

Quotes from a couple of famous DWEM's of the 19th Century

Edward Burnett Tylor

"In studying both the recurrence of special habits or ideas in several districts and their prevalence within each district, there come before us ever reiterated proofs of regular causation producing the phenomena of human life, and of laws of maintenance and diffusion according to which these phenomena settle into permanent standard conditions of society, at definite stages of culture."

"Among evidence aiding us to trace the courses which the civilization of the world has actually followed, is that great class of facts to denote which I have found it convenient to introduce the term 'survivals.' These are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has evolved."

"The quality of mankind which tends most to make the systematic study of civilization possible is that remarkable tacit consensus or agreement which so far induces whole populations to unite in the use of the same language, to follow the same religion and customary law, to settle down to the same general level of art and knowledge... There is found to be such regularity in the composition of societies of men that we can drop individual differences out of sight, and thus can generalize... In some branches of the study of social laws it is now possible to call in the aid of statistics... That a whole nation should have a special dress, special tools and weapons, special laws of marriage and property, special moral and religious doctrines is a remarkable fact, which we notice so little because we have lived all our lives in the midst of it. It is with such general qualities of organized bodies of men that ethnography has especially to deal."

"The study of language has, perhaps, done more than any other in removing from our view of human thought and action the ideas of chance and arbitrary invention, and substituting for them a theory of development by the cooperation of individual men, through processes ever reasonable and intelligible when the facts are fully known. Rudimentary as the science of culture still is, the symptoms are becoming very strong that even what seem its most spontaneous and motiveless phenomena will, nevertheless, be shown to come within the range of distinct cause and effect as certainly as the facts of mechanics... In carrying out the great task of ethnography, the investigation of the causes which have produced the phenomena of culture, and the laws to which they are subordinate, it is desirable to work out as systematically as possible a scheme of evolution of this culture along its many lines."

"[But] of his many contributions it was Tylor's definition of the concept of culture that is most enduring. By arguing for a non-biological basis of social difference Tylor stepped away from the racial explanation that characterized Western thought since the ancient Greeks. By outlining general principles of social life, Tylor gave new directions to comparative inquiry into human life. Finally, in defining the cultural dimension of human existence, Edward Tylor created anthropology, the study of humankind." (Richard Moore)

Lewis Henry Morgan

"Each of these [ethnical] periods has a distinct culture and exhibits a mode of life more or less special and peculiar to itself. This specialization of ethnical periods renders it possible to treat a particular society according to its condition of relative advancement, and to make it a subject of independent study and discussion."

"[There is] accumulating evidence tending to show that the principal institutions of mankind have been developed from a few primary germs of thought; and that the course and the manner of their development was predetermined, as well as restricted within narrow limits of divergence, by the natural logic of the human mind and the necessary limitations of its powers. Progress has been found to be substantially the same in kind in tribes and nations inhabiting different and even disconnected continents, while in the same status, with deviations in uniformity in particular instances produced by special causes. The argument when extended tends to establish the unity of origin of mankind."

"Human progress, from first to last, has been in a ratio not rigorously but essentially geometrical... Every item of absolute knowledge gained became a factor in further acquisitions, until the present complexity of knowledge was attained... It may be suggested... that the progress of mankind in the period of savagery, in its relation to the sum of human progress, was greater in degree than it was afterwards in the three sub periods of barbarism; and that the progress made in the whole period of barbarism was, in like manner, greater in degree than it has been since the entire period of civilization"

If we assume a hundred thousand years as the measure of man's existence upon the earth in order to find out the relative length of each period... it will be seen at once that at least sixty thousand years must be assigned to the period of savagery. Three fifths of the life of the most advanced portion of the human race [Europeans], on this apportionment, were spent in savagery. Of the remaining years, twenty thousand, or one fifth should be assigned to the Older period of Barbarism. For the Middle and Later periods there remain fifteen thousand years, leaving five thousand, more or less, for the period of civilization"