METAPHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FOLKTALES OF THE ESKIMOS OF ALASKA

JOHN R. CUMMING

In probing the philosophical depths of a primitive people, folktales present a definitive means of ascertaining the articulation within the group consciousness of mind and matter, and of mind and self. This continuity between philosophy and folktales has been underlined by Boas:

> Mythology, theology, and philosophy are different terms for the same influences which shape the current of human thought, and which determine the character of the attempts of man to explain the phenomena of nature (Boats, 1901, p. 7).

The patterning of the mind and its content as evidenced in folktales become reciprocals of man's attempt to comprehend the nature of reality. These concepts of reality must be resolved within the social and cultural contexts of a particular society. An approach to the folktales of the Alaskan Eskimos, therefore, must relate the philosophical analysis of its content to the cultural and ideological framework of the Eskimo people.

The impact of the folktale traditions upon the Eskimos in Alaska was most extensive. Because the folktales and mythology interwove the individual with his universe in so many facets of activity, there was a profound effect upon the religious, social, economic, and educational aspects of the society. Folktales to the Eskimo were more than a symbolistic compendium, or etiological conjecture. They were an integral part of the experiences of the individuals and of the socializing force of the community. They represented both machine and master, carrying forward traditional content of the society and at the same time aligning thought and activity in their pattern.

Thus, for philosophic inquiry, the folktales of the Eskimos are a valuable tool. The inclusive nature of folktales in the intellectual activity has been indicated:

> When we define as folk-lore the total mass of traditional matter present in the mind of a given people at any given time, we recognize that this matter must influence the opinions and activities of the people more or less according to its quantitative and qualitative value, and also, that the actions of each individual must be influenced to a greater extent by the mass of traditional material present in his mind (Boas, 1901, pp. 2-3).

In understanding the philosophy of the Eskimos, the mind content may be viewed as it evolves within the folktales and myths as molded by cultural values and influences. This concept has been validated: " . . . that the thinkers among primitive peoples envisage life in philosophical terms, that human experience and the world around them have become subjects for reflection, that these ponderings and searchings have become embodied in literature and ritual . . . " (Radin, 1927, p. 386).

Metaphysical considerations are most obvious in the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska, as it is this aspect of philosophy that received the most complex development and definition. Theories of the nature of the cosmos have entertained the minds of mankind primarily because of the existence of a physical world that was in many of its faces, inexplicable and unknowable. To the Eskimos it was a logical position to see the sun and the moon held together by a pattern of permeating force, settled on an eternal race, male pursuing female. For philosophical satisfaction the scientific interpretation accepted by western civilization has no more reality for comprehension than the position taken by the Eskimos.

In the same manner, the Eskimos evaluated the nature of man and his relation to reality throughout their folktales. Man did have a spiritual counterpart or parts, that transcended the finiteness of present existence. But it was a spiritual affinity, without the connotation of sacredness in many cases, and it was real and not ethereal in others. With western civilization and its religious backgrounds in Christianity, man transcends reality only at death or incidentally in gobblinism, spirit divination, etc. In western civilization mankind has also created other philosophical positions such as realism, pragmatism, both derived from naturalism. These conceptions have discarded any transcendentalism (with exceptions) as a hoax, and have relied on the physical forces of man and nature as the knowables of existence and hence the only acceptable evaluation of reality. The folktales of the Eskimo also interpret in various manners the nature of the unifying force of the universe, ranging from deism to pantheism, and postulate the meaning of existence itself.

In considering the metaphysics of the Eskimos of Alaska, then, the folktale presents a valuable source of material. The nature of ultimate reality provides question-marks that essay the attention of the primitive in his folktales, and provides the subject-matter for the analysis of the metaphysical concepts of these people. Regarding primitive man, John Dewey, the philosopher stated:

> . . . that effects, emotional and practical, were the material of the thought of real objects, and that thinkers in their doctrine of inner "force" stated in rational terms a notion which was expressed mythically by the mass, a notion which has marked affiliations with a persistent strain in the philosophical tradition (Radin, 1927, p. xviii).

RESEARCH AND SOURCES

Analyzing the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska was limited by the scarcity of adequate and well-defined collections in the folkloristic tradition amenable to philosophic interpretation. Abstractions of folktales were made in "depth," so-to-speak, from the relatively early compilations of Murdoch (1886), Nelson (1899), and Barnum (1901), to the more recent collections of Garber (1940), and Lantis (1946). Even in the more developed anthropological treatises, the collections of folklore tended to be appendages to, say, the study of artifacts or linguistics. Thus, it was deemed desirable to obtain at

least a sampling of as many translated editions as possible, to permit a determination of the philosophical insights of this people. Although a background and understanding of Eskimo culture were brought to this paper (however limited), it was believed that a pre-eminence should be attached to the folklore in any interpretation. Individual interpretations of metaphysical points contained in the various anthropological and novelistic editions while not discarded, were given second-place to the analysis of the composite traditions. Folkloristic interpretations were derived from study with Dr. Viola E. Garfield, University of Washington.

FOLKTALES AND MYTHOLOGY OF THE ESKIMOS OF ALASKA

From Greenland to the northeast segment of Siberia, the Eskimo peoples have a similarity of culture and environment, that facilitates a study of the facets of their cultural traits and patterns. A cultural classification including this area has been established for folktales common to the Eskimos:

> 1. **Eskimo.** Extending from East Greenland to the northeast corner of Siberia are the Eskimos. They are scattered over large distances, but they have a remarkably uniform culture, dependent upon their living in an arctic climate and on the shores of frozen seas (Thompson, 1951, p. 300).

Within this cultural area from Bristol Bay on the south to the Beaufort Sea in the arctic north live the Eskimos of Alaska. If a delineation of folktales characteristic of the Alaskan Eskimos were possible, they would be patterned around a curve centering in the Norton Sound area of western Alaska. At the extremities of this curve on the south, one would find the influx of folktales from the Aleuts and the Indian peoples of the north Pacific coast. In the north, the homogeneity would be modified by the impress of folktales from the Eskimos of the Arctic and Greenland. Pressing in on the center of this curve from the west would be the tales of the Eskimos and Chukchee of Siberia and on the east from the mainland of North America would be those of the Athapascan Indians.

DISTRIBUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOLKTALES AND COLLECTIONS

Into this cultural area of the Eskimos of Alaska, came the exponents of western civilization in the eighteenth century to explore and lay claim to this territory. Following the transfer of Alaska to the rule of the United States in 1867, missions began to be sent into the isolated northern and western areas where the Eskimos were located, and government outposts began to be established.

In the year 1885, the *Report of The International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska,* was made available and a creation myth of the Eskimo people was recorded (Ray, 1885, p. 47). From this same expedition, a few, brief abstractions of the folktales were reported by Murdoch in 1886 (pp. 593-599). A much larger collection of folktales and mythology became available with Nelson's work in 1899, dealing with the Eskimos of Bering Strait (p. 462). Many of these folktales

came from both Norton Sound and Yukon delta peoples. Along with a linguistic analysis, Barnum included a few folktales of the Eskimos of Nelson Island in 1901. Borgoras mentions folktales of this area in a comparison of the folklore of Northeastern Asia with that of Northern and Western America in 1902 (pp. 577-683).

At the beginning of the twentieth century adequate surveys of the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska had yet to be performed. Boas writing in 1904, sums up the situation:

> Unfortunately the folklore of the tribes west of the Mackenzie River is only imperfectly known, so that we cannot form a very clear idea of its character. Judging however, from the fact that quite a number of Eskimo tales which are known east of Hudson Bay are known to the Chukchee of northeastern Siberia (Borgoras), we are justified in assuming that these tales must also be known—or have been known—to the Alaskan Eskimo (Boas, 1904, p. 1).

Published materials during the fifty years since the observation of Boas, especially those of a professional character are few in number, and these are limited in folktales reported and analyzed. A comprehensive philosophically-oriented study of the folktales and mythology of the Eskimos of Alaska remains for the future.

Materials from both the early reports and from recordings since the turn of the century will be utilized throughout the discussion. Publications during the latter era covered the following areas: delta of the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers, Nelson Island, Nunivak Island, Norton Sound, Bering Strait, and Point Barrow. As to the acculturation of the folktales of the Eskimos during this period, we have the assurance of one writer that it remains relatively undefiled;

> It is most interesting and valuable to learn that mere contact of the Eskimos with more civilized philosophies has in no way spoiled, or even altered, their folktales (Garber, 1940, p. 20).

This same source, however, notes a discouraging trend:

> Unfortunately, there is an effort on the part of some selfish and unseeing missionaries and teachers to obliterate the Eskimo's indulgences in his own folklore . . . (it) is unchristian (Garber, 1940, p. 22).

EVOLVEMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF FOLKTALES

Because of the homogeneity of the cultural area of the Eskimos, a diffusion of folktale types throughout the immense distances of the habitat of these peoples has been assumed. Boas noted quite early that the folktales of the Greenland Eskimos were similar to those of Siberia with the inference of diffusion throughout Alaska (Boas, 1904, p. 1). However, the lack of research in the Alaskan area, which is situated between these two areas, made definite conclusions hazardous. In another report, Boas interviewed some Eskimos at the Columbian Exposition from Port Clarence, Alaska, (Seward Peninsula). He mentions that the tale of the mistress of the sea animals from Greenland was known in the traditions of this group, as well as the sun myth and the discovery of light (Boas, 1894, p. 205).

In the comparison made by Borgoras of Siberian and Alaskan

Eskimo folktales the same scarcity of adequate sources for Alaska, as mentioned by Boas, was reported (Borgaras, 1902, pp. 577-683). Borgoras notes the use of Nelson's study for Alaskan Eskimo folktales in his comparison. With a more extensive background of folktales on hand, Jenness indicates some disagreement with the earlier discussions of similarity between the folktales of the Alaskan peoples and those in Siberia. As a member of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, he compiled folktales from Pont Hope, Alaska to Coronation Gulf in Canada. He believed that both the style of the narratives and the cultural adaptation of them differed, and that independent development occurred more frequently in Alaska (Jenness, 1924, p. 1).

A more recent report in the literature overstates, perhaps, the validity of independent development suggested by Jenness:

> Each outstanding colony has developed its own legends and stories. Few of them are common to all Eskimo settlements (Garber, 1940, p. 23).

Again, this special characterization of the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska was upheld by Rasmussen by pointing out the personal tradition in the transmission of them:

> Before the first kagasse was built, all story-telling was more or less confined to implanting in the children's minds certain religious concepts.

He believed that this process, provided mostly by old women, caused a breakdown and degeneration of the myths. Continuing:

> But in the Feast house, where the listeners were . . . often friends who had come from a few districts, more was required, and the old myths and legends took a new form founded on and interpreted with personal experiences. So was developed through generations the art of story-telling I found in Alaska and it was fully on a level with the best I knew from . . . Greenland (Rasmussen, 1932, pp. 36-37).

Thompson notes similarity throughout the cultural area of the Eskimos for a few major tales, but allows for indigenous development, "There are . . . independent tales, rather incoherent, telling of the origin of man, of thunder, lightning, and rain, and of "day and night" (Thompson, 1951, p. 306).

As to influences from outside the Eskimo area on folktales, Boas noted that the Indian tribes and the Eskimos had a common pattern of animal stories. He reported the Swan Maiden as appearing among the Chuckchee, as well as among the Haida of Queen Charlotte Islands, and concluded that such stories would appear among the Athapascan. Boas referred to both Nelson's and Barnum's records that many of the animal tales of the Indians of the North Pacific coast and of the Athapascans had been introduced among them. Hero tales which were considered to be most prevalent folktales of the Eskimos, on the contrary were considered to be influenced slighty by the Indians and at the same time were diffusing from the Eskimos to the Chukchee and Koryak of Siberia (Boas, 1904). Recognition of the relation of the Raven tales to the North Pacific coast Indians would indicate some influence in the hero tales, "The part played by the Raven in the mythology . . . of the Kuskwogamiut finds its parallel among the Tlingit of the Southeastern Coast" (Gordon, 1917, p. 234).

TYPES AND STYLE OF FOLKTALES

Of all the creation myths, one has achieved in the literature a first role among the folktales of the Eskimos, including the peoples of Alaska. This myth concerns a diety supposedly residing under the waters of the sea, female in nature, who controls the sea-mammals and their use by the Eskimos. The folktale tells of a woman who in escaping from her bird-husband is pursued out to sea by him. Her father throws her overboard, but she clings to the gunwale of the boat. The father then chops off her fingers which are transformed into seals, salmon, walrus, and whales. Following this experience, she descends to the bottom of the sea to become ruler of the sea's denizens. Boas believed that this was a tale common to the Eskimos from Greenland westward to Alaska (Boas, 1904. p. 3), and Thompson calls this, "the basic myth of the Eskimo" (Thompson, 1951, p. 105).

From the many collections that have accrued on creation myths, the sea mistress is not frequently mentioned, particularly for the Eskimos of Alaska. Boas mentions one version received during his interview of Port Clarence Eskimos at the Columbian Exposition (Boas, 1894, p. 205). There is no mention of this underwater deity in the collections of Jenness (1924), Nelson (1899), Murdoch (1886), or Curtis (1930), dealing with the Eskimos of Alaska. For example, Lantis in regard to her collection of tales from Nunivak Island, states, "There is no Sedna, a female deity under the sea who controls the sea animals . . . (they) have the Northwest Coast belief in villages of the various species of sea-mammals." (Lantis, 1946, p. 314). This may indicate that the distribution of the Sedna myth may not be as extensive as heretofore believed. It must be noted, however, that one of the early reports from Nelson Island states that frequent mention of a "sea serpent" occurred in the folktales of these people (Barnum, 1901, p. 271). As Nelson Island is adjacent to Nunivak, this report may indicate that the Sedna myth was of more importance in Eskimo folktales in western Alaska in the past.

Raven appears in many of the collections as a creator of man and animal life. Nelson's folktales of the Raven are rather extensive and form a series of culture myths which account for the existence of all things (1899, p. 450). Regarding the Kuskwogamiut, Gordon states, "There is a long cycle of myths about Raven as the creator and teacher that forms an epic of extraordinary interest . . . " (1917, p. 234). As noted previously, Gordon links this development to the Tlingit peoples of Southeastern Alaska. On Nunivak Island, Lantis noted a sterility of Raven tales, which if correct seems unique for the Eskimos of Alaska. There is apparently no myths of Raven as creator, but rather as a trickster, "an amusing and tricky glutton who humbles along, managing to win out most of the time, but occasionally being tricked himself" (1946, p. 313). However, the tales of Raven as trickster are so few as to consider any cycle or pattern, rather dubious. For Northern Alaska, Raven as both creator and trickster appears to have

disappeared with only one passing mention by Jenness in his study (1924, p. 47).

A myth which is discernible among the folktales of most of the Eskimos of Alaska is that concerning the Sun and Moon. This deals with a brother who has incestuous relations with his sister. To escape, the sister goes to the sky and becomes the sun. Her brother pursued her and became the Moon and still remains chasing the Sun across the heavens. One version mentions the characters as being aunt and nephew, actually referring to what would be considered mother and son in the kinship relationships (Lantis, 1946, p. 314). Boas and Thompson both note the widespread distribution of this particular folktale (Boas, 1894, p. 205; Thompson, 1951, p. 306). Another tale which is consistently discovered in the folktales is that of the Dog Husband. Children from the union of the Dog Husband and a woman become the progenitors of a group of people or of the races of mankind, spreading out from the center where the tale originates (Boas, 1894; Lantis, 1946).

Other creation myths which are of more independent origin concern animals such as the walrus, caribou, fish, reindeer, and others of the origin of stars, winds, lightning, thunder, snow, daylight and darkness.

Animal folktales have not been developed to any extent by the Eskimos of Alaska, although the peoples of this area have shown more interest in them than the Eskimos of Canada and Greenland. Undoubtedly, the Indians of the North Pacific coast and the Athapascans in interior Alaska may have introduced animal folktales among the Eskimos. This has led one source to contend that the animal folktale was originally foreign to Eskimo folklore (Boas, 1904, p. 7). Although environmental factors may have had some weight in the interpretation of animals as characters in the folktales, an even sounder base is the adaptation of animals for protection and for magical purposes. It is difficult to believe that propitiation of animal spirits, which is ingrained in the religious ceremonies would not have had an effect on the folktales of the people.

The relative scarcity of animals and of the characterization of animals in the folktales has meant a greater use of humans in the tales than the Indian peoples did. Boas states, "The most striking feature of Eskimo folklore is its thoroughly human character" (1904, p. 2), and Lantis concurs almost identically, "A striking characteristic of this body of folklore (Nunivak Island) is its humanness. Most often even the animal characters are portrayed as human" (1946, p. 315). The lack of a mythical age in the folktales has had repercussion most likely upon the use of animals. Existence remains unchanged from the moment of creation.

Hero-tales with a strong dash of the supernatural seem to have been the most appealing element of folklore for the Eskimos of Alaska. Nelson suggests the development of these tales:

> The tales of these people seem to have originated largely from certain distinct sources; there are tales of hunting and adventure including voyages and incidents of the ordinary life of the people which may start from someone who recounts an episode in his life in a pleasing manner ,so that it is taken up and repeated, with various additions mainly of a supernatural character, and finally become fixed in the tribal folklore (1899, p. 451).

The number of tales precludes an analysis of the various tests or obstacles to be overcome. Many of them presuppose a knowledge of the supernatural concepts of the Eskimos. Tales of Shamans, with supernatural helpers, relate of visits to other worlds and heavenly bodies. They demonstrate their tremendous power to move spirits in animals and humans. Boas contends that the hero-tale is the most characteristic part of Eskimo folktales (1904, p. 13).

In an early report, Barnum records that for the Eskimos of Nelson Island, very little notice is paid either to a description of nature or of historical events (Barnum, 1901, p. 271). Of course, here again, environment may have created a stylization, and also, while a written report of a folktale may seem rather barren, an oral rendition would give it emotional cement. Folktales on Nelson Island contained:

> . . . accounts of sorcerers, orgees, giants, dwarfs, and mermaids. There is frequent mention made of the sea serpent, and of a mysterious monster like a half-man . References to cannibalism are continually mentioned and also the ghoulish trait of eating dead bodies . . . how the fox became red through shame at being overturned in strategy by a ptarmigan (Barnum, 1901, p. 271).

From Nunivak Island the main characterizations were of Grandmother and Grandchild, Two Brothers, Haughty Girl, Poor Boy, Raven, and Little Bird. The powers of amulets and songs are stressed in the folktales. Among the supernaturals on Nunivak, worms appear frequently, both men-worms and worms in a pool controlled by an evil person (Lantis, 1946, p. 315). These characterizations reported by Barnum and Lantis are representative of the variey of folktales available in the literature.

Boas mentions the conservatism of the Eskimos as regards retention of facts withim the folktales (1904, p. 9). This stability was retained during repetition by the story-tellers, according to Lantis (1946, p. 264). The teller was not allowed to add incidents or to mix up in the story in any manner. All the listeners were acquainted with the minute details of their folktales and would make corrections if deviations occurred. Although the plots remain stable, Garber notes for the Bering Strait Eskimos:

> One at times gets the impression that the narrator is making up his story as he goes along, though in reality his basis may be centuries old. The nararion often runs smoothly, not choppy, yet aimlessly, is the impression (1940, p. 13).

Barnum notes that particular story-tellers made great use of abbreviations and were fond of expressing themselves in a very condensed style (1901, p. 272). The conservatism and rigidity of reinterpretation gave the Eskimo folktale teller a style and pattern

for presentation. The good story-tellers would follow this form and begin with an introduction explaining who were the main characters, where they lived, how big their village was, etc. As the plot itself unfolded the narrator would elaborate on every aspect of the tale, and answer constant queries as to the nature of some point with patience and thoroughness. The result would be a complete rendition of all parts, and the solving of all problems (Lantis, 1946, p. 315).

FOLKTALE NARRATION AND SETTING

The narration of folktales by the Eskimo story-tellers has special implications outside of the style of the folktale itself. The stories are learned by the young men of the village from the elders, exactingly memorized and practiced, and rendered with detail. The narrator attempts to use the same intonations and gestures learned by arduous practice. This becomes a complex art when it is realized that some of the tales took hours in telling. This pattern has been well defined by Nelson:

> Young men who have an aptitude for learning tales become narrators and repeat them verbatim, even with the accompanying inflections of voice and gestures. On the lower Kuskokwim river and the adjacent district toward the Yukon mouth, some of the important tales are given by two men, who sit cross-legged near together and facing each other; one is the narrator and the other holds a bundle of small sticks in one hand. The tale proceeds and at certain points one of these sticks is placed on the floor between them, forming a sort of chapter mark. If the narrator is at fault he is prompted by his companion. Some of the tales are long, occupying several successive evenings in their recital. The narrators are very careful to repeat them in a set phraseology with repetitions in definitely determined places. When an error is made it is common for the narrator to go back and repeat from some prominent incident. The voice is intoned to imitate the different characters in a more or less dramatic manner, and with the gestures made a very effective recital. The listeners are quiet and attentive, and at certain incidents express by a word or two their feelings of surprise or satisfaction. These tales are heard over and over again, forming the unwritten lore upon which they draw for entertainment during the long winter evenings . . . (1899, p. 451).

The kashim (khashkii, kagasse, etc.) is the showplace of the Eskimo folktale. Used for community meetings, dances, work shop, religious center, it also serves as a folktale transmission and rendition center. The kashim would be crowded with the elders of the village, usually, reclining or sitting around the circular wall on grass mats or caribou skins. As "living libraries of Eskimo lore," these men would be sought out by the youths of the community to learn of the experiences and adventures of their ancestors. Story-telling went on at all times, but received more of a social emphasis during ceremonials or festivals when the villagers would come from neighboring villages. Folktales had a real meaning for these people; as Gordon puts it, " . . . these stories may be said to constitute a body of epical literature that is rich, expedient, and striking in form" (Gordon, 1917, p. 233).

COSMOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN FOLKTALES OF THE ALASKAN ESKIMOS

The nature of the world man lives in has been evaluated and questioned by both primitive and civilized man to determine the content and meaning of reality. Throughout the centuries of written history, the recording of these thoughts created a background of interpretations that today represent the major wold-frames of philosophy. Primitive man recorded abstractions of reality in the folklores and mythology of the people to be transmitted, and idealized through the spoken word of successive generations. Boas indicates quite succinctly the approach of primitive man to problems of reality:

> To primitive man—who has been taught to consider the heavenly orbs as animate beings, who sees in every animal a being more powerful than man, to whom the mountains, trees, and stones are endowed with life—explanations of phenomena will suggest themselves entirely different from those to which we are accustomed . . . (Boas, 1901, p. 7).

Of metaphysical theories, cosmology attempts to understand the nature of the cosmos and explanations of its origins and development. The folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska abound with references of a cosmological nature, in the creation myths, and in tales that note the presence of forces underlying the fabric of existence:

> The Alaskan Eskimos possess an almost endless number of tales and legends, which express in many details their religious beliefs and convey in an interesting form an idea of their ancient customs and modes of thought (Nelson, 1899, p. 450).

The absence of present relativity reinforces tendencies for cosmological explanations:

> The stories . . . do not deal with living individuals or even with people who have lived in the past two generations . . . Most of them can be classed as myths . . . There is a pretentious quality, a supernatural aura about them . . . (Lantis, 1946, p. 313).

ORIGIN OF THE COSMOS

Two distinct views may be discerned in the cosmology of the Eskimos, as to the origin of the cosmos. The universe and its occupants in some folktales are beings that merely evolve. "The world just is," and there reality begins. From this point, the world is continuing in evolution, adding and subtracting forces without care. Throughout this evolution, the reality of nature proves to be the guidepost to order and whatever patterning of the universe there is. Lantis mentions this position as being evident in the folktales of the people of Nunivak Island (1946, p. 314). Boas believes that the evolving cosmos is characteristic of the Eskimos:

> It will be noticed that in . . . (no legend) . . . is there any inner connection between the whole trend of the story and the incident of creation. It is not clearly stated, and in many of these stories it is not even necessarily implied, that the animals created did not exist before the creation recorded in the story (Boas, 1904, pp. 4-5).

Creation in this sense becomes incidental to the universe which is evolving and shaping the destiny of mankind. Boas did not feel that creations within this pattern were made primarily for the benefit of

man, or that they were necessarily connected with a mythological world.

From the Bering Strait collection, Nelson records a folktale that relates the origin of the land and the people. This folktale which follows the evolutionary pattern was taken from the Eskimos of the lower Yukon. It tells of a beginning in which there was water all over the earth, and it was extremely cold. Underlying the water there was nothing but ice, and there were no people. Then the ice ground together and created long ridges and hummocks that may be surmised to be land. A man came at this time and stopped at the ice hills near the Yukon people, taking a wolf as a wife. Children were born in pairs to this couple, always a boy and a girl that spoke a tongue different from the parents and their brothers and sisters. These pairs spread out over the ice hills which finally became snow-covered mountains. Their children speaking the different tongues of the world, represent the existent population of the world today (Nelson, 1899, pp. 482-83).

In this abstraction, it is possible to see that the basic matter of the universe as to its structure is not a force or energy but rather a universe of water and ice. The lack of inner force bears out the contention of Boas that creation is incidental to the main process of evolution. Yet, this tale does give a clue to the causality of existence for the Eskimos of this area. Certainly the basic structure of the metaphysics that appears is a naive naturalism bedded in a materialistic understanding of reality. The substance of the universe in its very beginning was water and reality was nature itself. It is interesting to note that Thales, an early naturalistic philosopher, sixth century, B.C., took almost the same position. The creation of the earth from this substance was purely one of evolution, the ice merely grinding together. This is the cause apparently, there being no pre-existing element to make the ice act. The nature of the land is recorded as changing from ice hills to snowy mountains. Evolution is indicated clearly here, as well as the nature of time for the Eskimos. Time does not appear as being objective and is not particularly relative. Beyond its externality to man, it has no effect on the processes presented.

The First Man is a being when the world begins possibly. The story relates that the First Man came from across the great water. He is not formed by any force, he merely appears and is. This indicates an evolutionary flavor in man's development. The joining of First Man with a wolf, harks of Roman mythology. It points to the validity of the contention that nature is reality in the folktales of these people. It indicates the close relation that the Eskimos considered applicable to man and nature, and man and animal. Also, the animal in nature especially during this period was given human characteristics, i.e. bearing children, that apparently were normal physiologically. The birth of twins was a necessity, not actually, but for the purposes of this tale. The mating of the twins, while possibly containing relational implications, presented no problems of incestuous actions, and provided for the great variety of people on the earth.

Radin, although dealing with a more complex pattern of evolutionism in the cosmos, postulates the characteristic of the consistency and inevitableness of primitive cosmology (Radin, 1927, p. 194). He makes the vital point that primitive man in his evolutionism skillfully dodged the question of prime origin with no more ability than the evolutionists in western culture.

The second cosmological view which may be added to the forces of evolutionism, or put in a position of complete opposition to it, is creationism. In this theory, there is force behind the materialism of the universe that molds and creates, and destroys the content of existence. Origins become tied to a particular Being in this concept, and order and stability emenate from it. The mechanizing view developed by evolutionism disappears with creationism which relies on a source of power transcending reality.

Creationism in Eskimo folktales is illustrated in the creation myth of the people on the Noatak River near Kotzebue Sound. Told by a native, Apakag, to Rasmussen, the tale concerns the beginning of all life (Rasmussen, 1932, p. 57). The sky appears before the earth, when the crusts of the earth are beginning to form. The first living creature was Tulugersak or Father Raven who was the creator of all human life, and other life forms. He was no common bird, but "a sacred and life-giving spirit, the origin of all the world as we know it now." Despite his spirit-power, Raven begins life in the shape of a man, achieving progress only by chance until his destiny was revealed to him:

> He was squatting in darkness upon the ground, when suddenly he came to consciousness and discovered himself. He knew neither where he was, nor how he came there. But he breathed the breath of life. He was alone.

In this darkness, he crawled about on the spongy clay, which he forms into the figure of a man and casts it into an abyss. This being becomes the essence of a Tormak, the evil spirit of the Eskimos. Finally, Raven flies down into an abyss to the earth where he creates man from pod plants. In the beginning, there was little difference between man and animal and they could change forms at will. Raven creates light and darkness from pieces of mica, and land from the pieces of a serpent he slays. He admonishes the people before he flies to the sky: "I am your father. To me you owe your land and your lives and you must never forget me" (Rasmussen, 1932, p. 64).

In Raven, we have an indication of a "cosmological argument," i.e. the creation of existence originating from an all-powerful Being, resulting in an ordered universe. Raven presents quite adequately those aspects of transcendental activity that would be connected with supreme Being; creation of land and life and the desire to be recognized by the humans of his creation. Raven, does not, according to this myth, begin of himself, or have any beginning, but rather begins in the shape of man digging in primeval clay, the same clay from which he creates man. Here, we find the finite deity of the realist who tampers with only selected portions of existence. Raven is not infinite, but that does not detract from his overwhelming importance. The realist would ask

for order in his metaphysics, and Raven supplies that with a pattern of creation and propitiation. The emergence of Raven from man to the form of a deity from clay is coincidental but his mental transformation is revealing, "he came to consciousness and discovered himself." Indicative of the nature of man, an analysis will be deferred until later in the discussion. It is an almost direct intonation of the concept, "I think, therefore, I am," from Descartes. This symbolization is representative of the scope of understanding to be derived from the folktales of the Eskimo. The creation of an evil spirit by Raven is an unusual development, but an interpretation cannot follow the moralistic scheme of analysis of western civilization. Evil in the connotation familiar to the Eskimos of Alaska is a force which attacks the order of nature not the morals of mankind. The creation of this spirit which would be a force to alter the workings of order desired by Raven might be considered paradoxical. One assumption from this concept might be that the evil spirit performs the function of the harsh and unpredictable side of nature, the devasting furies of the environment. It may also be hazarded that Raven, who admonishes man to remember him, knows that he will do just that and provides a force to sustain their interest in him.

From the text, one observes that Raven speaks of two levels of existence. He obviously leaves for a different world after the creational period, following a stay on earth, perhaps the same from which he dropped originally to earth. It is in this fragmentary spot of existence, that Raven discovered himself, and, clearly it transcends reality. Darkness and primeval clay are the characteristics that exist prior to Raven's awareness, and must therefore be portions of Ultimate Reality. From the text, we find sky existing before earth, yet it appears without apparent origin, or perhaps the inference is that Raven created it from his arena of Ultimate Reality.

Undoubtedly, from this creation myth, the paths of evolutionism may be seen wandering through the text, from sky to earth to man and plants, daylight and darkness. However, it falls within the cosmological pattern of creationism by virtue of Raven and his power.

A longer genesis myth, similar to the one above is reported by Nelson from Kigiktauik (Nelson, 1899, pp. 452-462). It relates the creation of man from pod to plants, the transformation of Raven, creation of foods and plants, animals, women, evolution of mankind, etc. To provide for man's finite nature he makes it permissible for man to enter his sky-world, thus completing his evolution from creation to death. The major points that differ from the creation myth just analyzed (Rasmussen), will be elaborated. Man having been created out of a pod-plant on the beach is viewed by Raven quizzically, as if man had been an accident. He creates foods (as well as a companion for man) by waving his wings four times. It was interesting to note that this existence is mythical in nature, "In those days there were no mountains far or near, and the sun never ceased shining brightly, no rain fell and no winds blew." First Man is clearly differentiated from

those that follow, existing in a different area. An instance of man being defeated by nature for the first time brings forth a reaction:

> . . . his breast seemed full of a strange feeling, and the water began to run in drops from his eyes and down his face. He put up his hand and caught some of these drops to look at them and found that they were really water (Nelson, 1899, p. 456-57).

Man is taken on visits to the sky-world and to the bottom of the sea. Although the people asked him to remain, First Man who had become aged wished to see the sky-land again and in the company of Raven returns there, thus completing the cycle of life and death for the Eskimo. The people on earth work against order in nature by over-killing animals, so Raven takes away the light. Finally he relents and makes the sky revolve around earth carrying the sun with it, providing for daylight and darkness.

Raven in this myth does a more thorough job of creating and provides a sound basis for order and stability in the universe. In this myth, the "cosmological argument" becomes more rational for Raven creates and provides the essentials for man's existence in the universe. Yet, Raven appears not an infinite power, in this myth, as in the one examined previously. The upper sky-world has a supreme being, whose equation with Raven goes unmentioned. Parents are noted for Raven, so other deities must be assumed. A polytheism may be inferred for the supernatural from these other forces existing in the sky-world, but there is no obvious limitation of the power of Raven.

The separation of the creation period from the ordinary existence of the present is an important feature of this myth. This stamps it clearly as a mythical period, with the sun standing still, and absence of wind or rain. The creation of an awareness in the first men of these myths is rather unique. Man becomes aware of himself, of his ability to cry—truely excellent characterizations of primeval man. The desire of man to see the sky-world indicates the transcendentalism that flows through these tales.

SEPARATE ORIGIN MYTHS

Important in the origin and development of the cosmos are several myths in the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska that describe the separate origin of one of the heavenly bodies, particular areas of land, animals, etc. These, of course, do not maintain the homogeneity that is characteristic of the creation myths mentioned above, that attempt a more or less complete rendition of the origin of the cosmos. Evolutionism and creationism run through these myths depending upon their point of origin. For example, Nunivak Island folktales show little evidences of creationism in the beginning; the world and the heavens merely are existent. Raven, also, contributes characterizations only as a minor trickster without spirit-power.

The obtaining of light for mankind reported by Curtis for western Alaska begins without a particular causality, as many of the shorter origin tales do (Curtis, 1930, p. 79). Two brothers who live in darkness, accidentally see light, and when they attempt to secure it are held

back by a spirit-power wielded by a young woman. The woman secures light for them and turns out to be wolf-spirit. Here, the spirit entices man with light, permits him to fail, and then presents it to him. There is no act of creationsim in this myth, but rather an ordering of the elements of nature. The nature of time and space are both rather vague in this account. The power of the transcendental forces is proclaimed over the weakness of man.

From Paimut on the lower Yukon, Nelson relates the bringing of the light by Raven (1899, pp. 483-85). A despised orphan boy who is Raven seeks the sun and moon and is told by his aunt to go "to the place you will know when you get there." The boy discovers a man shoveling snow and obscuring the light; he steals both the sun and the shovel. He discards pieces of the sun intermittantly on his journey home, thus causing daylight and darkness. In this myth, Raven contributes the sun to the cosmos and orders both daylight and darkness for mankind.

Raven bringing daylight to the Eskimos is a myth told by the chief of the village of Wales (Garber, 1940, pp. 29-32). In the beginning, all work was done by moonlight. The people heard that a man not an Eskimo, had a small and a large ball of light. Through kindness by the people to a raven, Raven appears and goes after the light for them. He tricks the little girl of the owner of the balls of light, into kicking the large ball of light out the door of the hut they were contained in, and Raven steals the ball. Raven then drops the ball of light from a great height on the sea-ice, shattering it, and the world has daylight. This is a more complete tale, than the one from the Yukon, mentioning the beginning and giving a cause for the creation of light. It becomes evident that the absence of light coincides with the period of creation and the pre-creation period. It must be noted that the ball of light is shattered and light becomes an all-pervading substance, characteristic of particular seasons in Eskimo latitudes. This represents a disassociation of light with the circular concept.

A similar tale of Raven bringing light, comes from the Kobuk area (Curtis, 1930, pp. 216-17). Here, there was darkness in the world of long ago. Raven changes to a feather to be swallowed by the daughter of the keeper of the light. She bears a son, as a result of impregnation from the feather, who steals the ball of light, flys to the sky and bursts it. This is actually Raven, of course, and as an anti-climax, Raven marries and is thrown out of the parents home because he is so filthy. This indicates that even all-powerful Raven is humbled, as man was in the beginning.

Lantis reports a myth regarding the sun and the moon (1946, pp. 268-69). A foster son loves his foster mother and sleeps with her. Desiring to escape, the woman flies up into the sky and becomes the sun, while the son chasing her is the moon. This myth gives the sun and moon an animistic definition, which is apparently unrelated to the ideas of the creation or bringing of the light.

The origin of thunder and lightening is recorded in a myth by

Murdoch in 1886 (p. 595), and appears in a tale by Lantis in 1946 (p. 269) with much similarity, despite the time-span. Although Lantis mentioned the factor of isolation at Nunivak from the rest of Alaska, this myth appeared at Point Barrow far from the Kuskokwim Bay area. Murdoch noted that an adult and a child went up into the sky where they happened upon a sealskin and a torch. With the sealskin, which was rattled they made thunder and with the torch, made lightening. Lantis reports a myth in which two menstruating girls out in a storm were taken to the sky by thunder things. The girls were given a mukluk skin which they dragged while running and thus made the thunder and through urination the rain.

Interesting in the origin concepts, is the myth of the Giant (Nelson, 1899, pp. 471-73). Incidental to the basic theme of martial difficulties, the Giant represents the snow and wind of the north. With his breath he causes the gales and winter storms. The Giant concept is not often mentioned in the folktales of the Eskimos and possibly was a borrowing from Indian peoples.

The Origin of the Winds myth from the lower Yukon contains important cosmological concepts (Nelson, 1899, pp. 497-98). A Doll ascends a path of light to the edge of the sky, "where the sky comes down to earth and walls in the light." Doll finds a gut-skin cover over a hole in the sky wall, which he cuts open and lets in the wind. Looking through the opening, Doll perceives another world similar to the earth. Coming to the middle of the earth plain, Doll looks up and sees the sky arching overhead, supported by long, slender poles made of some beautiful material unknown to him. He permits all the winds to enter and then returns home. In this myth, the sky is conceived of being shell-shaped, with openings to other places like the earth. Light is retained for earth by this covering shell. The role of Doll has no apparent causality other than that it is given some transcendent power, but no source of power is mentioned. Nature as reality seems to be the undergirding structure of this tale.

The origin of land is related by Curtis from two areas which are rather widely separated. In the Kobuk myth, the land was originally covered by a great flood of water so that only the mountain peaks remained above water (Curtis, 1930, p. 79). With only two villages in existence, which were becoming rapidly overcrowded, Raven decided to make more land. He speared Sod, which was an animate piece of earth floating on the water, and Sod expanded into a mainland. Water is the all-enveloping substance in this creation period. Sod is an unusual concept primarily because it lacks the "qualities" for animation, such as the sun or the moon. It contains great spirit-power which Raven releases for the benefit of humanity. The "Origin of Nunivak Island" concerns two brothers stranded on an ice-floe (Curtis, 1930, p. 74). The crying of the younger brother attracts the Spirit of the Universe, who is the encompassing and all-powerful spirit of Nunivak. She stands with one foot on each kayak and scatters exrement which becomes Nunivak Island. The younger brother is changed into a

woman, and from this pair come the descendants living on Nunivak. This represents a pure act of creationism, the work of a Being who is responsible for existence itself. The creation is limited in scope, i.e. other areas of the world are unmentioned. Also, the existence of the two brothers appears prior to the creation of Nunivak and its people.

CONSIDERATIONS OF THE NATURE OF MAN IN ALASKAN ESKIMO FOLKTALES

The examination of reality, following an analysis of the cosmological ideations of the Eskimos, proceeds to the nature of man. To the casual observer, nature would appear to be the direction of focus, the embodiment of reality for the Eskimos. As noted in the previous chapter, there are powerful forces in and about nature that preclude a purely materialistic or naturalistic metaphysics. These powers that control or constitute portions of ultimate reality in nature, deal with mankind throughout the folktales of the Eskimos. Man, however, is not a sentient body, a figure of static qualities, but a dynamic individual able to modify and even alter the forces about him.

Aspects of the nature of man that are of importance to metaphysical thinking concern the essential nature of the self, the relation of mind and body and the relation of man to the external universe (Butler, 1951, p. 17). Interpretation of the folktales of the Eskimo with these factors in mind results in a pattern that is unfamiliar in western culture. According to Radin, speaking of primitive man:

> The nature of the impingement of individual upon individual and of the individual upon the external world is thus utterly different from anything that a western European can imagine. The medley of combinations and permutations it would permit is quite bewildering (1927, p. 264).

The Eskimos maintain a variety of components of self which are synthesized logically into a configuration, which is more or less unique.

ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE SELF IN FOLKTALES

In the folktales of the Eskimo, a cursory investigation will show that the Self is not conceived as being body alone, in the naturalistic tradition. A closer approximation of Self is comprehended as being a spiritual essence, an *inua* or shade. These portions of self are sometimes three in number, representing the shade of a particular level of existence. There is a shade destined for future existence upon death which resembles the life form of the body, having no effect, however, upon the life activities of the individual. Another shade is the life of the body, which assumes the life form and leaves the body upon death. A third shade that is difficult to establish appears to linger with the body after death, and may be utilized for evil purposes. Consciousness and an awareness of self that goes beyond the function of the life-giving shade is also characteristic of Self in the Eskimo concept. Many of the folktales and myths of the Eskimos relate of shades that are able to divert the stream of reality. The shades stand out as the permanent element of Self, while the physical

structure is a fleeting thing, evolving towards the common end. There appears to be certain infiniteness in the shades as possessing a fragment of spirit-power or of Ultimate Reality.

The sentient shade that exists after death is well-explained in the folktale from Andreivsky on the lower Yukon called, "The Land of the Dead" (Nelson, 1899, p. 488). A young woman dies and is awakened by her grandfather shade. She is guided past the village of the dog shades, in order that, "you can see how the living dogs feel when beaten by people." She observes a shade being punished after having pulled up and chewed a grass root. Next, she crosses the river created by the tears of people who weep for the dead, when her namesake was to be confirmed, but as this girl dies ,she takes the place of her namesake on earth again for many years. This particular tale covers many of the conceptions of the Eskimos applied to the shade world. The significance of the grandfather is that the person when dying thinks of the person who he or she desires to lead them through the journey to the abode of the shades. The shade of a violent death goes to an abode in the sky, where Raven and other supernaturals reside. The shade of a natural death goes underground with the shades of animals. The incident of the village of the dog shades emphasizes the high level assigned to the spirits of animals, which were considered almost human in existence. A definite spirit-power, perhaps evil, is believed to be contained in grass roots. A beautiful literary device is the crossing of the river of tears; here, in the land of infinite existence is a memorial to those who have sorrowed and lost those residing there. It divides the areas of being and non-being dramatically. The partaking of food left by the living was a feature of all feasts to the dead which were really great celebrations for the Eskimos. These feasts were held infrequently over a long number of years and the first child born after a person had died would be confirmed at this feast and thus become a namesake of the deceased person.

The close relationship held to exist between the shades of man and animals is brought out in a folktale reported by Jenness, "The Caribou Man," that was told by an Eskimo woman of Cape Prince of Wales (1924, pp. 58-59). A hunter approaches a herd of deer, and as he raises his bow, one of the deer pushes back the hood from his head and changes into a man. He is asked if he would like to join the herd, and as he assents the deer gives him his clothes and the hunter becomes one of them. True to the nature of the tale, the hunter is unable to adapt as a reindeer, and asks to be taken home, where he again becomes a man. This change in being is on the shade level of existence, the body form seeming to have no relation to reality.

A creation myth that has special implications for the essential nature of self and that demonstrates the concepts of the Eskimos regarding the relation of mind and body is the myth reported by Curtis,

"How People Came to Cape Etolin" (1930, pp. 75-77). It tells of a man who all at once became conscious of himself. He discovered that he was a man standing naked in a men's house which was devoid of all furnishings, even the usual grass mats. He saw light which hurt his eyes, coming through the smoke-hole and flooding the entrance-way. He had to become accustomed to the sun's glare upon going outside. "Then, glancing about, he saw many strange things: calm, smooth water, grass and plants, and animals. Closer observation showed that these animals, moving in herds, were unlike him, because they had four legs, tails, and horns on their heads." Thinking about this, man realizes that the animals are clothed, while he is naked. He finds clothing, learns how to put it on, and goes through the learning process with a bow and arrows, killing a caribou, eating, making a fire, cooking food, and using a boat. Returning home one day he finds food ready for him, and "He wondered now about the house, cache, weapons, and kayak—who had made them; where all had come from . . . " A person with long hair in the house tells him that his grandfather had made the things for him. After marrying this person and having a son, man goes to meet his grandfather. He is told by grandfather to follow the sun's path and that he will meet someone who will, "tell you all you want to know." He meets an old woman and has to defend her against evil spirits. The two evil spirits become one to fight man but he overcomes them in a test of strength.

In the beginning of this myth, the man finding consciousness is a vital metaphysical concept related to reality. It establishes the existence of a mind, and separates it from the body. From this point of consciousness, the myth takes man through the evolution of life but from manhood not childhood. He becomes aware of his physique, that it differs from animals and requires special treatment. In the Eskimo mind, this idea indicates that the physical structure did enter into their consciousness. The symbolism that is represented in this story is Self as an important part of existence. A question in symbolism in the myth, is man's first idea that someone was responsible for the cultural tools he was using. The answer is grandfather, who in actuality, represents the wisdom that comes with age. The test man undergoes with the evil spirits tends to be unique and individual. The joining of the two evil spirits is a refinement of spirit-power as the evil in a spirit usually has the necessary power for the particular role. The ability to overcome the evil represents the desire of mankind to overcome the problems of living.

FREEDOM AND DETERMINATION IN FOLKTALES

The propitiation of the spirit-powers by the Eskimos was tied in many cases to the practicalities of ordinary existence. Tabus in the folktales and myth were set up to maintain the order of man's existence here on earth. Boas gives an example:

> When an Eskimo community is on the point of starvation and their religious proscriptions forbid them to make use of the seals that are basking on the ice, the amount of self-control of the whole community, which restrains them from killing these seals, is certainly very great. Cases of this kind are very numerous, and prove that primitive man has the ability to control his impulses, but that this control is exerted on occasions which depend upon the character of the social life of the people . . . (1901, p. 5).

In this case ,reality for the Eskimos is determined by a desire to appease a transcendent force.

A folktale from Little Diomede relates a well-known plot among the Eskimos. It concerns the "Story of Manina," a hunter who visits King Island (Curtis, 1930, p. 124). During the festivities, the hunter and a King Island medicine man decide to go to the spirits below. They journey to this spirit-world underneath the earth, and by good singing receive the pleasure of the spirits in the form of power to bring food to their people. The locus of power in existence is clearly defined in this tale. Spirits, not man, are the final arbitrers of the availability of the animal resources.

A direct appeal for supernatural assistance is recounted in the folktale, "The Tree Man," from the Kotzebue area (Curtis, 1930, p. 183). An old man was treated cruelly by his master and he asks the spirits for help. At this time a tree was washed up on the shore. "The tree gained consciousness; it remembered that it had once lived and stood on a large stream. It recalled memories of drifting hither and thither on the water. Driven by a sudden impulse, the tree decided to become a man . . . " The tree knew nothing of land, or people, and a seabird who also changed into a man, assisted him in learning the ways of men. Then, tree-man slays the wicked master of the old man. Here, man is driven to despair by the problems of existence and seeks a solution by appealing to a higher power than himself. The drift-log as an instrument of supernatural assistance becomes man. There is no allusion here to a particular spirit-power as flexing its supernatural forces, but only to the spirit-force inherent in nature. Reality is again determined for man.

Although determinism was the powerful ideation in Eskimo folktales and mythology, to be properly appeased, often it came as sheer evil against which there was no recourse. Such an account is "The Spirit Marks on the Mens House" (Curtis, 1930, pp. 155-156). In this tale, the young men are in the kashagii at midnight, when a frightful face makes an entrance. The thing "walked on elbows and knees about the room while the youths gazed, hardly daring to draw a breath. It bumped against each bench as it passed, and the young man, unable to resist it, followed in single-file behind the thing, the evil spirit, walking as it did on elbows and knees." In the morning, the people of the village discovered the young men frozen to death on the tundra.

Freedom within this pattern of determinism was quite possible for the Eskimos based on rationalism or plain everyday avoidance of religious proscriptions. However, an open violation of a religious law

when it concerned the society as an entity had to be measured against the possible consequences. For every activity that the supernatural ordered, there was a variety of responses possible, due to the extreme pluralism of the universe. Reality was not contained in one single, all-abiding power but was diffused throughout a spirit-world.

Raven Father, for example, may overstep the bounds of reason for man. In the folktale, "The Men on Earth Get Into Trouble" (Snell, 1925, pp. 54-61), First Man was taken to the Moon with Raven Father. They see the earth people killing too many reindeer, so they send down to earth reindeer that have sharp teeth. "It will teach men a lesson." The men on earth become frightened and could not hunt these reindeer. The old men overcome the reindeer by mixing sour berries with tallow and cause the reindeer to shake their teeth loose. Man did not waste food again, but reindeer never bothered with teeth again. Earth men, it is indicated, did not call on Raven Father for assistance, but met the threat to existence and survived.

IMPRESSIONS OF SPIRITUALISM IN ALASKA ESKIMO FOLKTALES

Coordinate with a discussion of the nature of man, and of the cosmos, is an examination of the nature of the spirits and powers that were part of the universe, as contained in the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska. Central to many of the conceptions of spiritualism is Raven F[illegible] ies are usually associated with creationism, having at some time on impulse created the earth and its people. Beyond this first act of omnipotence, however, these deities are usually sentient in nature, with man dealing with the cosmos by means of other spirits. Radin classifies such a deity:

> The supreme being thus develops into what has been admirably described as an otiose deity, one resting on his laurels after the creation of the world and leaving it entirely to its own devices (1927, p. 354).

In addition to the genesis myth about Raven Father, there are myths that mention other deities and spirits, such as the Great Chief in the Moon, the supernatural Dwarf People, Sun Man, the Big Eagle, Thunderbirds, Sedna, etc. There thus becomes a polytheistic approach to the supernatural world, with great spirits in nature and throughout the cosmos.

As was mentioned in the discussion on cosmogony, Raven Father created the earth and everyone on it. Raven came from the sky and made the earth, when there was nothing but water and gave potentiality to existence and an evolving world, "I am your father. To me you owe your land and your lives and you must never forget me" (Rasmussen, 1932). The sky-world of Raven is like the earth as shamans obtain animal life from there for the earth. First Man lives there, along with Raven Father and the shades of those suffering a violent death. When Raven Father took First Man on a tour of the Sky-world, we discover that it is "a beautiful country with a very much better climate than that on earth, but the people who lived there

were very small." There were poisonous lakes to humans, in which the grass did not bend under weight, and monsters such as one with a long head and six legs. When the first people killed too many of the animals on earth Raven took the sun away for awhile, and then put Bear on earth to scare man (Nelson, 1899, pp. 452-462). As a supernatural, Raven must be associated with creationism, not with evolution in mind, but with setting up the possibilities for life and existence. The other supernaturals maintain order in the cosmos, but Raven is revered and above the ordinary pattern of spirits. He is one of the many forces comprising the ultimate reality of the Eskimos.

SUPERNATURAL ABODES IN FOLKTALES

In the "Origin of the Yu-gi-Yhik," recorded at Ikogmut on the lower Yukon, is told the story of a shaman's visit to the upper world (Nelson, 1899, pp. 494-496). He sees the stars falling and the sky sinking to him, finally resting on a hill top. The stars are in reality round holes in the sky through which the light from above was shining. Going through one of the star holes, he observes another sky, which sinks down, and then another. Looking through the third sky he sees a kashim. Here, there are wooden images of the animal kingdom, sticks in a "V" shape representing Raven Father, and two large hoops representing the heavens arching over the earth. These hoops were attached to the top of the kashim and could be pulled up and down, symbolical of the apparent approach and retreat of the heavens according to conditions of the atmosphere. The shaman takes these ideas of heaven back to earth for the Doll Festival.

Another shamanistic visit is described in "The Big Diomede Medicine Man" (Curtis, 1930, pp. 129-131). Going to the sky, the shaman saw a house with a bird perched on each corner of the roof—crane, loon, eider-duck, and ptarmigan. They are to give warning of the approach of strangers to Sky Man, but shaman's power overcomes them and they tell Sky Man that only a mouse has come. An interesting feature of Sky Man's house is that it is a two-story structure. Sky Man had four spirit powers to assist him, but the power of the shaman overcame them all and he returned to earth.

LESSER CELESTIAL ABSOLUTES IN FOLKTALES

In addition to Raven Father, Sky Man, and similar supernatural conceptions, there are other important deities residing in the cosmos. "The Shaman in the Moon" from Kotzebue Sound tells of a great chief who lives in the moon (Nelson, 1899, pp. 515). From this chief, shaman may obtain animals for their people on earth. The land in the sky is like earth only that the grass grew hanging downward and was filled with snow which fell when the wind blew. Here also, were small round lakes in the grass that shone at night to form the stars. A different view is presented in "The Man Who Lived on the Moon," collected by Garber (1940, pp. 67-76). In this folktale, a beautiful girl finds a finger-sized baby on the tundra, that grows rapidly. One night on the tundra, the girl hears a sound coming from the moon, and there appears

a huge dog pulling a sled, and an individual with magnificent fur clothing. The girl is married to this individual, whose child she has, and is taken back to the moon.

Another version of this moon deity, "A Visit to the Moon," concerns a shaman's visit (Snell, 1925, pp. 136-145). He finds a great igloo guarded by two huge walrus, and uses bear spirits to get by them. He sees the great dog of the Man-In-The-Moon, and meets the deity who warns him not to laugh or Ermine will come out and eat him. Both the Man-In-The-Moon and his wife, who is a beautiful woman, try to make the shaman laugh, but not succeeding he is given a reindeer and a seal to take back to earth. The power of the Man-In-The-Moon is also demonstrated in the folktale "Azaruk and Man-In-The-Moon" (Snell, 1925, pp. 158-171). An orphan boy is mistreated, and Man-In-The-Moon hears his pleas for help. The orphan boy is whipped to make him strong, and finally overcomes three huge bears that threaten the village and thus becomes successful.

From Noatak comes an account of "Sun Man" who has many of the attributes of Man-In-The-Moon (Curtis, 1930, p. 199). Sun Man comes to earth when a girl picks up his son on the tundra and cares for it. He takes the girl and his son back to the sun with him.

"Spider Comes to Earth," tells of a spirit-power visit to earth (Curtis, 1930, pp. 85-86). Spider lived in the sky and liked to watch the people on earth. She saw an industrious man that filled her with desire. This man was transparent to her because of her power. She kills his wife and child and takes him to her sky home. The husband assumes the spirit-powers of a hawk and seagull and lives happily with Spider.

SPIRIT ACTIVITIES AND ABODES IN FOLKTALES

Indicative of the helpful spirit concept in Eskimo folktales is the folktale of "Akchikchuguk" from Sledge Island (Nelson, 1899, pp. 499-505). The plot concerns brothers in search of their beautiful sister. Akchikchuguk has tremendous powers because of the aid of a great spirit. He resuscitates his brothers, draws his arm inside his body, closes his eyes and compels the entire village to do the same, turned his head around on his shoulders, etc. But when he fails to heed an admonition, he loses his power, and turns to stone.

"The Land of Darkness," is visited by a mistreated wife (Nelson, 1899, pp. 511-514). She discovers here a man whose face and hands were coal black, and whose chest was white. All of the animals in the country were coal black also. A powerful spirit provided food for the man and the disgruntled wife. Finally, the woman returns home with many riches.

Spirit assistance is given to the "Strange Boy" in a folktale from Andreivsky on the lower Yukon (Nelson, 1899, p. 490). Making a visit to the far north, the boy visits with a series of clairvoyant individuals who tell him he is hunting for a wife. On his trip he consumes special spirit objects that give him power. He hears a terrible roaring noise

coming from a huge basket floating in the air. Boy invokes thunder and lightening to scare this basket-shaman away. Next, a shaman in the form of an eagle attacks him and he strikes his breast and a gerfalcon darted out of his mouth and through the eagle. Striking his breast a second time, an ermine leaps from his mouth and kills the eagle. He marries a beautiful girl in the kashim of the shaman whom he killed. Fearing that the girl will kill him, Boy slays his wife and returns home.

In the folktale, "How Akokock Became a Medicine-Man," both human and animal spirits assist man (Garber, 1940, pp. 109-114). As an infant, Akokock survives a starvation that kills his parents. Their shades bring him food to eat. Then a whale appears at the entrance to the hut and says, "One is not here to hurt little Akokock. One comes so that Akokock may eat of one's meat." Then the wale came to the entrance four times and the infant ate whale food. As a youth, Akokock again receives help from the animal spirits. Held in a kashim against his will, a small fish on the floor offers to take him home, which he does by increasing in size greatly and swimming across a body of water.

Inanimate objects held power to alter reality. An example is the folktale of the "Symplegades," in which two men are looking for wives (Lantis, 1946, pp. 281-82). They hear a tremendous sound like thunder as they are traveling, and come to a mountain that splits in half and comes together with a great clapping noise. Inside the mountain were round-mouthed people and many crushed kayaks. By paddling swiftly, only the ends of their kayaks were bitten off and they escaped.

The spirits of animals, fishes, and humans had abodes usually in some region under the earth or sea. "The Chief's Wife," describes the visit of a childless wife to the spirit land below the earth (Lantis, 1946, pp. 270-271). While she was traveling below the earth her clothes became old and they were completely blackened. She sees light which is a hole in the ground and through this she returns to earth.

'The Land of the Whale People," tells of the spirit abode of the whales (Curtis, 1930, pp. 151-152). Here the whale spirits gather and determine whether they will go to a particular village of man to be killed. The villages must be clean, as the whales avoid those that are not, and the dead must be buried properly.

In some instances, the underwater world, may be ruled by Sedna, mistress of the sea-mammals, who was their creator. In the folktales and myths, rulers of the spirits of animals and humans is rarely mentioned, as they seem to exist without interference or assistance from spirit-powers. The deities of the polytheistic world of the Eskimos reside apart and have their particular spheres of influence on man.

SUMMARY

The folktales and mythology of the Eskimos of Alaska were examined in the first portion of this discussion to determine the character of the folktale in Eskimo traditions, and their development

as brought out in the folktale collections. The inadequacy of materials available was noted at the turn of the century and at the present time for philosophical interpretation. The widespread homogeneity of Eskimo folktales that was upheld in the early literature was modified by more recent collectors such such as Garber and Lantis. Influence on Eskimo folklore for the pattern of animal tales was ascribed to the Athapascans of the Alaskan mainland and the Indians of the Northwest Coast. Hero tales were considered to be characteristic of Eskimo folktales. Both Sedna and Raven appear in the folktales, with Raven being of more importance. Raven is essentially connected with creationism, rather than as a trickster. The folktale of the Sun and the Moon appears to be widely distributed throughout the Alaskan culture area. It was suggested that Eskimo folktales especially in Alaska, have remained conservative because of their rigidity of presentation and interpretation. The folktale setting in the kashim was described and the mannerisms used in story-telling.

The first of three important concepts in metaphysics is discussed, the cosmological implications discernable in the folktale of the Eskimos of Alaska. Evolutionism and creationism were analyzed for particular application to the folktales. Evolutionary creation myths were mentioned as having no prime instrument of creation. Water becomes the basic substance of the universe in the approach to reality. Creationism is illustrated by creation myths concerning Raven Father, who creates heaven and earth, and humanity. Raven proves the "cosmological argument" for the Eskimos, as he presents those aspects of transcendental activity that would be connected with a supreme being. Evolutionism and creationism, however, are suggested as being itnerwoven in many of the creation myths. Then ,several origin myths were discussed concerning the origin of light, of thunder and lightening, of the winds, and of the land.

Considerations of the nature of man in reality were next discussed, being the second important concept of metaphysical thought dealt with in the paper. The essential nature of self was examined and shades or spirits, sometimes three in number, a consciousness of mind, and body, all were related to the essential self-concept of the Eskimos. It was indicated that spirits of both man and animal were similar or identical and that both resided in the spirit-world below the earth. Freedom and determinism were related to Eskimo thought in the folktales and it was noted that spiritualism to a large extent postulated an aura of determinism in the cosmos.

Finally, the third component of an analysis of the metaphysics of the Eskimos, spiritualism was examined. Central of the conceptions of creationism was a particular deity who was limited in power Beyond the acts of creationism, this deity was usually sentient in nature, with man dealing with the cosmos through other spirits. Chief in the Moon, Sun Man, Big Eagle, Thunderbirds, Sky Man, were some of the deities operating in the cosmos. The abodes of the supernaturals

and of spirits were noted in the folktales. It was indicated that the deities of the polytheistic world of the Eskimos maintained their own spheres of spiritual influence in the cosmos.

CONCLUSIONS

Metaphysically, the folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska suggest that the universe of the Eskimos is an organized one, with a particular pattern and design being evident in proof of the "cosmological argument"

From the folktale collections available, it would seem that in this ordered cosmos self would comprise spirits, two or three in number, a consciousness or mind, and a physical structure. Eskimo man related his reality to the supernatural or natural world about him, and tended toward determinism.

The supernatural world seems comprised of a deity of creation, and other deities that deal with man within their spheres of influence, thus, indicating a polytheistic tendency in the folktales

As to the folktale collections, it is believed that an analytical examination of folktales of the Eskimos of Alaska, other than as to literary style, would fill a decided gap in the literature. Many of the available studies tend to define the Eskimo peoples culturally, as one pure homogeneity, in particular their folktales, and thus, tend to omit vital portions of the folktales for interpretation. Gaps in the spread of the Raven Father myths were noted as well as for that of Sedna, mistress of the seas, for the Eskimos of Alaska. It is believed that a standardization of collections could be achieved through the establishment of some central agency to secure folktales of these people.

Bibliography

Barnum, Francis B.
1901. Grammatical Fundamentals of The Innuit Language. Boston.

Boas, Franz
1894. Notes on The Eskimo of Port Clarence, Alaska, Folklore: No. 3. **Collected Papers** (Boas), Vol. II, 1885-1920.
1901. The Mind of Primitive Man. **The Journal of American Folklore**, Vol. XIV. Richmond.
1904. The Folklore of The Eskimo. **The Journal of American Folklore**, Vol. XVII, pp. 1-13. Richmond.

Borgoras, Waldemar
1902. The Folklore of Northeastern Asia as Compared with That of Northwestern America. **American Anthropologist**, n.s., Vol. 4, pp. 577-683. Menasha.

Butler, J. Donald
1951. Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion. New York.

Curtis, Edward
1930. The North American Indian. Vol. XX. Norwood.

Garber, Clark M.
1940. Stories and Legends of The Bering Strait. Boston.

Gordon, George Byron
1917. In The Alaskan Wilderness. Philadelphia.

Jenness, Diamond
1924. Notes and Traditions from Northern Alaska, The Mackenzie Delta, and Coronation Gulf. **Report of The Canadian Arctic Expedition,** Southern Party, 1913-16, Vol. XIII. Ottawa.

Lantis, Margaret
1946. The Social Culture of The Nunivak Eskimo. **Transactions of The American Philosophical Society,** Vol. XXXV, pt. 3. Philadelphia.

Murdoch, John
1886. A Few Legendary Fragments from The Point Barrow Eskimos. **American Naturalist.** Vol. XX, pp. 593-99. Lancaster.

Nelson, Edward William
1899. The Eskimo About Bearing Strait. **Bureau of American Ethnology, Annual Report,** No. 18, pt. 1. Washington.

Radin, Paul
1927. Primitive Man as Philosopher. New York.

Rasmussen, Knud
1932. The Eagle's Gift. New York.

Ray, Lt. P. H.
1885. Ethnographic Sketch of The Natives of Point Barrow. **Report of The International Polar Expedition to Point Barrow, Alaska.** Washington.

Snell, Roy J.
1925. Eskimo Legends. Boston.

Thompson, Stith
1951. The Folktale. New York.

College of Education
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

ANTHROPOLOGICAL PAPERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

Vol. 1, No. 1 — Price $1.50

OBSERVATIONS ON THE "ESKIMO TYPE" OF KINSHIP AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE ..... J. L. Giddings, Jr.
NOTES ON KONIAG MATERIAL CULTURE ..... Robert F. Heizer
THE ALEUT-ESKIMO COMMUNITY ..... W. S. Laughlin
THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF HOOPER BAY VILLAGE, ALASKA ..... Wendell Oswalt

---

Vol. 1, No. 2 — Price $1.50

STRAY NOTES ON THE ESKIMO OF ARCTIC ALASKA ..... Diamond Jenness
THE SAUCER-SHAPED LAMP OF THE ESKIMO ..... Wendell Oswalt
CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS OF FOLKLORE COLLECTING AND STUDY ..... Viola E. Garfield
NEW WORLD AFFINITIES OF CAPE DORSET ESKIMO CULTURE ..... Elmer Harp, Jr.
EVIDENCE OF EARLY TUNDRA CULTURES IN NORTHERN ALASKA ..... William Irving

---

Vol. 2, No. 1 — Price $2.00

RECENT POTTERY FROM THE BERING STRAIT REGION ..... Wendell Oswalt
CARVED HUMAN FIGURES FROM ST. LAWRENCE ISLAND, ALASKA ..... James W. VanStone
CHILD BEARING PATTERNS AMONG THE GREAT WHALE RIVER ESKIMO ..... Irma Honigmann and John Honigmann
EARLY INTRUSION OF AGRICULTURE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC SUBARCTIC REGION ..... Gudmund Hatt
NUNIVAK ESKIMO PERSONALITY AS REVEALED IN THE MYTHOLOGY ..... Margaret Lantis

---

Vol. 2, No. 2 — Price $1.50

POTTERY FROM NUNIVAK ISLAND, ALASKA ..... James W. VanStone
PATTERNS OF PREFERENTIAL MARRIAGE AMONG THE ALASKAN HAIDAS ..... Rosemary A. Allen
REGIONAL CHRONOLOGIES IN SPRUCE OF THE KUSKOKWIM RIVER, ALASKA ..... Wendell Oswalt
BUCKLAND ESKIMO MYTHS ..... Charles Lucier