

M I N D

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OF

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.



I.—MR. MAX MÜLLER AND FETISHISM.

WHAT is the true place of Fetishism, to use a common but unscientific term, in the history of religious evolution? Some theorists have made Fetishism, that is to say, the adoration of odds and ends (with which they have confused the worship of animals, of mountains, and even of the earth), the first moment in the development of worship. Others again think that Fetishism is "a corruption of religion, in Africa, as elsewhere". The latter is the opinion of Mr. Max Müller, who has stated it in his *Hibbert Lectures* on "The Origin and Growth of Religion, especially as illustrated by the Religions of India". It seems probable that there is a middle position between these two extremes. Students may hold that we hardly know enough to justify us in talking about the *origin* of religion, while at the same time they may believe that Fetishism is one of the earliest traceable steps by which men climbed to higher conceptions of the supernatural. Meanwhile Mr. Max Müller supports his own theory, that Fetishism is a "parasitical growth," a "corruption" of religion, by arguments mainly drawn from historical study of savage creeds, and from the ancient religious documents of India. These documents are to English investigators ignorant of Sanskrit "a book sealed with seven seals". The Vedas are interpreted in very different ways by different Oriental scholars. Mr. Max Müller's rendering is certain to have the first claim on English readers, and

therefore it is desirable to investigate the conclusions which he draws from his Vedic studies. The ordinary anthropologist must first, however, lodge a protest against the tendency to look for *primitive* matter in the Vedas. They are the elaborate hymns of a specially trained set of poets and philosophers, living in an age almost of civilisation. They can therefore contain little testimony as to what man while still "primitive" thought about God, the world and the soul. One might as well look for the first germs of religion, for *primitive* religion strictly so called, in the Good Friday articles of the *Daily Telegraph* as in the Vedas. It is chiefly, however, by way of deductions from the Vedas, that Mr. Max Müller arrives at ideas which may be briefly and broadly stated thus: he inclines to derive religion from man's sense of the Infinite, as awakened by natural objects calculated to stir that sense. Our position is, on the other hand, that the germs of the religious sense in early man are developed, not so much by the vision of the Infinite, as by the idea of Power. Early religions, in short, are selfish, not disinterested. The worshipper is not contemplative, so much as eager to gain something to his advantage. In fetishes, he ignorantly recognises something that possesses power of an abnormal sort, and the train of ideas which leads him to believe in and to treasure fetishes is one among the earliest springs of religious belief. Mr. Müller's opinion is the very reverse: he believes that a contemplative and disinterested emotion in the presence of the infinite, or of anything that suggests infinitude or is mistaken for the infinite, begets human religion, while of this religion Fetishism is a corruption.

In treating of Fetishism Mr. Müller is obliged to criticise the system of De Brosses, who introduced this rather unfortunate term to science, in an admirable work, *Le Culte des Dieux Fétiches* (1760). We call the work "admirable," because, considering the contemporary state of knowledge and speculation, De Brosses's book is brilliant, original, and only now and then rash or confused. Mr. Müller says that De Brosses "holds that all nations had to begin with fetishism, to be followed afterwards by polytheism and monotheism". This sentence would lead some readers to suppose that De Brosses, in his speculations, was looking for the origin of religion; but, in reality, his work is a mere attempt to explain a certain element in ancient religion and mythology. De Brosses was well aware that heathen religions were a complex mass, a concretion of many materials. He admits the existence of regard for the spirits of the dead as one factor, he gives Sabaeism a place as another. But what chiefly puzzles him, and what he chiefly tries to explain, is the worship of odds

and ends of rubbish, the adoration of animals, mountains, trees, the sun, and so forth. When he masses all these worships together, and proposes to call them all Fetishism (a term derived from the Portuguese word for a talisman), De Brosses is distinctly unscientific. But when he attempts to explain the animal worship of Egypt, and the respect paid by Greeks and Romans to shapeless stones, as survivals of older savage practices, De Brosses is distinctly scientific.

The position of De Brosses is this: Old mythology and religion are a tissue of many threads. Sabaeism, adoration of the dead, mythopœic fancy, have their part in the fabric. Among many tribes, a form of theism, Islamite or Christian, or self-developed, is superimposed on a mass of earlier superstitions. Among these superstitions, is the worship of animals and plants, and the cult of rough stones and of odds and ends of matter. What is the origin of this element, so prominent in the religion of Egypt, and present, if less conspicuous, in the most ancient temples of Greece? It is the survival, answers De Brosses, of ancient practices like those of untutored peoples, as Brazilians, Samoyedes, Negroes, whom the Egyptians and Pelasgians once resembled in lack of culture.

This, briefly stated, is the hypothesis of De Brosses. If he had possessed our wider information, he would have known that, among savage races, the worships of the stars, of the dead, and of plants and animals, are interlaced by the strange metaphysical processes of wild men. He would, perhaps, have kept the supernatural element in magical stones, feathers, shells, and so on, apart from the triple thread of Sabaeism, ghost-worship, and Totemism, with its later development into the regular worship of plants and animals. It must be recognised however, that De Brosses was perfectly well aware of the confused and manifold character of early religion. He had a clear view of the truth that what the religious instinct has once grasped, it does not, as a rule, abandon, but subordinates or disguises when it reaches higher ideas. And he avers, again and again, that men laid hold of the coarser and more material objects of worship, while they themselves were coarse and dull, and that, as civilisation advanced, they, as a rule, subordinated and disguised the ruder factors in their system. Here it is that Mr. Max Müller differs from De Brosses. He holds that the adoration of stones, feathers, shells, and (as I understand him) the worship of animals are, even among the races of Africa, a corruption of a higher religion, a "parasitical development" of religion.

However, Mr. Max Müller himself held "for a long time" what he calls "De Brosses's theory of fetishism". What made him throw the theory overboard? It was "the fact that, while

in the earliest accessible documents of religious thought we look in vain for any very clear traces of fetishism, they become more and more frequent everywhere in the later stages of religious development, and are certainly more visible in the later corruptions of the Indian religion, beginning with the Âtharvana, than in the earliest hymns of the Rig-Veda". Now, by the earliest documents of religious thought, Professor Max Müller means the hymns of the Rig-Veda. These hymns are composed in the most elaborate metre, by sages of old repute, who, I presume, occupied a position not unlike that of the singers and seers of Israel. They lived in an age of tolerably advanced cultivation. They had wide geographical knowledge. They had settled government. They had wealth of gold, of grain, and of domesticated animals. Among the metals, they were acquainted with that which, in most countries, has been the latest worked—they used iron poles in their chariots. How then can the hymns of the most enlightened singers of a race thus far developed, be called "the earliest religious documents"? Oldest they may be, but that is a very different thing. How can we possibly argue that what is absent in these hymns, is absent because it had not yet come into existence? Is it not the very office of *pri vates et Phoebo digna locuti* to purify religion, to cover up decently its rude shapes, as the unhewn stone was concealed in the fane of Apollo of Delos? If the race whose noblest and oldest extant hymns were pure, exhibits traces of fetishism in its later documents, may not that as easily result from a recrudescence as from a corruption? Professor Max Müller has still to explain how the process of corruption which introduced the same fetishistic practices among Samoyeds, Brazilians, Negroes and the people of the Âtharvana Veda came to be everywhere identical.

We have been occupied, perhaps, too long with De Brosses. Let us now examine, as shortly as possible, Mr. Max Müller's reasons for denying that Fetishism is "a primitive form of religion". The negative side of his argument being thus disposed of, it will then be our business to consider (1) his psychological theory of the subjective element in religion and (2) his account of the growth of Indian religion. The conclusion of the essay will be concerned with demonstrating that Mr. Max Müller's system assigns little or no place to the superstitious beliefs without which, in other countries than India, Society could not have come into organised existence.

In his polemic against Fetishism, it is not always very easy to see against whom Mr. Müller is contending. It is one thing to say that fetishism is a "primitive form of religion," and quite

another to say that it is "the very beginning of all religion". Occasionally he attacks the "Comtian theory," which, I think, is not now held by many people who study the history of man, and which I am not concerned to defend. He says that the Portuguese navigators who discovered among the negroes "no other trace of any religious worship" except what they called the worship of *feitiços*, concluded that this was the whole of the religion of the negroes (p. 61). Mr. Muller then goes on to prove that "no religion consists of fetishism only," choosing his example of higher elements in negro religion from the collections of Waitz. It is difficult to see what bearing this has on his argument. De Brosses (p. 20) shews that *he*, at least, was well aware that many negro tribes have higher conceptions of the Deity, than any which are implied in fetish-worship. Even if no tribe in the world is exclusively devoted to fetishes, the argument makes no progress. Perhaps no tribe is in the way of using unpolished stone weapons and no others, but it does not follow that unpolished stone weapons are not primitive. It is just as easy to maintain that the purer ideas have, by this time, been reached by aid of the stepping stones of the grosser, as that the grosser are the corruption of the purer. Mr. Max Müller constantly asserts that the "human mind advanced by small and timid steps from what is intelligible, to what is at first sight almost beyond comprehension" (p. 126). Among the objects which aided man to take these small and timid steps, he reckons rivers and trees, which excited, he says, religious awe. What he will not suppose is that the earliest small and timid steps were not unaided by such objects as the fetishist treasures—stones, shells, and so forth, which suggest no idea of infinity. Stocks he will admit, but not, if he can help it, stones, of the sort that negroes and Kanakas and other tribes use as fetishes. The reason is, that he cannot see how the scraps of the fetishist can appeal to the feeling of the Infinite, which feeling is, in his theory, the basis of religion.

After maintaining (what is readily granted) that negroes have a religion composed of many elements, Mr. Muller tries to discredit the evidence about the creeds of savages, and discourses on the many minute shades of progress which exist among tribes too often lumped together as if they were all in the same condition. Here he will have all students of savage life on his side. It remains true, however, that certain elements of savage practice, fetishism being one of them, are practically ubiquitous. Thus, when Mr. Muller speaks of "the influence of public opinion" in biassing the narrative of travellers, we must not forget that the strongest evidence about savage practice is derived from the "undesigned coincidence" of testimony.

"Illiterate men, ignorant of the writings of each other, bring the same reports from various quarters of the globe," wrote Millar of Glasgow. When sailors, merchants, missionaries describe, as matters unprecedented and unheard of, such institutions as polyandry, totemism, and so forth, the evidence is so strong, because the witnesses are so astonished. They do not know that any one but themselves has ever noticed the curious facts before their eyes. And when Mr. Muller tries to make the testimony about savage faith still more untrustworthy, by talking of the "absence of recognised authority among savages," do not let us forget that custom (*vóμος*) is a recognised authority, and that the punishment of death is inflicted for transgression of of certain rules. These rules, generally speaking, are of a religious nature, and the religion to which they testify, is of the sort known (too vaguely) as "fetishistic". Let us keep steadily before our minds, when people talk of lack of evidence, that we have two of the strongest sorts of evidence in the world for the kind of religion which least suits Mr. Müller's argument—(1) the undesigned coincidence of testimony, (2) the irrefutable witness of elementary criminal law. Mr. Muller's own evidence is that much-disputed work, where "all men see what they want to see, as in the clouds," and where many see systematised fetishism,—the Veda.

The first step in Mr. Max Müller's polemic, was the assertion that Fetishism is nowhere unmixed. We have seen that the fact is capable of an interpretation that will suit either side. Stages of culture overlap each other. The second step in his polemic was the effort to damage the evidence. We have seen that we have as good evidence as can be desired. In the third place he asks, What are the antecedents of fetish worship? He appears to conceive himself to be arguing with persons (p. 127) who "have taken for granted that every human being was miraculously endowed with the concept of what forms the predicate of every fetish, call it power, spirit, or god". If there are reasoners so feeble, they must be left to the punishment inflicted by Mr. Muller. On the other hand, students who regard the growth of the idea of power, which is the predicate of every fetish, as a slow process, as the result of various impressions and trains of early half conscious reasoning, cannot be disposed of by the charge that they think that "every human being was miraculously endowed" with any concept whatever. They, at least, will agree with Mr. Max Muller that there are fetishes and fetishes, that to one reverence is assigned for one reason, to another for another. Unfortunately, it is less easy to admit that Mr. Max Müller has been happy in his choice of ancient instances. He writes (p. 99) : "Sometimes a stock or a stone was worshipped

because it was a forsaken altar or an ancient place of judgment, sometimes because it marked the place of a great battle or a murder, or the burial of a king." Here he refers to Pausanias, Book I. 28, 5, and VIII. 13, 3.¹ In both of these passages, Pausanias mentions stones—in the first passage stones on which men stood *δοιοι δίκας ὑπέχουσι καὶ οἱ διώκοντες*, in the second, barrows heaped up in honour of men who fell in battle. In neither case, however, do I find anything to shew that the stones were worshipped. These stones have no more to do with the argument than the milestones which certainly do exist on the Dover road, but which are not the objects of superstitious reverence. No! the fetish stones of Greece were those which occupied the holy of holies of the most ancient temples, the mysterious fanes within dark cedar or cypress groves, to which men were hardly admitted. They were the stones and blocks which bore the names of gods, Hera, or Apollo, names which were given, as De Brosses says, to the old fetishistic objects of worship, *after* the anthropomorphic gods entered Hellas. This, at least, is the natural conclusion from the fact that the Apollo and Hera of untouched wood or stone were confessedly the *oldest*. Religion, possessing an old fetish, did not run the risk of breaking the run of luck by discarding it, but wisely retained and renamed it. Mr. Max Müller says that the unhewn lump may indicate a higher power of abstraction than the worship paid to the work of Phidias; but in that case all the savage adorers of rough stones *may* be in a stage of more abstract thought than these contemporaries of Phidias who had such very hard work to make Greek thought abstract.

Mr. Müller founds a very curious argument on what he calls "the ubiquity of fetishism". Like De Brosses, he compiles (from Pausanias) a list of the rude stones worshipped by the early Greeks. He mentions various examples of fetishistic superstitions in Rome. He detects the fetishism of popular Catholicism, and of Russian orthodoxy among the peasants. Here, he cries, in religions the history of which is known to us, fetishism is secondary, "and why should fetishes in Africa, where we do not know the earlier development of religion, be considered as primary"? What a singular argument! According to Pausanias, this fetishism (if fetishism it is) *was* primary, in Greece. The *oldest* temples, in their holiest place, held the fetish. In Rome, it is at least probable that fetishism, as in Greece, was partly a survival, partly a new growth from the primal root of human superstitions. As to Catholicism, the

¹ A third reference to Pausanias, I have been unable to verify. There are several references to Greek fetish stones in Theophrastus's account of the Superstitious Man.

records of Councils, the invectives of the Church, shew us that, from the beginning, the secondary religion in point of time, the religion of the Church, laboured vainly to suppress, and had in part to tolerate, the primary religion of childish superstitions. The documents are before the world. As to the Russians, the history of their conversion is pretty well known. Jaroslaf, or Vladimir, or some other evangelist, had whole villages baptised in groups, and the pagan peasants naturally kept up their semi-savage ways of thought and worship, under the thinnest varnish of orthodoxy. In all Mr. Max Müller's examples, then, fetishism turns out to be *primary* in point of time; *secondary* only, as subordinate to some later development, or lately superimposed religion. Accepting his statement that fetishism is ubiquitous, we have the most powerful *à priori* argument that it is primitive. As religions become developed they are differentiated: it is only fetishism that you find everywhere. Thus the bow and arrow have a wide range of distribution; the musket, one not so wide; the Martini-Henry rifle, a still narrower range: it is the primitive stone weapons that are ubiquitous, that are found in the soil of England, Egypt, America, France, Greece, as in the hands of Dieyries and Admiralty Islanders. And just as rough stone knives are earlier than iron ones (though the same race often uses both), so fetishism is more primitive than higher and purer faiths, though the same race often combines fetishism and theism. No one will doubt the truth of this where weapons are concerned; but Mr. Max Muller will not look at religion in this way.

Mr. Max Muller's remarks on "Zoolatry," as De Brosses calls it, or animal worship, require only the briefest comment. De Brosses, very unluckily, confused zoolatry with other superstitions under the head of Fetishism. This was unscientific; but is it scientific of Mr. Max Muller to discuss animal worship without reference to Totemism? The worship of sacred animals is found, in every part of the globe, to be part of the sanction of the most stringent and important of all laws, the laws of marriage. It is a historical truth that the society of Ashantees, Choctaws, Australians, is actually constructed by the operation of laws which are under the sanction of various sacred plants and animals. There is scarcely a race so barbarous that these laws are not traceable at work in its society, nor a people (especially an ancient people) so cultivated that its laws and religion are not full of strange facts most easily explained as relics of totemism. Now note that actual living totemism is always combined with the rudest ideas of marriage, with almost repulsive ideas about the family. Presumably, this rudeness is earlier than culture, and therefore this form of animal worship

is one of the earliest religions that we know. The almost limitless distribution of the phenomena, their regular development, their gradual disappearance, all point to the fact that they are everywhere produced by similar causes.

Of all these facts, Mr. Max Müller only mentions one—that many races have called themselves Snakes, and he thinks they might naturally adopt the snake for ancestor, and finally for god. He quotes the remark of Diodorus that “the snake may either have been made a god because he was figured on the banners, or may have been figured on the banners because he was a god”; to which De Brosses, with his usual sense, rejoins—“we represent saints on our banners because we revere them, we do not revere them because we represent them on our banners.”

In a discussion about origins, and about the corruption of religion, it would have been well to account for institutions and beliefs almost universally distributed. We know, what De Brosses did not, that zoolatry is inextricably blent with laws and customs which surely must be early, if not primitive, because they make the working faith of societies in which male descent and the Family are not yet established. Any one who wishes to prove that this sort of society is a late corruption, not an early stage in evolution towards better things, has a difficult task before him, which, however, he must undertake, before he can prove zoolatry to be a corruption of religion.

As to the worship of ancestral and embodied human spirits, which (it has been so plausibly argued) is the first moment in religion, Mr. Max Müller dismisses it, here, in eleven lines and a half. An isolated but important allusion at the close of his lectures will be noticed in its place.

The end of the polemic against the primitiveness of fetishism deals with the question, “Whence comes the supernatural predicate of the fetish”? If a negro tells us his fetish is a god, whence got he the idea of “god”? Many obvious answers occur. Mr. Müller says, speaking of the Indians (p. 205): “The concept of *gods* was no doubt growing up, while men were assuming a more and more definite attitude towards these semi-tangible and intangible objects”—trees, rivers, hills, the sky, the sun, and so on which he thinks suggested and developed, by aid of a kind of awe, the religious feeling of the infinite. We too would say that, among people who adore fetishes and ghosts, the concept of gods no doubt silently grew up, as men assumed a more and more definite attitude towards those tangible and intangible objects. Again, negroes have had the idea of god imported among them by Christians and Islamites, so that, even if they did not climb (as De Brosses grants that many of them

do) to purer religious ideas unaided, these ideas are now familiar to them, and may well be used by them, when they have to explain a fetish to a European. Mr. Max Müller explains the origin of religion by a term ("the Infinite") which, he admits, the early people would not have comprehended. The negro, if he tells a white man that a fetish is a god, transposes terms in the same unscientific way. Mr. Müller asks, "How do these people, when they have picked up their stone or their shell, pick up, at the same time, the concepts of a supernatural power, of spirit, of god, and of worship paid to some unseen being"? But who says that men picked up these ideas *at the same time*? These ideas were evolved by a long, slow, complicated process. It is not at all impossible that the idea of a kind of "luck" attached to this or that object, was evolved by dint of meditating on a mere series of lucky accidents. Such or such a man, having found such an object, succeeded in hunting, fishing, or war. By degrees, similar objects might be believed to command success. Thus burglars carry bits of coal in their pockets, "for luck". This random way of connecting causes and effects which have really no inter-relation, is a common error of early reasoning. Mr. Max Müller says that "this process of reasoning is far more in accordance with modern thought"; if so, modern thought has little to be proud of. But there are many other practical ways in which the idea of supernatural power is attached to fetishes. Some fetish stones have a superficial resemblance to other objects, and thus (on the magical system of reasoning) are thought to influence these objects. Others, again, are pointed out as worthy of regard in dreams or by the ghosts of the dead.¹ To hold these views of the origin of the supernatural predicate of fetishes is not "to take for granted that every human being was miraculously endowed with the concept of what forms the predicate of every fetish".

Thus we need not be convinced by Mr. Max Müller that fetishism (though it necessarily has its antecedents in the human mind) is "a corruption of religion". It still appears to be one of the most primitive steps towards the idea of the supernatural.

What, then, is the subjective element of religion in man? How is he capable of conceiving of the supernatural? What outward

¹ Here I may mention a case illustrating the motives of the fetish-worshipper. My friend, Mr J. J. Atkinson, who has for many years studied the manners of the people of New Caledonia, asked a native *why* he treasured a certain fetish-stone. The man replied that, in one of the vigils which are practised beside the corpses of deceased friends, he saw a lizard. The lizard is a totem, a worshipful animal in New Caledonia. The native put out his hand to touch it, when it disappeared and left a stone in its place. This stone he therefore held sacred in the highest degree. Here then a fetish stone was indicated as such by a spirit in form of a lizard.

objects first awoke that dormant faculty in his breast? Mr. Max Müller answers, that man has "the faculty of apprehending the infinite"—that by dint of this faculty he is capable of religion and that sensible objects, "tangible, semi-tangible, intangible," first roused the faculty to religious activity, at least among the natives of India. He means, however, by the "infinite" which savages apprehend, not our metaphysical conception of the infinite, but the mere impression that there is "something beyond". "Every thing of which his senses cannot perceive a limit, is to a primitive savage or to any man in an early stage of intellectual activity *unlimited* or *infinite*." Thus, in all experience, the idea of "a beyond" is forced on men. If Mr. Max Müller would adhere to this theory, then we should suppose him to mean (what we hold to be more or less true) that savage religion, like savage science, is merely a fanciful explanation of what lies beyond the verge of experience. For example, if the Australians mentioned by Mr. Max Müller believe in a being who created the world, a being whom they do not worship, and to whom they pay no regard, their theory is scientific, not religious. They have looked for the causes of things, and are no more religious (in so doing) than Newton was when he worked out his theory of gravitation. The term "infinite" is wrongly applied, because it is a term of advanced thought used in explanation of the ideas of men who, Mr. Max Müller says, were incapable of conceiving the meaning of such a term. Again, it is wrongly applied, because it has some modern religious associations, which are covertly and mischievously introduced to explain the supposed emotions of early men. Thus, Mr. Müller says (p. 177)—he is giving his account of the material things that awoke the religious faculty—"the mere sight of the torrent or the stream would have been enough to call forth in the hearts of the early dwellers on the earth . . . a feeling that they were surrounded on all sides by powers invisible, infinite, or divine". Here, if I understand Mr. Müller, "infinite" is used in our modern sense. The question is, How did men ever come to believe in powers infinite, invisible, divine? If Mr. Müller's words mean anything, they mean that a dormant feeling that there were such existences lay in the breast of man, and was wakened into active and conscious life, by the sight of a torrent or a stream. If this is not the expression of a theory of "innate religion" (a theory which Mr. Müller disclaims), it is capable of being mistaken for that doctrine by even a careful reader. The feeling of "powers, infinite, invisible, divine," *must* be in the heart, or the mere sight of a river could not call it forth. How did the feeling get into the heart? That is the question.

The ordinary anthropologist distinguishes a multitude of

causes, a variety of processes, which shade into each other and gradually produce the belief in powers invisible, infinite, and divine. What tribe is unacquainted with dreams, visions, magic, the apparitions of the dead? Add to these the slow action of thought, the conjectural inferences, the guesses of crude metaphysics, the theories of isolated men of religious and speculative genius. By all these and other forces manifold, that emotion of awe in presence of the hills, the stars, the sea, is developed. Mr. Max Müller cuts the matter shorter. The early inhabitants of earth saw a river, and the "mere sight" of the torrent called forth the feelings which (to us) seem to demand ages of the operation of causes disregarded by Mr. Müller in his account of the origin of Indian religion.

The central spring of Mr. Müller's doctrine is his theory about "apprehending the infinite". Early religion, or at least that of India, was, in his view, the extension of an idea of Vastness, a disinterested emotion of awe. Elsewhere, we think, early religion has been a development of ideas of Force, an interested search, not for something wide and far and hard to conceive, but for something practically *strong* for good and evil. Mr. Müller (taking no count in this place of fetishes, ghosts, dreams and magic) explains that the sense of "wonderment" was awakened by objects only semi-tangible, trees, which are *taller* than we are, "whose roots are beyond our reach and which have a kind of life in them". "We are dealing with a quaternary, it may be a tertiary troglodyte," says Mr. Müller. If a tertiary Troglodyte was like a modern Andaman islander, a Kaneka, a Dieyrie, would he stand and meditate in awe on the fact that a tree was taller than he, or had a "kind of life," "an unknown and unknowable, yet undeniable something"? Why, this is the sentiment of modern Germany, and perhaps of the Indian sages of a cultivated period! A troglodyte would look for a 'possum in the tree, he would tap the trunk for honey, he would poke about in the bark after grubs. Does Mr. Müller really not see that he is transporting a kind of modern malady of thought into the midst of people who wanted to find a dinner, and who might worship a tree if it had a grotesque shape, that, for them, had a magical meaning, or if *boityas* lived in its boughs, but whose practical way of dealing with the problem of its life was to burn it round the stem, chop the charred wood with stone axes, and use the bark, branches and leaves as they happened to come handy.

Mr. Müller has a long list of semi-tangible objects "overwhelming and overawing," like the tree. There are mountains, where "even a stout heart shivers before the real presence of the infinite;" there are rivers, those instruments of so sudden a

religious awakening ; there is earth. These supply the material for semi-deities. Then come sky, stars, dawn, sun, and moon : " in these we have the germs of what, hereafter, we shall have to call by the name of deities ".

Before we can transmute, with Mr. Müller, these objects of a somewhat vague religious regard into a kind of gods, we have to adopt Noire's philological theories, and study the effects of auxiliary verbs on the development of personifications and of religion. Noire's philological theories are still, I presume, under discussion. They are necessary, however, to Mr. Müller's doctrine of the development of the vague " sense of the infinite " (wakened by fine old trees, and high mountains) into *devas*, and of *devas* (which means " shining ones ") into the Vedic Gods. Our troglodyte ancestors, and their feeling for the spiritual aspect of landscape, are thus brought into relation with the Rishis of the Vedas, the sages and poets of a pleasing civilisation. The reverence felt for such comparatively refined or remote things, as fire, the sun, wind, thunder, the dawn, furnished a series of stepping-stones to the Vedic theology, if theology it can be called. It is impossible to give each step in detail ; the process must be studied in Mr. Müller's lectures. Nor can we discuss the later changes of faith. As to that which produced the fetishistic " corruption " (that universal and everywhere identical form of decay), Mr. Müller does not afford even a hint. He only says that, when the Indians found that their old gods were mere names, " they built out of the scattered bricks a new altar to the Unknown God "—a statement which throws no light on the parasitical development of Fetishism.

We have contested step by step, many of Mr. Müller's propositions. If space permitted, it would be interesting to examine the actual attitude of certain contemporary savages, Bushmen and others, to the sun. Contemporary savages may be degraded, they certainly are not primitive, but their *legends*, at least, are the oldest things they possess. The supernatural elements in their ideas about the sun are curiously unlike those which, according to Mr. Müller, entered into the development of Aryan religion.

The last remark which has to be made about Mr. Müller's scheme of the development of Aryan religion is that the religion does not apparently aid the growth of society, nor work with it in any way. Let us look at a sub-barbaric society—say that of Zulu-land, of New Zealand, of the Iroquois League, or a savage society like that of the Kanekas, or of those Australian tribes of whom Mr. Brough Smyth has furnished us with an interesting and copious account. If we begin with the Australians, we observe that society is based on certain laws of

marriage enforced by capital punishment. These laws of marriage forbid the intermixing of persons belonging to the stock which worships this or that animal, or plant. Now this rule, as already observed, *made* the "gentile" system, (as Mr. Morgan erroneously calls it), the system which gradually reduces tribal hostility, by making tribes homogeneous. The system (with the religious sanction of a kind of zoolatry) is in force in Africa, America, and Australia, while a host of minute facts make it a reasonable conclusion that it prevailed in Asia and Europe. Among these facts certain peculiarities of Greek and Roman and Hindoo marriage law, Greek, Latin, and English tribal names, and a crowd of legends are the most prominent. Mr. Max Müller's doctrine of the development of Indian religion (while admitting the existence of Snake or Naga tribes) takes no account of the action of this universal zoolatry on society.

After marriage and after tribal institutions, look at *rank*. Is it not obvious that the religious elements left out of his reckoning by Mr. Müller are most powerful in developing rank? Even among those democratic paupers, the Fuegians, "the doctor-wizard of each party has much influence over his companions". Among those other democrats, the Eskimo, a class of wizards, called Angakuts, become "a kind of civil magistrates," because they can cause fine weather, and can magically detect people who commit offences. Thus the germs of rank, in these cases, are sown by the magic which is the practical working of Fetishism. Try the Zulus: "the heaven is the chiefs," he can call up clouds and storms, hence the sanction of his authority. In New Zealand, every Rangatira has a supernatural power. If he touches an article, no one else dares to appropriate it, for fear of terrible supernatural consequences. A head chief is "tapued an inch thick, and perfectly unapproachable". Magical power abides in and emanates from him. By this superstition, an aristocracy is formed, and property (the property, at least, of the aristocracy) is secured. Among the Red Indians, as Schoolcraft says, "priests and jugglers are the persons that make war and have a voice in the sale of the land". Mr. E. W. Robertson says much the same thing about early Scotland. If Odin was not a medicine-man, and did not owe his chiefship to his talent for dealing with magic, he is greatly maligned. The Irish Brehons sanctioned legal decisions by magical devices, afterwards condemned by the Church. Among the Zulus, "the *Itongo* (spirit) dwells with the great man; he who dreams is the chief of the village". The chief alone can "read in the vessel of divination" The Kaneka chiefs are medicine-men.

Here then, in widely distributed regions, in early European, American, Melanesian, African societies, we find those factors in

religion which the primitive Aryans dispensed with, helping to construct society, rank, property. Is it necessary to add that the ancestral spirits still "rule the present from the past," and demand sacrifice, and speak to "him who dreams," who, therefore, is a strong force in society, if not a chief? Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr. Tylor, M. Fustel de Coulanges, a dozen others, have made all this matter of common notoriety. As Hearne the traveller says about the Copper River Indians, "it is almost necessary that they who rule them should profess something a little supernatural to enable them to deal with the people". The few examples we have given show how widely, and among what untutored races, the need is felt. The rudimentary government of early peoples requires, and by aid of dreams, necromancy, "medicine" (*i.e.*, fetiches), *tapu*, and so forth, obtains a supernatural sanction.

Where is the supernatural sanction that consecrated the chiefs of a race which woke to the sense of the existence of infinite beings, in face of trees, rivers, the dawn, the sun, and had none of the so-called late and corrupt fetichism that does such useful social work?

To the student of other early societies, Mr. Müller's theory of the growth of Aryan religion seems to leave society without cement, and without the most necessary sanctions. One man is as good as another, before a tree, a river, a hill. The savage organisers of other societies found out fetiches and ghosts at were "respecters of persons". Zoolatry is intertwined with the earliest and most widespread law of prohibited degree. How did the Hindoos dispense with the aid of these superstitions? Well, they did not quite dispense with them. Mr. Max Müller remarks, almost on his last page (376), that "in India also . . . the thoughts and feelings about those whom death had separated from us for a time, supplied some of the earliest and most important elements of religion". If this was the case, surely the presence of those elements and their influence should have been indicated along with the remarks about the awfulness of trees and the suggestiveness of rivers. Is nothing said about the spirits of the dead and their cult in the Vedas? Then other elements of savage religion may also have been neglected there, and it will be impossible to argue that Fetichism did not exist because it is not mentioned.

The perusal of Mr. Max Müller's book deeply impresses one with the necessity of studying early religions and early societies simultaneously. If it be true that early Indian religion lacked precisely those superstitions, so childish, so grotesque, and yet so useful, which we find at work in contemporary tribes, and which we read of in history, the discovery is even more

remarkable and important than the author of the *Hibbert Lectures* seems to suppose. It is scarcely necessary to repeat that the negative evidence of the Vedas, the religious utterances of sages, made in a time of what we might call "heroic culture," can never disprove the existence of superstitions which, whether current or not in the former experience of the race, the hymnists might naturally ignore. Our object has been to defend the "primitiveness of fetishism". By this we do not mean to express any opinion as to whether Fetishism (in the strictest sense of the word) was or was not earlier than Totemism, the worship of the dead, or even the involuntary sense of awe and terror with which certain vast phenomena may have affected the earliest men. We only claim for the powerful and ubiquitous practices of fetishism a place *among* the early elements of religion, and insist that what is so universal has not yet been shown to be "a corruption" of something older and purer.

One remark of Mr. Max Müller's fortifies these opinions. If Fetishism be indeed one of the earliest factors of faith in the supernatural, if it be, in its rudest forms, most powerful in proportion to other elements of faith among the least cultivated races (and *that* Mr. Müller will probably allow),—among what class of cultivated peoples will it longest hold its ground? Clearly, among the least cultivated, among the fishermen, the shepherds of lonely districts, the peasants of outlying lands—in short, among the *people*. Neglected by sacred poets in the culminating period of purity in religion, it will linger among the superstitions of the rustics. There is no real break in the continuity of peasant life; the modern folk-lore is (in many points) the savage ritual. If any one will compare Mr. Brough Smyth's accounts of the superstitions of Australian black fellows with those of French and Scotch peasants, he will see what I mean. Now Mr. Müller, when he was minimising the existence of fetishism in the Rig-Veda (the oldest collection of hymns) admitted its existence in the *Ātharvāna* (p. 60). On p. 151, we read "the *Atharva-veda-Sanhita* is a later collection, containing, besides a large number of Rig-Veda verses, *some curious relics of popular poetry connected with charms, imprecations, and other superstitious usages*". The italics are mine, and are meant to emphasise this fact:—When we leave the sages, and look at what is *popular*, look at what that class believed which of savage practice has everywhere retained so much, we are at once among the charms and the fetishes! This is precisely what one would have expected. If the history of religion and of mythology is to be unravelled, we must look to what the unprogressive classes in Europe have in common with Australians, and Bushmen and Andaman islanders. It is the

function of the people to retain these elements of religion, which it is the high duty of the sage and the poet to purify away in the fire of refining thought. It is for this very reason that *ritual* has (though Mr. Max Müller curiously says that it seems not to possess) an immense scientific interest. Ritual holds on, with the tenacity of superstition, to all that has ever been practised. Yet, when Mr. Müller wants to know about *origins*, about actual ancient *practice*, he deliberately turns to that "great collection of ancient poetry" (the Rig-Veda) "which has no special reference to sacrificial acts".

To sum up briefly :—(1) Mr. Müller's arguments against the evidence for, and the primitiveness of, Fetishism seem to demonstrate the opposite of that which he intends them to prove. (2) His own evidence for *primitive* practice is chosen from the documents of a *cultivated* society. (3) His theory deprives that society of the very influences which have elsewhere helped the Tribe, the Family, Rank and Priesthoods to grow up, and to form the backbone of social existence.

A. LANG.

II.—AN EMPIRICAL THEORY OF FREE WILL.

IN one sense, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air are like us : for most of their lives they do less than they can. A horse runs faster and farther when he follows the hounds in full cry than when he careers about his paddock in spring : when two bulls fight for an heifer one gives up when he is tired, but a bull in the bullring fights as long as he can : the hawk before he wears the jesses, while he flies unhooded where he will, chooses to stoop at smaller game than herons : and the fox journeys farther in a hour when the hounds have sighted him than in the state of nature he would journey in a day. All these have a store of force in their life to draw upon at their need, but of this force they have not the key which is kept by necessity and her vicar man.

Their ordinary activity does not seem to be free either. The need of food sets them in motion to seek it ; if food is plentiful the attraction of it will keep them eating without hunger : the desire of sun or shelter or of water, the fear of enemies, or any thing which seems terrible because it is strange, will keep them on the move, and all this diversity of action takes so much from the storehouse of their life either profitably or unprofitably. The power so expended is no more theirs while they sleep than the power they are able to expend at their need is theirs when they are at ease. The same may be said of their activity when most