

Our morality is a kind of summation of the wisdom and experience of our race. It comes to us largely by tradition or religion. Some people justify evil things on the basis of morality—but by and large a recognition of right and wrong, even if these concepts are

sometimes fuzzy, has proved to be of value to mankind. The philosophical, metaphysical or even scientific analysis of the principles of ethics has not proved particularly fruitful. A sense of morality and decency, even if not scientific, may help win the war.

THE AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY¹

By the late Dr. FRANZ BOAS

PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ANTHROPOLOGY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

THE American Ethnological Society was founded at a period when interest in racial and ethnic questions was very lively. The racial question was particularly a subject of heated discussion on account of the struggle between the abolitionists and the defendants of slavery. It had taken the form of a passionate controversy between those who stood for the unity of mankind and those who claimed distinct origins for the races of man. At the same time the interest in the customs and lives of alien people was very lively. It was about the time of the Wilkes expedition to the South Seas, of the vast collection of material on the American Indians by Schoolcraft and of intensive interest in the archeology of our continent.

Through the energy and interest of Albert Gallatin the American Ethnological Society was established and during the years from 1842 until his death in 1849 the society was a center of anthropological interest in New York City. About the same time the Government explorations of the western part of the United States gave strong stimulus to interest in the study of Indian tribes and of American antiquities. For a number of years the society contributed in important ways to our knowledge of both North and Central America. The investigations of members of the society were published in the form of Transactions, of which three volumes appeared, in 1845, 1848 and 1853. The last one of these volumes was never published because the whole edition was destroyed by fire before it was distributed. It was, however, republished in photographic reproduction in 1909 by the revived society. A new start was made in 1860 when the society began publication of a bulletin containing brief communications, the last of which appeared in 1869. The interest of members in the society was evidently declining rapidly and in 1869 a committee headed by E. George Squier issued a statement calling for reorganization on a new basis. The outlook of this group is characterized by the following statement issued in 1869, evidently drafted by Mr. Squier:

Statesmen, whether senators or kings, can no longer overlook the profound lessons inculcated by anthropology. The political reorganization of Europe is going on in consonance with its discoveries and results. Religion under its influence is separating itself from a ritualistic dogmatism that has nothing to do with morals or the relationship that exists between men and God and has become all the loftier from the dissociation.

To these grand results we may ask what has the American Ethnological Society contributed. Absolutely, for twenty years, nothing. True, ten of these years have been unfavorable to scientific pursuits in this country. Students having common sympathies and aims have been separated by political and social barriers and investigators weaned or diverted from their pursuits by imperative requirements in other fields. Estranged co-laborers, however, are returning with that catholic spirit which study for Truth inspires and encourages, to their old associations and researches; and the altered condition of our common country encourages and, indeed, makes necessary a wider and deeper investigation of the character and true relations of the varieties and races of mankind than ever existed before. But this investigation must be made *ab initio*, or rather in a purely abstract scientific sense. It can not be done by men who, for any reason or motive, bring into the study the element of faith, or adhesion to dogmas or creeds of any kind whatever. These subtle elements of depression of scientific inquiry have been, to a certain degree, the ruin of this Society. Your reporter can remember when the question of human unity could not be discussed without offense to some of the members of the Society and when its casual introduction was made a ground of impassioned protest. This allusion is made only to enforce the vital truth that, in scientific inquiry, the item of faith must be entirely eliminated. Not having been so, discussion in this Society has been relatively tame and fruitless.

On the basis of this critical examination of the activities of the society during the two decades from 1850 to 1869, the American Ethnological Society was dissolved and it was decided to reconstitute the society as the American Anthropological Society. Since at the same time an association with the same name had been founded in Boston, the committee followed the example of the newly consolidated Anthropological and Ethnological Societies of London and adopted the name "The Anthropological Institute of New

¹ Address delivered at the celebration of the centenary of the society, on November 14, 1942. Dr. Boas died on December 21.

York," which published its first volume in 1871-1872. The object of the newly organized group was stated as "the study of man in all his varieties and under all his aspects and relations."

This attempt at reorganization was evidently unsuccessful. An association of the old members of the Ethnological Society with the newly founded American Museum of Natural History led to a formal continuance of activities under the old name of the American Ethnological Society, but there was evidently no productive scientific activity during this period.

About 1895, when the American Museum of Natural History began its field explorations and when anthropology was introduced as a subject of instruction in Columbia University, a number of younger men were drawn to New York who met occasionally in an informal way to discuss anthropological problems. The first attempts to affiliate this group with the surviving members of the American Ethnological Society were unsuccessful because the society had practically become a group which met occasionally for social purposes. As the American Museum of Natural History developed, the proposal of reactivating the American Ethnological Society was renewed. In 1900 the younger group joined the society, and the president of the American Museum of Natural History, Morris K. Jesup, was elected president of the society. He was succeeded by General James Grant Wilson, who served until 1913. After this time the officers of the society were confined entirely to professional anthropologists.

About this time cooperation of the scientific societies of New York was established under the leadership of the New York Academy of Sciences. The Ethnological Society joined this organization and since that time its regular meetings have been held in connection with the meetings of the New York Academy of Sciences at the American Museum of Natural History.

With the renewal of the activities of the society it was felt that the most important service that could be rendered was to establish a series of publications and the society became essentially a publishing society, although regular meetings were held, without however any attempt to publish these in the form of transactions. The meetings were on the whole rather informal and devoted to questions on which the members of the society or visiting anthropologists were working.

It was a period of a general reorganization of an-

thropological societies. Long before this time anthropology had been recognized as one of the sections of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and in the annual meetings anthropologists from all parts of the country used to meet and to discuss their problems. About the same time an anthropological society was founded in Washington, curiously enough followed by the establishment of a women's anthropological society in the same city. On account of the difficulties of publication it was felt that a general anthropological society was needed and at the time of the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Pittsburgh in 1902, the establishment of the American Anthropological Association was decided upon. The difficult financial question of establishing an adequate journal for the publication of work of American anthropologists was met by the generosity of Charles P. Bowditch of Boston and the Duke of Loubat of New York, who helped the journal during the early years of its existence. At the same time an agreement was reached between the American Anthropological Association and the American Ethnological Society for a certain division of the kind of publication to be maintained by either society. The *American Anthropologist* was established as the joint journal of both societies. While the *American Anthropologist* was to contain papers on general anthropology the Ethnological Society confined its publication to a series of volumes giving ethnological records of various tribes in the original language with translations, thus following the earlier series published by the U. S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region and of the series of native documents published by Daniel Garrison Brinton.

During these years of specialization the *Journal of American Folk-Lore* had been established owing to the energetic efforts of William Wells Newell. In 1918, a special journal was established by Dr. Aleš Hrdlička for physical anthropology and the *International Journal of American Linguistics* by myself in 1917. In 1940 the American Ethnological Society started a new series of brief ethnographic monographs.

Thus the society has become an active member in anthropological work in our country. Let us hope that it will continue its active participation in anthropological work and contribute by the researches of its members and by its more popular activities to the solution of the difficult social problems of our times.

OBITUARY

JOHN FRANKLIN DANIEL

PROFESSOR JOHN FRANKLIN DANIEL, chairman of the department of zoology of the University of Cali-

fornia, died in Berkeley on November 2, 1942. The students, colleagues, friends and family of Dr. Daniel assembled at his home on the afternoon of November