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A Revolutionary Anthropologist Before His Time: Intellectual Biography of Edward Westermarck

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Anthropologists write from time to time about ancestor worship among peoples they study, but they are selective with respect to their own cult. In the texts that cover the history of our discipline, certain names take pride of place (e.g. Tylor, Mauss, Boas, Evans-Pritchard, Steward, Geertz and Turner) and others are neglected. Edward Westermarck is still neglected by the authors of most student texts and readers in the history of anthropology apart from brief discussions of his controversial ideas concerning the universal aversion toward incest. That situation may now be changing.

In 1982, Timothy Stroup edited an excellent volume of essays about him that should have had more impact. In recent years interest in his work has been rekindled. Two fine essay collections have appeared in the last five years (Shankland 2014; Lagerspetz, Antfolk, Gustafsson and Kronqvist 2016) as well as papers by Shankland, Lyons 2017 and Leck 2017. In 1999, Juhani Ihanus's book on Westermarck was published by Peter Lang. Routledge has reissued some of his more important studies, and many of his writings are now in print again. Yet more can be downloaded from sources such as Gutenberg and Internet Archive. The reasons for the revival of interest are probably diverse. They include Westermarck's status as a pioneer in the anthropology of homosexualities and his anticipation of some of the ideas of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. Attention has also been called to his interesting work on ethical relativism. It is now noted that he was one of the first anthropologists to do intensive fieldwork, something for which his student Malinowski was

once given credit, but his ethnographies certainly initiated no revolutions in anthropology.

Outline of Career

Edward (Edvard) Westermarck was born in 1862. His parents were prosperous members of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, which was then a part of Russia, struggling hard to preserve its semi-autonomous status. His father became Bursar of the University of Helsingfors (Helsinki) and his mother was the daughter of the university's Librarian. He entered university in 1881, and received his first degree in 1886, specializing in philosophy only towards the end of his undergraduate career. For the rest of his life he was to work in an interdisciplinary border-zone, fashioned by his own intellectual journeys in anthropology and moral philosophy. Around 1885, he became a declared disciple of Charles Darwin. In 1886 he began a thesis on the origin of the family which was published in 1891 as *The History of Human Marriage* . The research involved a visit to London, during which he became acquainted with British pioneers in anthropology, including E. B. Tylor.

In 1893 Westermarck began his teaching career at Helsingfors (Helsinki), an association which lasted 25 years. He was to become Professor of Philosophy there in 1907. In 1898, Westermarck began fieldwork in Morocco. He was to make as many as 21 visits to the country over a 30-year period, spending a total of 7 years there. Much of his fieldwork was conducted in summers before and a few years after the Great War, but there were also protracted stays, including one continuous stay of two years and two months (1900-1902). Westermarck's magnum opus, the two-volume, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, was published in 1906-1908. It reflected his command of written sources in anthropology, moral philosophy and psychology, but it also incorporated findings from his Moroccan fieldwork. By the time it appeared Westermarck was holding appointments in two universities in different countries, the London School of Economics (from 1904) and Helsingfors. In 1906, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy in Helsingfors, and in 1907 became Martin White Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics (LSE). Usually he would teach for two terms in Finland, teach for a term in London and then spend the summer in Morocco. His monograph, *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco*, appeared in 1914.

Westermarck's yearly routine was disrupted by World War I, thirty months of which he spent continuously in London. For a while, Westermarck's advocacy of Finnish independence from Russia meant that he was both more effective and safer staying in the London area. Although Germany was training Finns to fight Russia, Westermarck was sufficiently integrated into the British establishment and sufficiently discreet that he avoided suspicion. He used some of his time in London and his rented cottage in Surrey preparing a substantially revised three-volume edition of *The History of Human Marriage* which was eventually to appear in 1921. In 1917, he was on the sidelines and somewhat suspicious when the Mensheviks proclaimed the autonomy of Finland. One result of the war was that Finland did achieve independence. In September 2018 Westermarck returned to Finland, but to a different university. He had accepted an appointment as Professor of Anthropology and Rector of a new university for Swedish-speaking Finns at Åbo Akademi.

He was supplanted by his deputy who was elected in his stead in 1921. This was because he had spent too much time away on other political and academic commitments. No longer an administrator, he continued to pursue a bi-national academic life.

In 1923, after a ten-year gap, he resumed his fieldwork visits to Morocco. In 1926, his publishers, Macmillan, brought out the two-volume work, which he considered his ethnographic masterpiece, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*. It was followed by *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco* in 1930. Westermarck's autobiography, the primary source for this outline, was published in Swedish in 1927 and in English as *Memories of my Life* in 1929. He retired from LSE in 1930 and from Åbo a couple of years later, but he continued writing. *Ethical Relativity*, a philosophical work which honed and reformulated arguments that had been stated implicitly in earlier writings, particularly *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, came out in 1932. In the 1930s Westermarck also wrote *Three Essays on Sex and Marriage* (1934), *The Future of Marriage in Western Civilization* (1936) and *Christianity and Morals* (1939). He lived just long enough to hear the news of the Nazi invasion of Poland.

Marriage and Incest

> "….marriage is nothing else than a more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond a mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring(Westermarck 1901: 69,70)."

Despite the protests of Sir Henry Maine and until the publication of Westermarck's first book, most Victorian anthropologists and their readers accepted some version of the misnamed "matriarchal" theory which traced the evolution of the family from the zero point of primitive promiscuity to the apogee of Victorian monogamy. In the earliest stages (primitive promiscuity and then group marriage), women were treated as chattels and subject to violence. Because women were made to have several mates, there was necessarily ignorance of actual physiological paternity, preparing the ground for matrilineal descent. The formation of exogamous matrilineal kinship groups supposedly coincided with an improvement in the status of women (Bachofen thought that Greek myths revealed a brief period of matriarchy), although polygyny remained common at this stage of evolution. The move to patrilineal descent and eventually to what we now call cognatic kinship was coincident with the rise of civilization. Proof of the former existence of primitive promiscuity and or group marriage took the form of cultural survivals such as classificatory kinship terminologies, moiety systems, brother-sister exchanges, Australian secondary "marriages", and the rare *ius primae noctis* (right of the lord or social superior to the bride on the first night). Variants of this theory with different additions (e.g. the stage of polyandry and infanticide in McLennan's writing) were common ground for Morgan, Lubbock, Bachofen and McLennan. The status of women improved up to the stage of "mother right", and, despite a few blips in the early stages of patriarchy, was improving in Victorian Times. Paradoxically, although men were responsible for the mistreatment of women in prehistoric times and were the more aggressive sex, they were seen as the innovators and creators of culture.

Sir Charles Darwin, who was John Lubbock's neighbour and friend, read the work of these matriarchal theorists and concluded that he had to accept their word about primitive promiscuity and the consequent absence of the family unit in the earliest human societies, although he found it difficult to believe that absolute promiscuity existed in any group that was recognizably human. He was somewhat puzzled because such apparent evidence contravened what he knew about primate evolution and the little that had been written about many monkeys and the great apes (Darwin 1874: 588-581. The apes appeared to move around in small family groups, although chimpanzees sometimes moved around in groups. Orangutans were "monogamous" for short periods, and gorillas appeared to be "polygamous." A male stayed with his female partner during pregnancy and for some time after the infant was born in order to protect the family and secure food supply. This was necessary because of the nature of the terrain, sparse food supply, predators, length of pregnancy and prolonged infancy. For reasons of jealousy a male would chase off his competitors (ibid.).. There was no promiscuity, no matriarchy Westermarck, following Darwin, assumed that apes were the evolutionary model for humans, and believed that monogamy was the more usual form of marriage from the very start. More than forty years later he was to acknowledge that new data showed that there was much more variation in primate social organization, because a lot more had been learned in the interim.

Westermarck had decided to pursue the question of primitive promiscuity as his doctoral thesis. Although he was at first a follower of the matriarchal theorists, the more he read the more he became convinced that Darwin had erred in giving ground to them. Using the same comparative method that they had so often employed (a seemingly infinite list of similarities and differences: "Among the Wotjabaluk … and also among the Pitjanjara we find X — but contrarily among the Tasmanians we find Y"), he showed that there was little evidence of primitive promiscuity anywhere, and that some form of marriage, albeit not always marked by a ceremony, existed among all peoples. However varied marriage rules might be, some sort of marriage rule was always present. Many of the old reports of promiscuity were compiled by missionaries with little knowledge of the peoples they studied and basic misunderstandings of simple matters, such as the fact that an absence of clothing need not signify an absence of modesty. Some more recent missionary sources such as E. H. Man on the Andamanese and John Mathew on the Australian Aborigines were more reliable. Premarital sex was not necessarily a form of promiscuity. In some societies, it was an approved period of experimentation before marriage. Societal breakdown in the wake of European conquest often resulted in an increase in extra- marital sex, but this was a consequence of modernity rather than a primordial condition. Because there were few unmarried people in primitive societies there were less inducements toward extramarital sex and irregular sexual relations than in modern society where people tended to marry late and many did not marry at all: "Irregular connections between the sexes have on the whole exhibited a tendency to increase along with the progress of civilization (Westermarck 1901:69)."

Westermarck also regarded the evidence provided by purported cultural survivals as

implausible. Classificatory kinship terminologies did not in any way signify marriage practices (or the lack of them) in past times. Secondary "marriages" in Australia were probably nothing more than ritual expressions of hospitality. The position of women was improving in recent times, but there was no simple progression in women's rights. The position of women in many of the simplest human groups was in many ways better than that in societies with elementary agriculture. Much of what Westermarck said in *The History of Human Marriage* resembles the findings of modern anthropology, but some of the language, such as the constant references to "lower races" jars on the modern ear. Moreover, although not to the extent of contemporaries such as Havelock Ellis and Ernest Crawley, he counters assertions about oversexed, promiscuous savages, with statements that seem to imply the opposite. He believed that a mating season once existed in human groups, and that during other times sexual urges were relatively quiescent. Selective pressure favoured births at a time when the food supply was at its maximum.

Sexual restraint also featured as a major theme in Westermarck's writing about incest and exogamy. He first advanced his well-known hypothesis in the first edition of *The History of Human Marriage*, and he was still defending it in the 1930s when the vogue for Freudian theory had made it distinctly unfashionable. Following Antfolk and Wolf (2016) as well as Segerstrale (2016) we can identify the four factors involved in the purported Westermarck effect:

First, given that the children of unions between close relatives have a disproportionate number of genetic defects, it is not surprising that selective pressure is exerted on the psyche in such a way that people are less attracted to close kin. This is the ultimate cause of the taboo.

2. Secondly, if two individuals are raised together from early childhood, they will develop an aversion to sexual relations with each other. Most people in this category will be close kin. This is a proximate cause of the taboo.

3. Thirdly, it must be noted that nature is imperfect, and consequently the aversion will develop more or less in some people compared to others.

4. Explicit rules (the taboo) against incest are evident in all societies.

Let us first note that Westermarck speaks of an *innate* aversion and also talks of an *instinct*, and sometimes of a *body of reflexes*. *Instinct* as such is a nineteenth century concept in biology. Its usage in Westermarck's writing is a bit slippery. Moreover, one is not necessarily *born* with an aversion concerning contact with someone who happens to be near you. One might acquire such an aversion through a process that we would now dub "negative sexual imprinting." Those affected would include close kin but, additionally, non-kin with whom one also spent one's infancy. The third factor explains why an explicit rule is necessary. Westermarck's critics would often say that, if there were indeed an innate aversion, there would be no need for a rule. Westermarck's response was that the aversion was not

universally experienced in even measure. Furthermore, one could hardly say that most of the population is inclined to murder, but there is still a law about it.

One weakness of Westermarck's theory was that he failed to distinguish implicit or explicit rules/taboos against incestuous mating in all societies from rules concerning lineage/village exogamy which might affect large numbers of people (and involved marriage rather than just acts of sexual intercourse). Indeed, that is one reason why the taboo is included in a book whose subject is marriage. His response was that they were in origin the same. If people lived together in close proximity a sentiment of aversion might involve many people. Furthermore, in certain circumstances exogamy rules might be extended to spatially and genealogically distant kin in one's group, or to outsiders by extension of the criterion in use for group membership.

Not unsurprisingly, the Freudian hypothesis that assumed the existence of incestuous desire and its repression as an universal stage in childhood was particularly offensive to Westermarck. In *Three Essays on Sex and Marriage* (see Ihanus 2016: 30-35) he raised all the classic arguments against Freudianism: the experience of neurotics is not the experience of all of humanity; there is no proof that the unconscious exists; Freud's notion of the sexual drive in children is ill defined and dubious. Demolishing Freud's mythic justification (in *Totem and Tabu)* for the incest taboo, the guilt of the males in the primal horde after their slaughter of the father and their worship of animal surrogates, was an easy task to accomplish, given the narrative's tenuous relation to ethnographic fact. However, while few of Westermarck's contemporaries in the 1930s saw Freud's story of parricide as anything more than a charter myth, belief in the universality of incestuous desire has been more pervasive. It is assumed to exist not just by Freudians and neo-Freudians but also by functionalists who see the importance of the rule in stabilizing the family and by structuralists who view the incest taboo and the exogamy rules as factors that promote exchange.

In the last 50 years, however, an increasing number of studies have given empirical backing to Westermarck's hypothesis (see Antfolk and Wolf 2016; Segerstrale 2016). These include Shepher's work (1971) on 65 kibbutzniks, boys and girls, who were raised in communal nurseries. There was no sexual attraction and there were no relationships between members of the two sexes in later life. Subsequently the work of Arthur Wolf also supported the existence of the Westermarck effect. Wolf studied *inter alia* a custom in Taiwan and pre-Communist China called *Shim-Pua* marriage (Wolf 1970; Wolf and Huang 1980). Males in a village would adopt young girls at an early age. They would marry the sons of the host families with whom they had been raised. The fertility rate was 30% below normal and the divorce rate was high. There have been subsequent studies to similar effect. Not unsurprisingly, the existence of the Westermarck effect has been promoted by proponents of sociobiology such as Robin Fox, Lionel Tiger and E.O. Wilson (see Wilson 1998). Whether or not one agrees with Westermarck's argument, it is germane to note that it is decidedly *au courant* 130 years after it was formulated. That cannot be said for the remaining argument of

The History of Human Marriage , and furthermore it has been often misunderstood.

Nobody today will see the need for an extended proof that primitive promiscuity is a fiction, which was Westermarck's primary aim in writing *The History of Human Marriage*. Unfortunately, his definition of marriage can easily be read today as a heteronormative statement, naturalizing patriarchy. If one combines this statement with his use of words like "savages" and "lower races", which, regrettably were the argot of his time, and then add his subsequent repetition of Havelock Ellis's quip that the Sabine women may have quite enjoyed being carted off [1] (1906-1908,I: 658), one might see a reason for Calverton's argument nearly 90 years ago that he was a sexual conservative and for Leck's statements, in an informative essay on Westermarck's Moroccan fieldwork, that Westermarck not only legitimized "male sadism", but also in *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* "legitimized the moral order of the Christian bourgeoisie at home and Western imperialism abroad (Leck 2017: 79 and 75). On the other hand, Lindberg (2008 and 2015) views Westermarck as a progressive who took radical stands on many issues, particularly sexual politics. For reasons we shall now state we think Lindberg is correct.

Darwinism, secularism and sex

Westermarck's Darwinism was clearly linked to an increasingly firm, even intransigent atheism. Westermarck was one of 221 students who signed a petition requesting that confirmation in the Lutheran Church should no longer be a requirement for full Finnish citizenship. Confirmation involved a recital of the Creed and thereby stating one's belief in the Trinity. The law was modified some years later, but the movement attracted unfavourable attention in the Press. In his autobiography, Westermarck made it clear that he attended church services when it was socially necessary, but he personally disliked prescribed ritual forms in his own society to the point of avoiding academic ceremonial, a necessary exception being made for his own installation as Rektor at Åbo. He was not even keen on humanist ceremonies, because there was no need to worship anything, least of all humanity. In 1905 he was one of the founders of the Association Prometheus in Finland, an atheist society, along with his students Rafael Karsten and Rolf Lagerborg.

The History of Human Marriage, a very Darwinian work in many ways, had an introductory note written by Alfred Russel Wallace. It was an interesting alliance, because the co-discoverer of evolution was a spiritualist and a socialist, unlike Westermarck, and also supported, as did Westermarck, a number of progressive causes including the emancipation of women. A constant theme in Westermarck's writing about organized religion is his opposition to the sexual repression so often enjoined by devotees of the major monotheistic religions, particularly Christianity. He opposed traditional arguments that the sex act was unclean, that women were impure, and that homosexuality was unnatural and wrong. His anti-Christianity takes centre stage in his last work, *Christianity and Morals*.

There has been speculation about Westermarck's sexuality. A close reading of *Memories of My Life* makes it very clear that the expert on heterosexual marriage turned down a few offers

from women and never had a heterosexual relationship. He was close to his mother and his sister Helena, a prominent writer. He appears to have had a number of close male friendships, but there is no hint that any of these friendships involved any sexual engagement. It is a notable fact that a number of the anthropologists and sexologists who were involved in the demolition of mid-Victorian ideas of human evolution and/or sexual propriety, did not themselves have "normal", heterosexual married lives. In *irregular Connections* (2004) Harriet Lyons and I observed that this was true of Westermarck's friend, Havelock Ellis (who wrote of his '"urolagnia" and his "semi-detached" marriage, Marie Stopes (her unconsummated first marriage), and possibly C. Staniland Wake and Ernest Crawley.

Westermarck's discussion of homosexuality in *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (Chapter XVIII of Volume 2), was the first in the history of anthropology (if one excludes Sir Richard Burton's rather eccentric survey in the Terminal Essay appended to his edition of *The Arabian Nights*). It consists of a worldwide survey, demonstrating a variety of same sex practices (or a lack thereof) and a variety of attitudes towards them that is in no way clearly correlated with any schema of social evolution. In Sub-Saharan Africa, homosexuality is less manifest and rarely tolerated. Among Polynesians like the Tahitians there is a ritual role for homosexuals. In some Siberian societies they are shamans. Westermarck was inclined to think that homosexuality was innate, but he noted that, in circumstances that dictated an absence of opposite sex partners, it might also be an acquired trait. There was a high incidence of homosexuality in societies with a segregated military corps such as Sparta, monastic or semi-monastic traditions (e.g. Moroccan scribes) and other strong forms of gender segregation, such as Ancient Athens where women lived in a separate world and were treated like chattels. Judaism and Christianity were both highly intolerant of homosexuals, although Westermarck noted an improvement since the Enlightenment. He thought the unfortunate trend had commenced with Jewish rejection of the customs of their Canaanite neighbours including the employment of male temple prostitutes. In some of his later writings, such as *The Future of Marriage*, Westermarck noted that there was clearly a bisexual potential in all humans at birth, and in certain circumstances that potential would be developed in individuals who might otherwise be heterosexual. Additionally, at least 2% of the population, possibly more according to some American studies, was homosexual. While heterosexual aversion to homosexual acts was understandable, there was no valid rationale for laws preventing homosexuality between consenting adults. Westermarck also thought that masturbation was perfectly natural. He also noted that not all societies shared Europeans' concerns about bestiality. Westermarck's survey of differing cultural responses to sexual variation was clearly less than value neutral. It was directed toward the removal of restrictions which he saw as rooted in religious intolerance.

In 1913, some of Westermarck's associates and friends founded the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology. These included George Ives, Edward Carpenter and Laurence Housman, all gay activists. Women were admitted within a year of its foundation, and among them were the lesbian and feminist Edith Ellis, wife of Havelock, the feminist Stella

Browne and the militant suffragist, Cicely Hamilton. Both Westermarck and his friend, Havelock Ellis (they corresponded and met around 1902 after reading each other's work) presented papers to the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology. The gay German Jewish sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld attended the first meeting of the group, and Norman Haire, the Australian sexologist, became a member in the 1920s. The group was initially focussed on homosexuality, but its discussions were free ranging, including feminism, free love, free divorce and abortion.

Feminists were therefore very much part of Westermarck's milieu, and in his autobiography he describes his pleasure at being invited to join the board of two feminist associations (Westermarck 1929: 98). Perhaps through Havelock Ellis Westermarck became a follower of the Swedish feminist, Ellen Key, whose views are at odds with later second and third wave feminism. Key was a fervent supporter of suffrage and women's rights in general, but she believed that women were more nurturant and sensitive in nature. Westermarck also believed, as a Darwinian, that men were more courageous than women, and were the natural defenders of the family group. Women therefore had an evolutionary disadvantage (which in other ways was an evolutionary advantage) in that they were less fitted for leadership roles. This is, of course, a patriarchal position by current standards, but Westermarck was nonetheless surprised when the American writer, V. F. Calverton, accused him of legitimating patriarchy and its expression in monogamy in *The History of Human Marriage*. Calverton was a defender of the 1920s matriarchal theorist, Robert Briffault, who had (like Engels, to a degree, before him) altered the very sexist mid-Victorian narrative of social evolution to give women the advantage in the age of matrilineal descent. Westermarck, who had in fact demonstrated that the treatment of women in primitive societies was often far better than it appeared in speculative accounts of promiscuity and group marriage, emphasized that Calverton had misread his work, and failed to recognize the moral relativism that pervaded it (Westermarck 1934:348). Westermarck did not think that monogamous marriage in its present form necessarily had a future. In a future society with full female emancipation the family would be a very different institution.

Ethical Relativity

Westermarck's book on moral relativism appeared in 1932, towards the end of his long career. That book recommends a position that had developed between the 1880s and 1906 when the first volume of *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* appeared. In the editions of *History of Human Marriage* that appeared before 1921 (the first substantial revision), a degree of relativism is implicit in the attack on the legends of primitive promiscuity and group marriage, but there is still quite a bit of social evolutionist baggage. Sometime in the late 1890s more and more of that baggage was discarded (see von Wright 1982), and the fieldwork in Morocco was another decisive step. *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* is an expression of relativism, but the concept is unnamed. The words, "relativism" or "relativity," are not found in the text. They belong to a slightly later time. It should be emphasized that the discussion of homosexuality is only one of many instances of relativism in the two

volumes. For example, the discussion of human sacrifice is also memorable. The important point is that, after Einstein and just before Whorf, the idea of relativism was in the air, and Westermarck well knew how applicable it was to his comparative analyses.

Boas and Westermarck were contemporaries who independently developed relativist approaches grounded in the rejection of sweeping evolutionary hypotheses. In theory, Boas's relativism arose from the idealist tradition in nineteenth century German thought, whereas Westermarckian relativity was linked to a Darwinian, materialist tradition. Boas was concerned with every aspect of culture, whereas Westermarck was concerned with ethics and morality only. In fact, both anthropologists started out with empirical critiques of evolutionist nostrums and ended up in a similar place, rejecting highly ethnocentric narratives of primitive alterity (see Lyons 2017).

According to Westermarck (1932), moral judgments (and concepts) are based on retributive sentiments and emotions of disapproval and approval. One may react to the actions or perceived actions of others in one's own group with a desire to punish them or to reward them (the word "retributive" is used in a positive as well as a negative sense). Moral judgements are to be distinguished from simple emotional reactions like rage, a desire for vengeance, and gratitude because they are impartial and disinterested. My sentiments concerning the actions of another can become a moral judgment if a totally impartial third party would have reached a similar conclusion.

Emotional drives are rooted in a system of biological adaptations. They are arrayed into more complex patterns or "sentiments" such as "love". Westermarck's understanding of "sentiments" is based on the work of his older friend, the barrister and psychologist, Alexander Faulkner Shand, great grandfather of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (e.g. Shand 1914). Inasmuch as moral judgments derive from emotions, they cannot form part of any rational schema. One cannot elicit any set of norms based on any universal ground rule. Emotions go through multiple filters, cognitive, environmental and social. They are reasoned out, processed in thought, reflect the individual's history and interactions with a social group with its own customary patterns of acting and feeling.

Westermarck accordingly rejects the possibility of normative ethics, of the existence of universal moral principles. For him, moral concepts (y) are relative to emotions (x) with x being the independent and y the dependent variable (see Kronqvist 2014). One cannot describe an emotion, which is in no way reducible to a rational principle, as true or false.

There are some constraints that prevent total arbitrariness. For example, all societies oppose theft and have a concept of unjust killing, albeit their definition of such offences may vary substantially. Secondly, there is the obvious point, implicit in the very idea of moral judgment, that everybody is impelled to act altruistically to benefit those who are included in their group rather than those outside it.

Westermarck acknowledged the difficulties inherent in ethical subjectivism or relativism. It

was more difficult to condemn actions that another group might condone but our peers might consider reprehensible. However, an acknowledgement of such a problem might further critical analysis rather than impede it.

There was some definite limits to Westermarck's relativism, perhaps a hangover from social evolutionism. Although he did not maintain that the earliest societies conducted a war of all against all (hence his denial of primitive promiscuity), he did believe that the altruistic sentiment extended to match the size of the social group during the course of social evolution. As society evolved, one had to act civilly to more people. In this way, Westermarck anticipated Steven Pinker's Darwinian ideas about the extension of altruism, but there is much less of a Hobbesian tone to his argument. Secondly, as Morris Ginsberg noted (Ginsberg 1982: 21), his relativism disappeared when he wrote about the religion in which he had been raised.

One might also note that when "the first sociobiologist", as Westermarck has been called (Lepistö 2016: 194; Sanderson 2018), outlined the ways in which moral emotions were filtered through reason and custom to make moral judgments, he may be said to have anticipated E. O. Wilson's notion of consilience, the sociobiologist's belated concession to culture and history.

Fieldwork and Ethnography

Westermarck's ethnography concentrated on the customs of the Berbers rather than the Arabs of Morocco, on the little tradition of peasant villagers rather than the great tradition of the state (Brown 1982: 232; Dyer 1982:260; after Redfield 1956). He was fluent in the Berber dialects of the country, and also spoke and read Arabic. His command of foreign languages meant that he could be a skilled observer and sometimes a participant in Berber social life. He also set a precedent in terms of acknowledgment of the Other's ethnographic authority. The name of his assistant, Shereef 'Abd-es-Salam al-Baqqali appears underneath his own on the title page of his collection of Moroccan proverbs in Berber and Arabic, *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco* (1930), and he also ensured that al-Baqqali was honoured by the Finnish government.

Westermarck considered the first volume of *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* as his masterpiece. It begins with an attack on the distinction between magic and religion, evident in different ways in the writings of Frazer and Durkheim, convincingly arguing that the common distinction that is made between religion, socially directed propitiation of the sacred through an intercessor, and magic as an impersonal, asocial control of nature, breaks down in practice, because an emotion of awe and a sense of the supernatural surround both religion and magic. This insight is extended to Westermarck's analysis of *baraka* or holiness in Berber culture. With regard to *baraka,* his narrative clearly shows that individuals can achieve it, or begin to lose it, as well as inherit it, and that there are gradations therefore between the sacred and the profane (See Lagerspetz and Suolinna 2016:40). The ethnography also contains extended data on the spirit entities known as *djinn*, on oaths and compurgation, and on the social actions that commence with the gesture or statement called '*Ar*, which

Westermarck and many, like Geertz, who have followed him, interpret as a conditional curse. For example, A is chased by B because he has stolen the latter's sheep. He seeks a protector, C, who will protect him from B. A initiates this contract by kneeling and touching an item of C's clothing. Should C fail in his duty of protection, the *'Ar* may cause him to suffer misfortune.

The volume is an absolute mine of information, but there is a seemingly endless repetition of examples of every single point with snippets culled from different Berber villages and towns all over Morocco. Most of the information is first rather than second-hand, but the way it is presented is far closer to Frazer or Tylor, or indeed earlier Westermarck, than to Malinowski [2]. The book seems to come from a different era than *Ethical Relativity*, though they are only a few years apart. For that matter, the ethnography in the earlier *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* is interesting because it is organized around the nascent notion of relativity. Occasionally, the old debate between advocates of independent invention and diffusion surfaces in the book, as it did in the Huxley lecture Westermarck gave to the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1936. It does so when Westermarck talks about the origin of religion, of the resemblances and differences between ideas about *djinn* in different Berber and Arab cultures, and the possibility that ideas of spirit possession may have diffused from the Zar cult in the Sudan. However, these ideas do not supply a warp and woof to give pattern to the book. There are descriptions of occasional short episodes, vignettes of quotidian life, but little sense of the social structure of any Berber community. Malinowskian functionalism or configurationism à la Benedict might have supplied it. That is why Westermarck's ethnographies are still read by regional specialists only, who may find much of value in his descriptions of *baraka* and folk legal systems (on the latter see Dwyer 1982).

Students and Followers

Malinowski is generally regarded as Seligman's student at LSE, because Seligman did survey fieldwork in Melanesia and was far more involved in the development of Malinowski's fieldwork career. However, Malinowski always acknowledged Westermarck as a mentor, and in the 1920s each scholar apparently visited the other's seminars on many occasions. The younger scholar's first book, *The Family Among the Australian Aborigines* (1912), was a detailed ethnographic test and application of Westermarck's contention that primitive promiscuity existed in no society, but the family was always present.

One of Westermarck's students, Rolf Lagerborg, became a prominent philosopher in Finland. Rafael Karsten, ethnographer of the Jivaro and expert on Amazonia, did obtain professorial rank at Helsinki, but he was not a loyal follower of Westermarck. He quarrelled with Westermarck, with Landtman, with his friend Erland Nordenskiöld, and with Paul Rivet. Gunnar Landtman, another Westermarck student, worked among Kiwai Papuans and wrote an ethnography about them. As a pioneer in humanist ethnography, Hilma Grandqvist achieved some recognition both during her long lifetime and after it for her accounts of the Palestinian village where she did fieldwork. Because of her gender Grandqvist did not achieve the professional success she deserved. Westermarck encouraged and assisted her

when Landtman criticized her methodology.

Lastly, Ashley Montagu's humanistic brand of biosocial anthropology owed a lot to Westermarck, whose seminars he attended. (see Montagu 1982) He told Harriet Lyons and myself that he greatly respected Westermarck, but that Malinowski was his mentor and friend during his years as a student in London (Montagu 1989).

Westermarck had a most successful career, but he founded no school, and that is why his legacy was forgotten till the rise of two very divergent academic trends, gender studies and sociobiology. Had he chosen to spend more of the year in London rather than Helsinki, he might conceivably have had more impact on the immediate history of the discipline, but only if he had come to terms more with the ethnographic revolution.

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[1] e.g. p 658 in *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* , Vol. 1

[2] Brown 1982:220,221.