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The Position of Myth in Frazer's Anthropological Theory

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Abstract

George James Frazer (1854-1941), the spiritual father of myth-ritual school, was bred up in the British tradition of empiricism. Believing in the evolutionary process of culture, Frazer mainly focused his attention on explaining such epistemic forms of thought as magic, religion and science. Accordingly, while interpreting the processes through which magic leads to religion and finally evolves into science, Frazer noticed the importance of myth and ritual and their position in this process. However, most researchers regard his reasoning in this regard as incoherent and variable. Thus, in this article, the author tries to reconsider the methodology and axioms on which Frazer relies as well as to make clear the position of myth in his anthropological system. The author believes that Frazer's dual viewpoint about myth's position results in no way from the attributed incoherency of his thoughts, but in fact his contemplations on intermediate levels, which make possible going from one stage to the other, provides him with an adequate explanation of the position of myth and its relation to ritual. In the end, it is revealed that Frazer thinks of myth as posterior to ritual in the first intermediate level, while prior to ritual in the second intermediate level. Accordingly, analyzing the validity of Frazer's reasoning as well as his methodological and epistemic viewpoints, the author has put forth a couple of critical suggestion.

Keywords: Frazer, myth, ritual, the rules of association, intermediate level.

1. Introduction

James George Frazer (1854-1941), who was affected by the teachings of August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Robertson Smith, and Edward B. Taylor, eventually employed comparative methodology to study cultural phenomena, including magic, religion, myth, taboo and totem. In addition to applying the comparative method, Frazer organized his research in an inductive manner and sought to explain the evolutionary stages of human thought. Of course, his early engagement was limited to classical works¹, but his acquaintance with Smith, who at that time was editing the British Encyclopedia Britannica, made him interested in research in the field of anthropology². Thus, Frazer, when working on Golden Bough, was thinking of a comparative study of magic and religion, and, therefore, during this work, claimed that the residues of the magic era could be discovered in religion.

Obviously, his iconoclastic ideas could have given rise to controversy in Victorian times though he had never directly criticized Christianity. Nonetheless, it is clear that Frazer actually employed "the objective scientific comparative method as a weapon to finally dispatch Christianity as an outworn relic of misunderstanding, credulity and superstition" (Ackerman, 2005: 3192). In this way, Frazer, by relying on a

comparative study, attempted to reveal the linear course of the evolution of human thought and its epistemic mechanism. That's why Frazer believing in the gradual evolution of cultural forms, claimed that the human thought firstly caused the formation of the primitive stage of magic, and then, at the same time as the evolution of human thought, magic was also advanced to religion, and ultimately to a more evolutionary point by the name of science.

Of course, this idea is by no means an indication of Frazer's own innovation, since the origin of such a view can be traced back to the time of Voltaire and his Italian counterpart, Giambattista Vico. Vico, the father of history and sociology of culture, as well as the founder of the periodical theory of history asserted that "true understanding is always genetic and in the case of men and their works always historical, not timeless, and not analytic" (Berlin, 2000: 66). For this reason, in considering the historical course of the development of human culture, there were three periods of the gods-heroes-people, each period had certain characteristics. In Vico's opinion, there is a kind of determinism imposed upon the course of history according to which "all nations are destined to pass through the same cycles of culture" (Berlin, 2000: 74).

It is the same idea that enters the French world in the coming centuries and, after merging with the idealistic French perspective, develops a progressive line, which, unlike Vico's theory, does not necessarily require the element of return³. Of course, there is no such progress in all aspects of the French tradition. For example, despite the fact that August Comte's scheme is based on the flow of rational progress in three different stages of theology, metaphysics, and the science⁴, the evolutionary development proposed by Frazer is not necessarily a progressive process and "the slow and toilsome ascent from savagery toward civilization assumes a cyclical pattern" (Wheeler-Barclay, 2010: 199).

In the same vein, Wilhelm Schmidt not only does not necessarily consider the flow of thought to progress and perfection, but rather as the history of the destruction of the power of the intuitive perception prevalent among the primitives (See Thrower, 1999: 106). However, as James Ward talked him into reading Tylor's primitive cultures, Frazer got familiar with an anthropological tradition which ultimately went through Tylor to the views of August Comte and thence to Charles de Brosses (Evans-Pritchard 1965: 20), a tradition that analyzes the laws of human mental development based on the theory of historical evolution of culture, and that is why Frazer's critics question the validity of his ideas and look down upon him for his employing psychological approach to the analysis of primitive mind.

In any case, at the magic stage, the primitive⁵ mind, or in Frazer's own words, the savage mind, is basically "unable to distinguish between the natural and the supernatural" (de Vert, 2006: 100), and therefore in dealing with his world, the primitive man employs all its efforts to force nature to do what it needs. Thus, the stimulation of nature and the reception of a desirable response in the absence of a divine will or a superior preemption require a special mechanism that Frazer takes into consideration while talking about magic. The principles underlying the primitive's arguments at this stage, are, in Frazer's opinion, entirely scientific and rational, but the incorrect application of these principles leads to the primitive being involved with the magical understanding.

Evidently, in the course of the evolution of culture, the primitive mind dismisses this conception and, by going to the realm of science, systematically employs the principles of understanding and changing the world. However, Frazer never denies "the permanent existence of a solid layer of savagery beneath the surface of society" (Wheeler-Barclay, 2010: 194), and regards it a "permanent threat to civilization" (Frazer, 2011: 138). In any case, the evolutionary process of culture in Frazer's view rests on Spenser's proposed principle, according to which "in the evolution of thought, as the evolution of matter, the simplest thought is the oldest one" (Levy-Bruhl, 2010: 74). For this

reason, Frazer, following Spencer, states that human race evolves physically and mentally in a similar way; therefore, if it is possible to talk of a stone age⁶ in the realm of man's civilization, it is certain that there is also a magic age in man's cultural progress.

In other words, Frazer is influenced by a kind of "social Darwinism" (Bowie 2012: 209) which holds that human thought has its particular epistemic characteristics at different stages, although it is always possible to preserve or retain the remnants of these previous forms at later stages. For example, in dreams, poetry, myth, and rituals one could always retrieve parts of the fundamental aspects of human mind. Nonetheless, despite the fact that Frazer is the father of myth-ritualism school, it seems that in explaining the transition from magic to religion, and then to science, he does not address the subject of myth as it deserves. That's why most scholars regard his views on myth to be fluid and assert "on no matter did he change his mind more often than on the nature and origin of myth and its relation to ritual" (Ackerman, 2002: 53). In fact, they consider his opinions about the myth/ritual and the way they function to be of high value, but still in need of reconsideration and re-estimation.

For this reason, the present study, while reviewing Frazer's views on how human thought functions in the course of cultural evolution, yields the fundamental epistemic principles upon which Frazer's arguments are based, and analyzes the position of myth in his anthropological theory, since it seems that the position of myth and its mechanism according to his analysis have not yet been accurately explained. It is supposed that Frazer has put forth some vivid points about how myth emerges in an intermediate stage, which is of high importance particularly in the genealogical reading of myths. In what follows, we examine the features of intermediate stages, the causes and the origins of the emergence of myth in terms of Frazer.

2. Review of literature

Contemplating upon Frazer's ideas reveals that despite the fact that in the tripartite model proposed by Frazer, namely, magic-religion-science, there seems to be no room for myth, two distinct aspects of myth could be found in his view. Each of these aspects has its own epistemic structure and emerges at a certain point in the evolution of human culture. Of course, among the scholars surveyed in my review Robert Segal (2004: 64-70), with a certain theoretical accuracy, notices the difference between these two kinds of myths briefly rather than fully analyzes it, but Segal's investigation mostly focuses on the relationship between the kinds of rituals and their correspondent myths. Accordingly, Segal distinguishes vegetal myths, which include descriptions of death and resurrection, from monarchic myths that include sacrificial rituals. Thus, in what follows, we will continue to explore the dual aspects of myth and their respective position in the intermediate stages. Examining the internal structure of each of these forms, it's to be studied in detail the practical considerations of Frazer's views in this regard.

3. The Position of Myth in Frazer's Anthropological Theory

3-1. Myth as a theoretical explanation of the religion

We saw that Frazer, examining the evolution of human culture, calls the first stage magic⁷. In fact, he tries to identify and exploit the principles of primitive mind in the context of the cultural life of the so-called "contemporary primitives" (Ackerman, 2002: 48), with a focus on the life of the Arians who, regardless of the cultural and civilian influences of modern Europe, survive with their primitive ways of life⁸. Because, according to Frazer, "the primitive features found in an advanced society are fossilized memories of a former period of evolution and also a proof of social evolution" (Bowie, 2012: 210-211). In this regard, Frazer looking upon the primitive man's confrontation with

the world around him concludes that primitive life at the magic stage "is focused on the struggle for survival" (Pulse, 2010: 60). Therefore, the primitive handles whatever it takes to change the conditions if its initial needs are not met. Consequently, the primitive's reactions to nature are such that "his most basic efforts take on a form of magic" (Ibid.). Because primitives act in a way to control or change nature on the basis of particular epistemic mechanism prevalent during the magic stage.

But the question here is on the basis of what kind of understanding of the world primitives, or in other words, based on which particular epistemic mechanism, primitives at this stage try to change their own world in order to achieve the desired goals. In other words, primitives at this stage employ what kind of mechanisms to theoretically interpret the world in the first place? And secondly, what kind of actions do primitives actually employ to achieve their desired result? In response to the first question, Frazer examines the epistemic aspects of the primitive mind under the term magic, while the answer to the second question clarifies the causes of the emergence of the ritual. The separation of magic from ritual in the first stage is important because one describes the primitive's cognitive framework and the employment of the principles of the association by the primitive mind and the other describes the practical side of the primitive actions.

Accordingly, the use of the term magic for this stage and its separation from ritual is not merely a terminological observation, but implies that Frazer identifies this stage as a formidable formulation that organizes social relations, primitive values and behaviors. Of course, the primitive does not consciously realize the fundamental structures behind his perception of the world, and in fact his cognitive mechanism unconsciously organizes the world and shapes his perception. So, it is time to get right into it and clarify on what principles are based the main formulation of the stage called magic.

3-1-1. Epistemic Formation of the Magic Stage

Frazer, with clear lines, distinguishes the magic stage with its lack of belief in the supernatural affair from the religion stage. In the magic stage, compromise with the world does not take place through a resort to divinity, but through the imitation of natural phenomena so as to bring the world to act out what the primitive does. In other words, the primitive reconstructs or just imitates natural phenomena in pursuit of his desirable purpose; in fact, he implicitly believes that the representation or imitation of nature will ultimately lead nature to extend its sympathy towards mankind. For this reason, Frazer calls this form of magic a sympathetic or imitative magic.

The imitation of the world is theoretically based on those relations that result from the association of meanings. Of course, the association of meanings is based on the tripartite principles of similarity, contiguity⁹ and causality, but Frazer considers the principle of causation to be specific to the science stage¹⁰. It is worth noting that the other two principles themselves have cognitive validity, but when the primitive uses these principles to understand and change the world, magic is born as the "bastard sisters of science" (Frazer 2010: 124). For example, according to the principle of similarity, the simultaneous association of an identical phenomenon strengthens this non-scientific notion in the primitive mind that each phenomenon could be one and the same as its identical phenomenon.

Therefore, in the magic stage the sign is semantically motivated by virtue of the type of the effect that it is expected to yield (Nöth, 1990: 189). This is because the arbitrary nature of the sign is not known to the primitive, so that the primitive thinks of the word and its object as qualitatively the same things, and he even believes that overwhelming an object could be affected by the domination over its name. In the same vein, since the association of a phenomenon might incite or instill the presence of something in one's mind which once has been in contact with it, the primitive mind, in the same way, tends to feel that there is an unbreakable relationship between the two

imaginings which it thinks them indispensable. By virtue of the first principle, "the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it" (Frazer, 2009: 36). Perhaps the most common application of the principle of similarity is the effort that many people used in different ages to wound or destroy the enemy, and this was done by wounding and destroying his image, with the notion that "just as the image suffers, so does the man, and that when it perishes he must die" (Ibid. 40). For example, as Frazer cites in his voluminous work *The North American Indians*, we are told, believe that by drawing the figure of a person in sand, ashes, or clay, or by considering any object as his body, and then pricking it with a sharp stick or doing it any other injury, they inflict a corresponding injury on the person represented (Ibid.).

But by virtue of the second principle, "whatever one does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact" (Ibid. 36). The most common example of the contiguity magic comes from the impression that the individual and a part of his body or his limbs are considered to be the same. Thus, according to this principle "whoever gets possession of human hair or nails may work his will, at any distance, upon the person from whom they were cut" (Ibid. 96). For example,

One of the New Hebrides, people bury or throw into the sea the leavings of their food, lest these should fall into the hands of the disease-makers. For if a disease-maker finds the remnants of a meal, say the skin of a banana, he picks it up and burns it slowly in the fire. As it burns, the person who ate the banana falls ill and sends to the disease-maker, offering him presents if he will stop burning the banana skin (Ibid. 479).

3-1-2. The absence of subjectivity in the magic stage

From these arguments, it follows that sympathy between man and his world, in the absence of any supreme divinity, is in such a way that any interaction with the world on the basis of similarity and contiguity seems to lead to the desirable outcome. Frazer does not determine how this blind, unwilling will that is ascertained in the absence of subjectivity identifies the alleged similarity. Apparently, at the level of theoretical reasoning, it would seem that the discovery of the similarity between two phenomena requires the presence of a subject that recognizes the similarity, since similarity in itself does not exist in the outside world and in fact it is essentially a relationship found between phenomena. Thus, the discovery of such a relationship requires the presence of a conscious subject.

Obviously, due to the lack of consciousness in nature, Frazer's reasoning is not justified, since mere interaction between the primitive and nature through the implementation of the ritual does not make clear how nature sympathizes with the primitive in the total absence of a superior being. However, it is enough to accept that the system of the world for primitives is interpreted in such a way that even in the absence of the will of a supreme being, it is possible to simply imitate the nature and facilitate the occurrence of a desired purpose. Of course, Frazer states that "critical minds" (Pulse, 2010: 62) in the later periods, find that their argument is useless due to lack of practical results and begin to search for more practical ways.

3-1-3. Positive and Negative magic

Frazer examines rituals based on the principles of similarity and contiguity under the positive aspect in case they require ceremonial actions to arrive at a satisfactory result, but a large part of the primitive's social and intellectual life is affected by a set of prohibitions which prevent him from doing whatever he wishes to. In fact, his social stability depends on avoiding such prohibitions. Such issues, which are discussed as taboos, function on the basis of a similar mechanism to the ritual, and their theoretical explanation is possible from this perspective. In fact, "the whole doctrine

of taboo would seem to be only a special application of sympathetic magic, with its two great laws of similarity and contact” (Frazer, 2009: 55). For example, when Malagasy soldier avoids eating kidney, he implicitly acknowledges the effect of the principle of similarity, because “in the Malagasy language, the word for kidney is the same as that for ‘shot’; so shot he would certainly be if he ate a kidney (Ibid. 61).

Similarly, in the New Guinea, they care hard to eliminate the rest of their food, “lest these should be found by their enemies and used by them for the injury or destruction of the eaters” (Ibid. 480). This form of the primitive’s avoidance of abandoning the remaining food could only be interpreted if the magic of contiguity is implicitly acknowledged by the primitive. Based on these arguments, Frazer sees taboo as the result of the employment of the principle of similarity or contiguity.

Therefore, primitive’s adherence is justified by negative commands based on the laws of association. This aspect can be examined under the title of negative magic which holds that “orders of negation be observed in the form of acts rather than commandments” (Mehregan, 2006: 50). Now is the time to see how myth appears in an intermediate stage while we move on from magic to religion. In fact, Frazer has two different views in explaining the emergence of myth, which at first glance might seem to be due to the lack of coherence in his theory, but we will continue to see that Frazer justifies the position of myth in a way that myth emerges in two different stages: an early and a late intermediate stage, with completely different functions.

3-1-4. The emergence of myth in the first intermediate stage

The first intermediate stage is situated between magic and religion. At this stage, “myth and ritual are most prominent” (Nicholls, 2015: 60). Of course, although at this level, the presence of ritual is definite, but “myth is not necessarily observed” (Segal, 1997: 4), and its presence can only be justified in case it has an explanatory function. The function of myth, therefore, is to explain the rituals that have become widespread in the magic stage, so just as Smith considers religion to precede the emergence of myth, so too Frazer thinks of myth as antecedent to rituals, and argues that “ritual is the emotional or practical dimension of myth while myth functions as the explanatory dimension of ritual” (See Wallace, 1993: 810).

Obviously, the empiricist nature of Frazer's view requires the employment of this argument, since the primitive is replete with emotional dimension and thus able to discover relationships on the level of material and tangible things even before it has the power of abstract reasoning, concrete thinking at this level acts through the perception of the material components and the discovery of their inner relations; therefore, if the magic stage involves the application of the principles of association, ritual requires the practical implementation of these principles; that is, primitive at the magic stage implicitly believes in a set of rules that are only reflected through the practical aspect of the ritual. Thus, if ritual is regarded as the result of the material and operational incarnation of primitive’s implicit thoughts, myth is, on the other hand, the theoretical abstraction of the acts that are present in the ritual.

Accordingly, myth involves the realization of the principles that the primitive implies only implicitly in the previous stage. That is why, unlike Tylor who considers myth as the primitive’s power for theoretical explanation of the world, and henceforth as a primitive philosophy, Frazer states that myth is not to explain the world, but is an attempt “to secure a bountiful harvest” (Nicholls, 2015: 61). And since such an abundance is dependent upon nature’s sympathy and assistance, myth is ultimately the same as the theoretical aspect of the ritual, which uses the principles of the association to persuade nature’s empathy so as to meet the needs of mankind. Henceforth, myth is to yield a theoretical explanation of the rituals that were implicitly flowing in primitive’s cultural life.

Accordingly, myth for Frazer is more like applied science than scientific theory" (Ibid.), because it could hardly be acceptable to believe that there are purely theoretical arguments in the primitive thought, since primitives are more dependent on practical rituals than supposed to possess the capacity of abstract thought, and therefore, ritual can be considered as a prelude to myth and "the written form of the ritual" (Meletinsky, 1998: 37), which requires the stipulation of the rules laid down in the ritual. A look at the rituals of vegetation and myths derived from them, in addition to revealing the explanatory work of myth at the intermediate level, indicates that at this stage myths are related to rituals that do not imply a supernatural being. These rituals act independently from myth following them, and are therefore more ancient than the second-order myth discussed below.

3-1-5. The emergence of myth in the second intermediate

We have seen that myth appears on the first intermediate level, that is, in between the passage of magic to religion, and therefore is an antecedent phenomenon to the concrete form of the ritual. In fact, as asserted by the proponents of the Cambridge School "myth becomes etiological when the original emotions giving rise to ritual lose their immediacy and recognizability" (Wallace, 1993: 810). But Frazer also thinks of another form of myth that appears in between the religion and science stage, and is therefore antecedent to an abstract form like religion. The fundamental difference between these two forms of myth arises from the nature of religious belief according to which any apparent change of the world depends on the will of a supernatural being; whereas in the magic stage, primitives by virtue of the sympathetic magic resort to nature to bring out the favorable change. Therefore, "believing in the existence of a supernatural power focuses primitive thought on the basis of the principle of reconciliation" (Frazer, 2013: 118-119).

Under the principle of reconciliation, the primitive tries to draw the attention of divine will to him and makes the desired change to happen through compromise with divinity. Obviously, at this level, the rituals designed for this purpose are primarily influenced by the theoretical justifications of the myths that have already been established before them, and secondly, they do not necessarily adhere to the principles of similarity and contiguity. Based on these assumptions, it can be said that in the second stage, the affiliation of myth to the ritual is ruled out and myth can continue its life as a self-fulfilling phenomenon of cultural life. Thus, while at the first level, myth has merely an explanatory function, theoretically justifying the legitimacy of the ritual, at the second level, myth has a religious function, that is, "it is religion which provides myth" (Segal, 1997: 4) and accordingly, myth is raised in the absence of ritual as an "autonomous phenomenon" (Meletinsky, 1998: 39).

Perhaps it is asked what the characteristics of this intermediate level are, in which the possibility of the uprising of myth is raised. In answering this question, we must remember that in Frazer's opinion though magic is not systematic, it is a rational effort to control and change the world, and therefore it can be regarded as a kind of primitive science. Frazer is right in the wake of this argument that magic and science are placed in a single category, because "magic implies an essential and irrevocable sequence of cause and effect, independent of personal will and thus directly leads the way to science" (Frazer, 1392/2013: 132).

This theory illustrates the fact that magic provides the necessary context for objective encounters with the world, although it is incapable of understanding how to control it. This means that, at the magic stage, the world is not divided into ideal and real levels; therefore, magic at the same level as the pure facts, by employing the principles of association, tries to shape reality as it wishes. It is natural that at this stage there is no force beyond the world to which the primitive could resort. Accordingly, the form of the rituals is merely aimed at representing or imitating the realities that the primitive wishes it to occur. So in the magic stage, due to the primitive's particular perception of the mechanism of the world, the emergence of rituals is

unavoidable, but when the man has passed the stage of the ritual, it is in some way equipped with abstraction whose lack in the magic stage is conspicuous.

In the religion stage, any change in the universe is due to the exercise of the will of a superior deity that is different from the man in terms of type and degree. That's why the wrath and grace of this abstract-being guarantee man's suffering and gratification. That is why the objective reality is regarded as a superficial and false one which is basically under the influence of the supreme powers. At this stage, turning to the divine will and trying to reconcile with him lies at the height of human efforts. Thus, amidst the transition from religion to science, it is possible to face myth as another intermediate stage, a kind of myth that has a fundamental difference with the first-order myths.

In fact, myth in here is not limited to the theoretical explanation of rituals, unlike the first-order one which has an explanatory function. In fact, myth at this level acknowledges the existence of supernatural power and consequently is an outcome of religion in its general sense. Thus, rituals act as an operational approach that brings the theoretical justifications of the myth into action and gives it a material embodiment so as to reach an agreement with the Supreme Being. Thus, contrary to Smith's view, myth does not come from within the religion, but occurs at the same time and even before it; that is, the existence of a myth is possible even without a ritual preceding it, but a ritual without myth is not possible; more precisely, at the magic stage, the ritual is present even in the absence of myth, but in this level myth is preceded by a ritual (See Segal, 1997: 4). Examining sacrifice rituals indicates that myth at this stage functions as a prelude to the emergence of rituals appropriate to it, and it is not necessarily based on the principles of association.

4. Discussion

There are several general flows in the golden bough all Frazer's thoughts are considered to be minor branches of which; consequently, each criticism that is directed toward these major issues might include smaller branches, as well. For this reason, the critiques posed in this section are generally aimed at the principles and methodology of Frazer in the golden bough. In order to expedite the discussion, the followings are discussed separately:

A) Frazer in the golden bough meets the principle of similarity from two completely different points of view. In fact, this principle is raised on both methodological and epistemic levels. Henceforth, when we speak of the principle of similarity at the methodological level, it is a rule that leads the researcher to generalizations by emphasizing analogy and by discovering similarities in the cultural phenomena. In this respect, Frazer follows Wilhelm Mandhardt's method for analyzing myths. Frazer accomplishes this by reducing diffused, diverse, and seemingly scattered forms into general or universal structures. For this reason, Frazer's attention to the surficial similarities of mythology is methodologically bound to the framework of comparative research.

Of course, accepting that the similarities in cultural phenomena necessarily come from a single fundamental structure is not so consistent with reality, since at least transformational generative grammar has taught us that, fundamental structures by virtue of transformations create phenomena that are of the least resemblance in terms of structure. On the other hand, similar forms have not always been extracted from a single fundamental structure in all cases. However, when we speak of the principle of similarity at the epistemic level, we mean one of the general principles of association first proposed systematically in Hume's treatise concerning human understanding. Frazer uses this principle in explaining the magic function, which is based on the incorrect application of the principles of association, and emphasizes that the cognitive

structure of the primitive's mind is such that the probability of such falsification always remains with him.

However, it seems that Frazer, who from among the principles of association puts the principles of causality away and dedicates it to science, does not seem to justify it as it must be. In my opinion, primitives at least for two reasons is not indifferent to the principle of causality. The first reason which we owe to Cassirer (1999: 67), makes it clear that the basis of the difference between the world of science and myth is not related to the lack or presence of the concept of causation, but actually to the specific form of causal explanation in each.

The second reason that Frazer himself also acknowledged though did not follow its theoretical outcomes is based on the fact that when the primitive behaves in a certain way, it does not mean that he knows not the principle of causation, it is just because of "the false impression of cause and effect upon him" (Frazer, 2013: 96). To clarify, we recall that what Frazer introduces as contiguity principle has two different levels: the contiguity of phenomena in the axis of time and the contiguity of phenomena in the axis of space. In my opinion, in primitives' mind, the principle of contiguity in the axis of time is confused with the principle of causation. In other words, the primitive is capable to make inferences through the principle of causality, but this principle, for him, entails the understanding of the phenomena based on their primacy and timing. This means that phenomena that follow each other in a given time sequence since the earlier and latter one have a certain chronological order, the primitive is convinced to consider the priority of the earlier one to be the cause of the latter and the latter to be its consequence.

Because the primitive in the realization process of the causal relationship thinks of the totality of phenomena in general, and due to the lack of sufficient knowledge, it cannot properly be clarified which specific component in the first phenomenon directly induces the optimal effect. Thus, the primitive holds an entire phenomenon as a cause just for its being prior to the other, without being able to give rise to a scientific analysis of the way it happens. However, the reference to the principles of association for explaining the evolution of human culture means that Frazer has been caught up in a series of psychological arguments. Indeed, Frazer's firm belief in the unity of human mental performance has led to the explanation of cultural phenomena by relying on the epistemic functions of the mind, irrespective of the impact of social structures.

B) The evolution of the human mind, as Frazer explains, follows a linear course. According to his explanation, at each stage, a group of thoroughly rationalized men will be aware of the impairment of their epistemic justifications, and thus try to propose a more rational way of interpreting or changing the world. This argument, which is one of the most serious weaknesses of Frazer's theory, requires that the evolution of the cultural era be subjected to the fervor of some enlightened figures who are responsible for discovering the falsity of the rules that everyone implicitly or explicitly has a share in its application.

In the same vein, Frazer in explaining the precedence of magic to religion attaches to his epistemological arguments and ignores the importance of ethnography, a matter which was seriously challenged by Andrew Lang. In fact, Lang complains that an ivory tower researcher, like Frazer, without direct involvement in field research and merely relying on unreliable citations, cannot properly understand the position of religion and myth in the system of thought and culture of the primitive societies. He also notes that it is not that original to emphasize the priority of magic to religion as long as they get along with each other in pseudo-primitive societies. Of course, Frazer, while being aware of the intermingling of magic and religion in some cultures, still maintains that this kind of cultural mixture is not an original primitive form of culture and is in fact the

result of cultural evolution in the subsequent periods. Thus, he assures his readers that in the course of the evolution of culture, magic has certainly precedence over religion.

C) Frazer approaches Tylor's position and duly neglects the importance of social structures in his way to understand the arguments by which the primitive interprets the world. Malinowski, a serious critic of Frazer who was raised in Durkheimian school, emphasized the functionalist aspect of myth and ritual, and announced Frazer's psychological approach and his theoretical arguments as nonsense (see Malinowski 2004: 209-241). It seems what Malinowski offers is related to the social factor that Frazer has completely ignored. However, in our opinion, it seems true that primitive's attention is paid to the practical significance of myth rather than to the epistemic explanation religion or myth: in other words, we agree with Malinowski that rituals will continue to exist as long as they perform their particular function, but in no way, we do agree with his notion of function.

Indeed, the delimitation of the term function to practical functions involves ignoring the very important aspects of rituals or myths. In fact, rituals despite surviving in modern societies, no practical or pragmatic function could be attributed to them. So, rather than limiting the function of myth and ritual to their practical aspects, we believe that myths or rituals have an explanatory function, social function, practical function, and most importantly, symbolic function. That is why even if they have lost their explanatory, social or practical function, they continue to live as merely a symbolic investment.

5. Conclusion

Frazer's view about the position of myth, despite the criticisms it faces, seems to have its own theoretical delicacies and innovations. Indeed, Frazer, inspired by Tylor's anthropological teachings, emphasizes that in the evolutionary process of culture, myth emerges at two distinct points each with a particular function.

At first glance, myth is essentially the written form of ritual and hence antecedent to it. The explanatory function of myth in this point justifies those rituals that are epistemically based on the contiguity and similarity magic; that is, the rituals that require sympathy with nature, and their stimulating function is merely to increase fertility and thus to meet human needs which are directly related to the survival of the human species. Accordingly, in the genealogy of the ancient mythologies, this doctrine can be regarded as the main indicator for the recognition of earlier myths.

In other words, if we accept that myths in the first level are to explain the rituals that deal directly with nature and the ways of arousing its sympathy, we will have a few key points for the genealogy of myths: (a) older myths do not imply the existence of a supernatural being, (b) older myths epistemically embody the implicit ways of human reasoning to change the world through the similarity and contiguity magic, (c) the rituals that myths try to explain still do not involve the process of sacrifice, and they are merely dependent upon those magical actions that, in their turn, lead to nature's sympathy. But the second-class myths -which lie in between the evolution of religion and the advent of science- have a different nature, and since these myths themselves originate from religion, they not only imply the existence of a supernatural being, but also entail sacrifice, and accordingly, they seem to act as a human attempt to satisfy superior powers. Myths, at this stage, are no longer related to the vegetation rituals but the sacrifice of a king.

Endnotes

1. Frazer was blind in the late years of his life, and he was forced to work with J. McMillan. It was at this time that Frazer returned to his previous inclinations, i.e. the study of classical works, and created remarkable works in this area. However, although Frazer's views, after World War I, were gradually replaced by functional theories of such thinkers as Boas, Radcliffe-Brown, and Malinowski, and his views lost their theoretical interest among the anthropologists especially in the 1950s and 1960s, it has always had a special place among writers and men of letters (See Doty 2000: 203-234). As an example, one could cite his influence through J. Weston, the author of the invaluable book *from ritualism to romance*, on T. S. Eliot. It is worth noting that the return to Frazer was pursued in anthropological studies after the 60s. The Cambridge School, which was strongly influenced by its ideas, introduced major scholars to the field of anthropological studies, among them J. Harrison, A. B. Cook, F. Cornford, and G. Murray.

2. Frazer met Robertson Smith, who taught at Trinity College in 1884. This Scottish fanatic countryman had a major impact on the interests of Frazer. Smith encouraged him to collaborate on writing some of the encyclopedic entries, including the *totem* and *taboo*; the most important entries that underlie Frazer's scientific life

3. Ricorso

4. Comte introduced his tripartite model in *Lessons about Positive Philosophy*.

5. Tylor uses the term *primitive*, but Frazer uses the term *savage*.

6. Of course, Levi-Bruhl argues that Frazer's arguments are merely a probable explanation (Levy-Bruhl, 2010: 73) just based on speculation.

7. Mehregan (2006: 149-150) suggests that concerning terminology it would be better for Frazer to call this stage ritual. In my opinion, Mehregan's suggestion neglect some of the evolutionary levels of Frazer's theory, since what Frazer proposes as ritual, just like the myth, refers to two different aspects of ritual, which appear on two distinct levels. Later rituals appear after the religion stage, and therefore their history cannot be taken back to the magic stage.

8. Evans-Pritchard insists that Frazer and the other followers of the Empirical Anthropology School are all on the wrong way due to their adopting this methodological approach. Regarding the famous fallacy "*If I were a horse*", Evans-Pritchard considers their arguments to be fallacious and thus not valid (see Evans-Pritchard, 1965: 20-47).

9. Frazer did not mention the laws of association in the first edition of the golden bough, but in the 1900 text published ten years after the first publication the laws of association which were derived from Hume were incorporated in its analysis (See von Hendy, 2001: 94).

10. The significance of this distinction is that it can be employed in such diverse studies as psychiatric disorders, literary schools, painting or filming styles, unconscious functions, and even cultural phenomena (Vickery, 1993: 784).

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