for example, Evans-Pritchard 1981,

<sup>15</sup> In defence of Lévy-Bruhl against Radin and Lévi-Strauss, see Pertier 1983, pp. 118, 121–23.

<sup>16</sup> Though Tylor scarcely generalizes from the example, he, too, cites 'primitive' peoples who attribute death to witchcraft exclusively: see Tylor 1958, I, p. 138.

pp. 127–28). In actuality, Lévy-Bruhl simply distinguishes the quasi-scientific techniques used by ‘primitives’ from any scientific explanation of those techniques given by ‘primitives’. ‘Primitive’ peoples *explain* the efficacy of their practices either mystically or not at all (see Lévy-Bruhl 1985, pp. 228–29; 1923, pp. 442–44; 1928, pp. 19–20; 1935, pp. 24, 92).

Shifting from the Azande to the Nuer, Evans-Pritchard contests Lévy-Bruhl’s most striking evidence of prelogical mentality: statements that, for example, a cucumber is an ox and that twins are birds (see Evans-Pritchard 1956, ch. 5). Lévy-Bruhl maintains that mystical representations override the senses, so that ‘primitive’ peoples somehow actually perceive, not just conceive, a cucumber as an ox. Evans-Pritchard denies that they do either. The Nuer, he asserts, are speaking only metaphorically. They are saying that a cucumber is sufficiently like an ox to serve as a substitute for it:

When a cucumber is used as a sacrificial victim Nuer speak of it as an ox. In doing so they are asserting something rather more than that it takes the place of an ox. They do not, of course, say that cucumbers are oxen, and in speaking of a particular cucumber as an ox in a sacrificial situation they are only indicating that it may be thought of as an ox in that particular situation; and they act accordingly by performing the sacrificial rites as closely as possible to what happens when the victim is an ox.

(Evans-Pritchard 1956, p. 128)

Likewise the Nuer are saying that a twin is like a bird in certain respects but not that twins are birds (see Evans-Pritchard 1956, pp. 131–32).

In his posthumously published *Notebooks* (1949 in French, 1975 in English) Lévy-Bruhl does not, as is conventionally assumed, abandon altogether his claim that ‘primitive’ peoples have a distinctive mentality (see, for example, Needham 1972, pp. 164–66). He does cede his characterization of ‘primitive’ peoples as prelogical, but he retains his characterization of them as mystical (see Lévy-Bruhl 1975, especially pp. 37–39, 47–50, 100–01, 126–27; see also Horton 1973, pp. 257–58; Lloyd 1990, pp. 1–2). The difference between ‘primitive’ peoples and moderns thus becomes one of the degree of mystical thinking in each:

Let us rectify what I believed correct in 1910 [the date of *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*]: there is not a primitive mentality distinguishable from the other by *two* characteristics which are peculiar to it (mystical and prelogical). There is a mystical mentality which is more marked and more easily observable among ‘primitive peoples’ than in our own societies, but it is present in every human mind.

(Lévy-Bruhl 1975, pp. 100–01)

True, it was the prelogical aspect of ‘primitive’ thinking that Lévy-Bruhl had considered the more important, but that aspect rests on the mystical character, on which he never yields.

Lévy-Bruhl does not, like Evans-Pritchard (1956, ch. 5), grant that the Bororo, in deeming Trumai tribesmen fish, are merely comparing the Trumai with fish. He does, however, grant that the Trumai are fish spiritually, not physically: their spiritual ‘fishness’ complements, not contradicts, their physical humanness (see

Lévy-Bruhl 1975, pp. 8–10, 136–38). ‘Primitive’ peoples thus recognize, not miss, at least the distinction between the non-physical and the physical (see Lévy-Bruhl 1975, pp. 5–12, 19–22, 40–42, 45–50, 125–29).

Where others criticize Lévy-Bruhl for making ‘primitive’ peoples prelogical or outright illogical, Jung would criticize him for making moderns logical. In his stress on the prelogical or illogical nature of moderns, Jung is really less close to Lévy-Bruhl than to the Italian social theorist Vilfredo Pareto, who deems most *modern* behaviour ‘non-logical’. Like other critics of Lévy-Bruhl, Jung would contend that Lévy-Bruhl goes too far—but in the depiction of moderns, not ‘primitives’.

Almost seven decades after his death, Lévy-Bruhl continues to be the subject of debate. He still attracts defenders and antagonists alike.<sup>17</sup> Fields such as child development, ethnoscience, and cognitive psychology have turned, or returned, to Lévy-Bruhl’s contrast of ‘primitive’ thinking to modern and also to his association of ‘primitive’ thinking with children’s thinking. Attempts have been made to defend Lévy-Bruhl by linking his views to those of, notably, Jean Piaget, who argues that the thinking of children is different from that of adults and who himself cites Lévy-Bruhl, although with qualification, for parallels between ‘primitive’ peoples and children (see Piaget 1971, pp. 197–98).<sup>18</sup> Lévy-Bruhl’s influence,<sup>19</sup> whether lauded or bemoaned, has spread beyond anthropology, psychology, and other social sciences to the humanities. To cite but one example, discussions of ‘mentalities’ hark back to Lévy-Bruhl.

Lévy-Bruhl does not need Jung. But Jung does need Lévy-Bruhl. Because Jung assumes that the development of the individual recapitulates that of the species, and because he depicts the individual as beginning in sheer unconscious and only gradually developing consciousness of the external world, he requires a depiction of our forebears as existing in a womb-like state, cut off from the outer world. Lévy-Bruhl supplies that depiction. Tylor and Frazer, who see our forebears as reacting to the same outer world as we do, do not. Whether Jung’s history of the psyche can survive the loss of Lévy-Bruhl is the fit subject of another article.

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TRANSLATIONS OF ABSTRACT

Dans son approche des peuples dits «primitifs», Jung s’appuya sur les travaux de Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), philosophe français qui, à mi-parcours dans sa carrière, devint anthropologue en chambre. Dès 1910, dans une série d’ouvrages, Lévy-Bruhl affirme que

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<sup>17</sup> In partial defence of Lévy-Bruhl against Evans-Pritchard, see Gellner 1970, pp. 34–39.

<sup>18</sup> On Lévy-Bruhl’s influence on Piaget, see Jahoda 2000.

<sup>19</sup> On Lévy-Bruhl’s continuing influence, or anticipation of subsequent views, see, pro and con, Lloyd 1966, pp. 3–6; Lloyd 1990, pp. 1–5, 116–19, 141–42, 144; Needham 1972, pp. 167–71; Horton 1973, pp. 272–73; Porter 1978; Gardner 1985, esp. pp. 223–27, 257–59; Littleton 1985, pp. xxi–xlv; Pertierra 1983, pp. 114–15; Price-Williams, 1999.

les peuples dits «primitifs» ont été mal compris par les occidentaux. Plutôt que de penser comme les modernes, bien que d'une façon moins rigoureuse, les primitifs possèdent une mentalité qui leur est propre. La pensée «primitive» est à la fois «mystique» et «prélogique». Par «mystique», Lévy-Bruhl entend que les peuples «primitifs» vivent une identité de l'homme et du monde. Leur rapport au monde et à leurs semblables relève de la *participation mystique*. Par «prélogique» Lévy-Bruhl entend que la pensée «primitive» est indifférente aux contradictions. Les peuples dits «primitifs» considèrent que toute chose est identique aux autres en même temps qu'elle en diffère d'une certaine manière. Un être humain est à la fois un arbre et un être humain.

Jung accepta sans la remettre en cause une telle description de la psyché «primitive», même si, à la différence de Lévy-Bruhl, il se rendit sur le terrain, à la rencontre des peuplades dites «primitives». Cependant, il modifia la conception de Lévy-Bruhl en trois points-clés. Premièrement il la psychologisa. En effet, si pour Lévy-Bruhl la pensée primitive se justifie du point de vue sociologique, Jung, lui, l'explique du point de vue psychologique: si les peuples «primitifs» pensent comme ils le font, c'est parce qu'ils vivent dans un état d'inconscience. Deuxièmement, Jung universalisa la mentalité dite «primitive». Pour Lévy-Bruhl, la pensée «primitive» est amenée à être progressivement remplacée par la pensée moderne alors que selon Jung, la pensée «primitive» constitue l'état psychologique initial de tout être humain. Troisièmement, Jung accordait de la valeur à la pensée dite «primitive». Lévy-Bruhl la tenait pour fautive alors que pour Jung, elle est véridique à condition d'être reconnue comme l'expression des modalités de fonctionnement de l'inconscient et non pas du monde. Quant à savoir si oui ou non Jung avait saisi toutes les implications de la description de Lévy-Bruhl de la pensée dite «primitive», je le pense, à l'égal de ses contemporains, philosophes et anthropologues, qui critiquèrent ses conceptions.

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Für seine Kenntnis der 'primitiven' Völker stützte sich C.G. Jung auf die Arbeit von Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), einem französischen Philosophen, der sich mitten in seiner Karriere der Anthropologie zuwandte. Lévy-Bruhl behauptete in einer Reihe von Büchern ab 1910, dass 'primitive' Völker von zeitgenössischen Abendländern missverstanden worden seien. Statt wie 'moderne Menschen' zu denken, nur nicht so genau, besäßen 'Primitive' eine ganz eigene Mentalität. 'Primitives' Denken ist sowohl 'mystisch' als auch 'prälogisch'. Mit 'mystisch' meinte Lévy-Bruhl, dass sich 'primitive' Völker als mit der Welt identisch erleben. Ihre Beziehung zur Welt, einschließlich der zu ihren Mitmenschen, ist die einer *participation mystique*. Mit 'prälogisch' meinte Lévy-Bruhl, dass primitives Denken sich Widersprüchen und Gegensätzen gegenüber indifferent verhält. 'Primitive' Völker halten alle Dinge für identisch mit einander aber dennoch irgendwie verschieden. Ein Mensch ist gleichzeitig ein Baum und immer noch ein Mensch. Jung akzeptierte Lévy-Bruhls Bezeichnung des 'primitiven' Geistes fraglos, auch wenn er, im Gegensatz zu Lévy-Bruhl, auf seinen Reisen Feldforschung betrieb, um 'primitive' Völker mit eigenen Augen zu sehen. Aber er veränderte Lévy-Bruhls Konzeption der 'primitiven' Mentalität in drei entscheidenden Bereichen. Erstens psychologisierte er sie. Während für Lévy-Bruhl 'primitives' Denken soziologisch erklärt werden müsse, sollte es für Jung psychologisch erklärt werden: 'primitive' Völker denken in ihrer Weise, weil sie in einem Zustand der Unbewusstheit leben. Zweitens universalisierte Jung die primitive Mentalität. Während für Lévy-Bruhl 'primitives' Denken immer

mehr durch modernes Denken ersetzt werde, bedeutet für Jung 'primitives' Denken das psychologische Anfangsstadium aller menschlicher Wesen. Drittens schätzte Jung 'primitives' Denken. Während für Lévy-Bruhl 'primitives' Denken falsch ist, ist es für Jung wahr—wenn es nicht als ein Ausdruck über den Zustand der Welt verstanden wird, sondern darüber, wie das Unbewusste arbeitet. Ich untersuche, ob Jung tatsächlich alles erfasst hat, was Lévy-Bruhl mit 'primitivem' Denken beschrieb, zusammen mit der Kritik an Lévy-Bruhls Konzeption des 'primitiven' Denkens durch andere Anthropologen und Philosophen seiner Zeit.

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Per la sua conoscenza dei popoli 'primitivi', Jung si basò sul lavoro di Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), un filosofo francese che a metà della sua carriera divenne un teorico di antropologia. In una serie di testi che vanno dal 1910 in poi, Lévy-Bruhl sostenne che i popoli 'primitivi' sono stati fraintesi dai moderni occidentali. Piuttosto che pensare come dei moderni, solo meno rigorosi, i 'primitivi' hanno una mentalità tutta loro. Il pensiero 'primitivo' è contemporaneamente 'mistico' e 'prelogico'. Per 'mistico', Lévy-Bruhl intende che i popoli 'primitivi' fanno esperienza del mondo come identico a loro stessi. La loro relazione con il mondo, inclusi i propri simili umani, è quella di una *participation mystique*. Per 'prelogico' Lévy Bruhl intende che il pensiero 'primitivo' è indifferente alle contraddizioni. I popoli 'primitivi' considerano le cose tutte identiche le une alle altre eppure ancora in qualche modo distinte. Un essere umano è nello stesso tempo un albero eppure ancora un essere umano. Jung accettò senza riserve la descrizione che Lévy-Bruhl fece della mente 'primitiva', anche quando, a differenza di Lévy-Bruhl, egli andò sul campo a vedere di persona i popoli 'primitivi'. Ma egli modificò il concetto di Lévy-Bruhl della mentalità primitiva in tre punti fondamentali. Primo, la psicologizzò. Laddove per Lévy-Bruhl la mentalità 'primitiva' deve essere spiegata da un punto di vista sociologico, per Jung deve essere spiegata da un punto di vista psicologico: i popoli 'primitivi' pensano come fanno perché vivono in uno stato di inconsapevolezza. Secondo, Jung universalizzò la mentalità 'primitiva'. Laddove per Lévy-Bruhl il pensiero 'primitivo' viene sempre più rimpiazzato dal pensiero moderno, per Jung il pensiero 'primitivo' rappresenta lo stato psicologico iniziale di tutti gli esseri umani. Terzo, Jung apprezzò il pensiero 'primitivo'. Laddove per Lévy-Bruhl il pensiero primitivo è falso, per Jung è vero —una volta che lo si riconosca come una espressione non di come il mondo, ma di come l'inconscio lavora. Sebbene Jung si attaccò a tutto ciò che Lévy-Bruhl intendeva per pensiero primitivo, lo considero tra le critiche che i colleghi antropologi e filosofi fecero della concezione di Lévy-Bruhl del pensiero 'primitivo'.

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Por su conocimiento de los pueblos 'primitivos' Jung se basó en los estudios de Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), un filósofo Francés que a la mitad de su carrera se transformó en un importante antropólogo. En una serie de libros de 1910 en adelante, Lévy-Bruhl aseguraba que los pueblos 'primitivos' habían sido mal interpretados por los occidentales modernos. En lugar de pensar cómo los modernos, menos rigurosamente, los 'primitivos' tenían una mentalidad propia. El pensamiento 'primitivo' es al mismo tiempo 'místico' y 'prelógico'. Por 'místico', Lévy-Bruhl quiso decir que los pueblos 'primitivos' experimentaban al mundo como idéntico a ellos mismos. la relación con el mundo, incluyendo sus congéneres humanos, es aquella de la '*Participation Mystique*'. Por

prelógico quiso decir que el pensamiento ‘primitivo’ es indiferente a las contradicciones. Los pueblos ‘primitivos’ conciben todas las cosas como idénticas unas con otras y sin embargo diferentes. Un ser humano es un árbol y continua siendo un ser humano. Jung aceptó sin dudarle la opinión de Lévy-Bruhl sobre la mente ‘primitiva’, aún cuando, diferente a Lévy-Bruhl, él se trasladó al campo para observar directamente a pueblos ‘primitivos’. Sin embargo modificó el concepto de Lévy-Bruhl de tres maneras significativas. Primero, la psicologizó. Si para Lévy-Bruhl el pensamiento ‘primitivo’ era explicado sociológicamente, para Jung debía ser entendido psicológicamente: los pueblos ‘primitivos’ piensan como tales debido a que viven en estado de inconsciencia. Segundo, Jung universalizó la mentalidad ‘primitiva’. Mientras para Lévy-Bruhl el pensamiento ‘primitivo’ está siendo remplazado por el pensamiento moderno, para Jung el pensamiento ‘primitivo’ es el estado psíquico inicial de todo ser humano. Tercero, Jung valoraba al pensamiento ‘primitivo’. Mientras Lévy-Bruhl consideraba al pensamiento ‘primitivo’ como falso, para Jung es verdadero una vez que es reconocido no como la forma de ser del mundo sino como la forma de funcionamiento del inconsciente. Si bien de hecho Jung tomó todo lo que Lévy-Bruhl quiso decir por pensamiento ‘primitivo’, apreció las críticas realizadas a las concepciones del pensamiento ‘primitivo’ de Lévy-Bruhl por sus colegas filósofos y antropólogos.

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