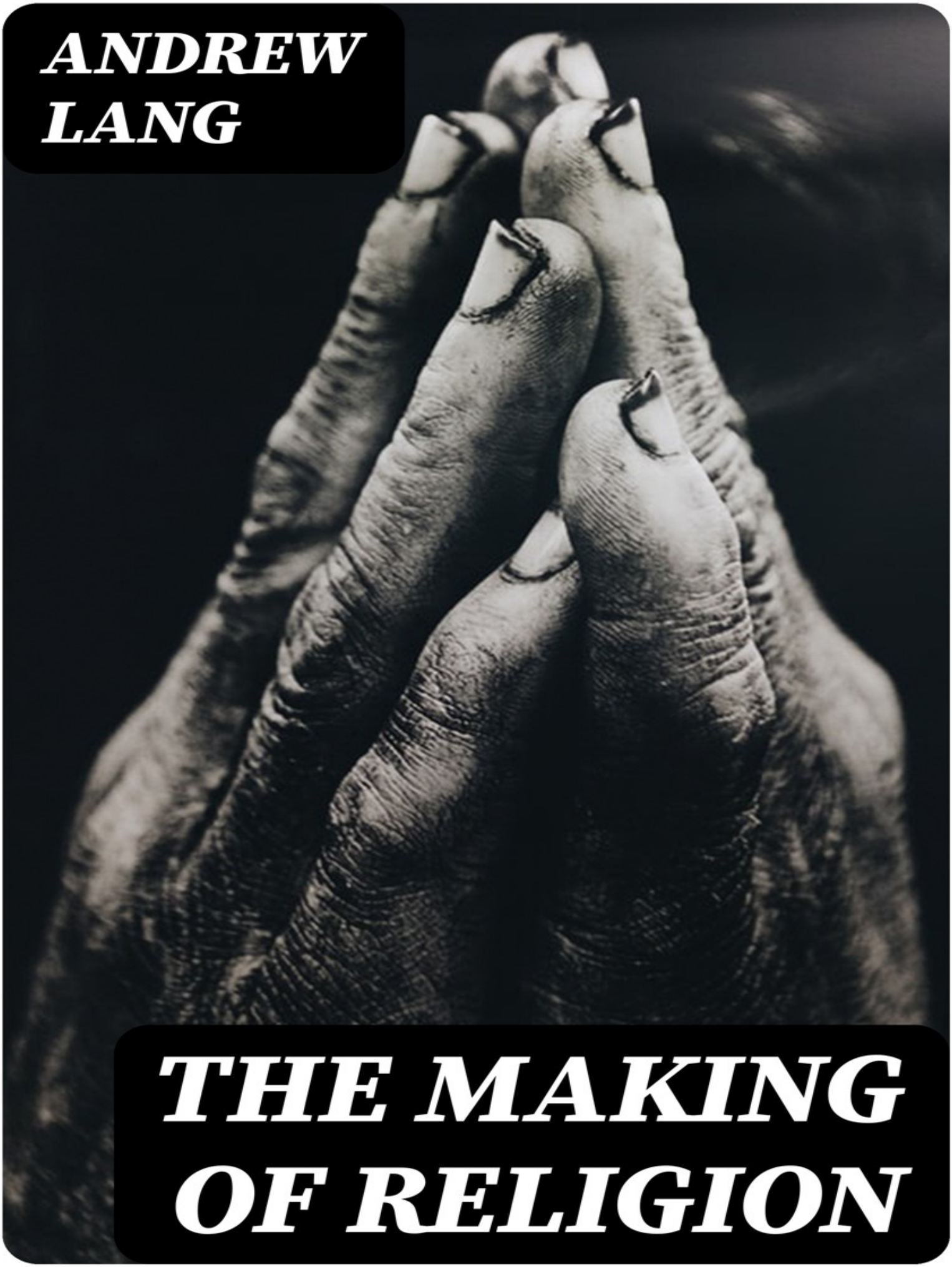
ANDREW LANG



THE MAKING OF RELIGION

Andrew Lang

The Making of Religion

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THE MAKING OF RELIGION

I

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

The modern Science of the History of Religion has attained conclusions which already possess an air of being firmly established. These conclusions may be briefly stated thus: Man derived the conception of 'spirit' or 'soul' from his reflections on the phenomena of sleep, dreams, death, shadow, and from the experiences of trance and hallucination. Worshipping first the departed souls of his kindred, man later extended the doctrine of spiritual beings in many directions. Ghosts, or other spiritual existences fashioned on the same lines, prospered till they became gods. Finally, as the result of a variety of processes, one of these gods became supreme, and, at last, was regarded as the one only God. Meanwhile man retained his belief in the existence of his own soul, surviving after the death of the body, and so reached the conception of immortality. Thus the ideas of God and of the soul are the result of early fallacious reasonings about misunderstood experiences.

It may seem almost wanton to suggest the desirableness of revising a system at once so simple, so logical, and apparently so well bottomed on facts. But there can never be any real harm in studying masses of evidence from fresh points of view. At worst, the failure of adverse criticism must help to establish the doctrines assailed. Now, as we shall show, there are two points of view from which the evidence as to religion in its early stages has not been steadily contemplated. Therefore we intend to ask, first, what, if anything, can be ascertained as to the nature of the 'visions' and hallucinations which, according to Mr. Tylor in his celebrated work 'Primitive Culture,' lent their aid to the formation of the idea of 'spirit.' Secondly, we shall collect and compare the accounts which we possess of the High Gods and creative beings worshipped or believed in, by the most backward races. We shall then ask whether these relatively Supreme Beings, so conceived of by men in very rudimentary social conditions, can be, as anthropology declares, mere developments from the belief in ghosts of the dead.

We shall end by venturing to suggest that the savage theory of the soul may be based, at least in part, on experiences which cannot, at present, be made to fit into any purely materialistic system of the universe. We shall also bring evidence tending to prove that the idea of God, in its earliest known shape, need not logically be derived from the idea of spirit, however that idea itself may have been attained or evolved. The conception of God, then, need not be evolved out of reflections on dreams and 'ghosts.'

If these two positions can be defended with any success, it is obvious that the whole theory of the Science of Religion will need to be reconsidered. But it is no less evident that our two positions do not depend on each other. The first may be regarded as fantastic, or improbable, or may be 'masked' and left on one side. But the strength of the second position, derived from evidence of a different character, will not, therefore, be in any way impaired. Our first position can only be argued for by dint of evidence highly unpopular in character, and, as a general rule, condemned by modern science. The evidence is obtained by what is, at all events, a legitimate anthropological proceeding. We may follow Mr. Tylor's example, and collect savage *beliefs* about visions, hallucinations, 'clairvoyance,' and the acquisition of knowledge apparently not attainable through the normal channels of sense. We may then compare these savage beliefs with attested records of similar *experiences* among living and educated civilised men. Even if we attain to no conclusion, or a negative conclusion, as to the actuality and supernormal character of the alleged experiences, still to compare data of savage and civilised psychology, or even of savage and civilised illusions and fables, is decidedly part, though a neglected part, of the function of anthropological science. The results, whether they do or do not strengthen our first position, must be curious and instructive, if only as a chapter in the history of human error. That chapter, too, is concerned with no mean topic, but with what we may call the X region of our nature. Out of that region, out of miracle, prophecy, vision, have certainly come forth the great religions, Christianity and

Islam; and the great religious innovators and leaders, our Lord Himself, St. Francis, John Knox, Jeanne d'Arc, down to the founder of the new faith of the Sioux and Arapahoe. It cannot, then, be unscientific to compare the barbaric with the civilised beliefs and experiences about a region so dimly understood, and so fertile in potent influences. Here the topic will be examined rather by the method of anthropology than of psychology. We may conceivably have something to learn (as has been the case before) from the rough observations and hasty inferences of the most backward races.

We may illustrate this by an anecdote:

'The Northern Indians call the *Aurora Borealis* "Edthin," that is "Deer." Their ideas in this respect are founded on a principle one would not imagine. Experience has shown them that when a hairy deer-skin is briskly stroked with the hand on a dark night, it will emit many sparks of electrical fire.'

So says Hearne in his 'Journey,' published in 1795 (p. 346).

This observation of the Red Men is a kind of parable representing a part of the purport of the following treatise. The Indians, making a hasty inference from a trivial phenomenon, arrived unawares at a probably correct conclusion, long unknown to civilised science. They connected the Aurora Borealis with electricity, supposing that multitudes of deer in the sky rubbed the sparks out of each other! Meanwhile, even in the last century, a puzzled populace spoke of the phenomenon as 'Lord Derwentwater's Lights.' The cosmic pomp and splendour shone to welcome

the loyal Derwentwater into heaven, when he had given his life for his exiled king.

Now, my purpose in the earlier portion of this essay is to suggest that certain phenomena of human nature, apparently as trivial as the sparks rubbed out of a deer's hide in a dark night, may indicate, and may be allied to a force or forces, which, like the Aurora Borealis, may shine from one end of the heavens to the other, strangely illumining the darkness of our destiny. Such phenomena science has ignored, as it so long ignored the sparks from the stroked deer-skin, and the attractive power of rubbed amber. These trivial things were not known to be allied to the lightning, or to indicate a force which man could tame and use. But just as the Indians, by a rapid careless inference, attributed the Aurora Borealis to electric influences, so (as anthropology assures us) savages everywhere have inferred the existence of soul or spirit, intelligence that

'Does not know the bond of Time,
Nor wear the manacles of Space,'

in part from certain apparently trivial phenomena of human faculty. These phenomena, as Mr. Tylor says, 'the great intellectual movement of the last two centuries has simply thrown aside as worthless.'[1] I refer to alleged experiences, merely odd, sporadic, and, for commercial purposes, useless, such as the transference of thought from one mind to another by no known channel of sense, the occurrence of hallucinations which, *prima facie*, correspond coincidentally with unknown events at a distance, all that is called 'second sight,' or 'clairvoyance,' and other things

even more obscure. Reasoning on these real or alleged phenomena, and on other quite normal and accepted facts of dream, shadow, sleep, trance, and death, savages have inferred the existence of spirit or soul, exactly as the Indians arrived at the notion of electricity (not so called by them, of course) as the cause of the Aurora Borealis. But, just as the Indians thought that the cosmic lights were caused by the rubbing together of crowded deer in the heavens (a theory quite childishly absurd), so the savage has expressed, in rude fantastic ways, his conclusion as to the existence of spirit. He believes in wandering separable souls of men, surviving death, and he has peopled with his dreams the whole inanimate universe.

My suggestion is that, in spite of his fantasies, the savage had possibly drawn from his premises an inference not wholly, or not demonstrably erroneous. As the sparks of the deer-skin indicated electricity, so the strange lights in the night of human nature may indicate faculties which science, till of late and in a few instances, has laughed at, ignored, 'thrown aside as worthless.'

It should be observed that I am not speaking of 'spiritualism,' a word of the worst associations, inextricably entangled with fraud, bad logic, and the blindest credulity. Some of the phenomena alluded to have, however, been claimed as their own province by 'spiritists,' and need to be rescued from them. Mr. Tylor writes:

'The issue raised by the comparison of savage, barbaric, and civilised spiritualism is this: Do the Red Indian medicine-man, the Tatar necromancer, the Highland ghost-seer, and the Boston medium, share the possession of belief and

knowledge of the highest truth and import, which, nevertheless, the great intellectual movement of the last two centuries has simply thrown aside as worthless?'

Distinguo! That does not seem to me to be the issue. In my opinion the issue is: 'Have the Red Indian, the Tatar, the Highland seer, and the Boston medium (the least reputable of the menagerie) observed, and reasoned wildly from, and counterfeited, and darkened with imposture, certain genuine by-products of human faculty, which do not *prima facie* deserve to be thrown aside?'

That, I venture to think, is the real issue. That science may toss aside as worthless some valuable observations of savages is now universally admitted by people who know the facts. Among these observations is the whole topic of Hypnotism, with the use of suggestion for healing purposes, and the phenomena, no longer denied, of 'alternating personalities.' For the truth of this statement we may appeal to one of the greatest of Continental anthropologists, Adolf Bastian.[2] The missionaries, like Livingstone, usually supposed that the savage seer's declared ignorance— after his so-called fit of inspiration—of what occurred in that state, was an imposture. But nobody now doubts the similar oblivion of what has passed that sometimes follows the analogous hypnotic sleep. Of a remarkable cure, which the school of the Salpêtrière or Nancy would ascribe, with probable justice, to 'suggestion,' a savage example will be given later.

Savage hypnotism and 'suggestion,' among the Sioux and Arapahoe, has been thought worthy of a whole volume in the Reports of the Ethnological Bureau of the Smithsonian

Institute (Washington, U.S., 1892-98). Republican Governments publish scientific matter 'regardless of expense,' and the essential points might have been put more shortly. They illustrate the fact that only certain persons can hypnotise others, and throw light on some peculiarities of *rapport.*[3] In brief, savages anticipated us in the modern science of experimental psychology, as is frankly acknowledged by the Society for Experimental Psychology of Berlin. 'That many mystical phenomena are much more common and prominent among savages than among ourselves is familiar to everyone acquainted with the subject. The *ethnological* side of our inquiry demands penetrative study.'[4]

That study I am about to try to sketch. My object is to examine some 'superstitious practices' and beliefs of savages by aid of the comparative method. I shall compare, as I have already said, the ethnological evidence for savage usages and beliefs analogous to thought-transference, coincidental hallucinations, alternating personality, and so forth, with the best attested modern examples, experimental or spontaneous. This raises the question of our evidence, which is all-important. We proceed to defend it. The savage accounts are on the level of much anthropological evidence; they may, that is, be dismissed by adversaries as 'travellers' tales.' But the best testimony for the truth of the reports as to actual belief in the facts is the undesigned coincidence of evidence from all ages and quarters.[5] When the stories brought by travellers, ancient and modern, learned and unlearned, pious or sceptical, agree in the main, we have all the certainty that

anthropology can offer. Again, when we find practically the same strange neglected sparks, not only rumoured of in European popular superstition, but attested in many hundreds of depositions made at first hand by respectable modern witnesses, educated and responsible, we cannot honestly or safely dismiss the coincidence of report as indicating a mere 'survival' of savage superstitious belief, and nothing more.

We can no longer do so, it is agreed, in the case of hypnotic phenomena. I hope to make it seem possible that we should not do so in the matter of the hallucinations provoked by gazing in a smooth deep, usually styled 'crystal-gazing.' Ethnologically, this practice is at least as old as classical times, and is of practically world-wide distribution. I shall prove its existence in Australia, New Zealand, North America, South America, Asia, Africa, Polynesia, and among the Incas, not to speak of the middle and recent European ages. The universal idea is that such visions may be 'clairvoyant.' To take a Polynesian case, 'resembling the Hawaiian *wai harru*.' When anyone has been robbed, the priest, after praying, has a hole dug in the floor of the house, and filled with water. Then he gazes into the water, 'over which the god is supposed to place the spirit of the thief.... The image of the thief was, according to their account, reflected in the water, and being perceived by the priest, he named the individual, or the parties.'[6] Here the statement about the 'spirit' is a mere savage philosophical explanation. But the fact that hallucinatory pictures can really be seen by a fair percentage of educated Europeans, in water, glass balls, and so forth, is now confirmed by

frequent experiment, and accepted by opponents, 'non-mystical writers,' like Dr. Parish of Munich.[7] I shall bring evidence to suggest that the visions may correctly reflect, as it were, persons and places absolutely unknown to the gazer, and that they may even reveal details unknown to every one present. Such results among savages, or among the superstitious, would be, and are, explained by the theory of 'spirits.' Modern science has still to find an explanation consistent with recognised laws of nature, but 'spirits' we shall not invoke.

In the same way I mean to examine all or most of the 'so-called mystical phenomena of savage life.' I then compare them with the better vouched for modern examples. To return to the question of evidence, I confess that I do not see how the adverse anthropologist, psychologist, or popular agnostic is to evade the following dilemma: To the anthropologist we say, 'The evidence we adduce is your own evidence, that of books of travel in all lands and countries. If *you* may argue from it, so may we. Some of it is evidence to unusual facts, more of it is evidence to singular beliefs, which we think not necessarily without foundation. As raising a presumption in favour of that opinion, we cite examples in which savage observations of abnormal and once rejected facts, are now admitted by science to have a large residuum of truth, we argue that what is admitted in some cases may come to be admitted in more. No *a priori* line can here be drawn.'

To the psychologist who objects that our modern instances are mere anecdotes, we reply by asking, 'Dear sir, what are *your* modern instances? What do you know of

"Mrs. A.," whom you still persistently cite as an example of morbid recurrent hallucinations? Name the German servant girl who, in a fever, talked several learned languages, which she had heard her former master, a scholar, declaim! Where did she live? Who vouches for her, who heard her, who understood her? There is, you know, no evidence at all; the anecdote is told by Coleridge: the phenomena are said by him to have been observed "in a Roman Catholic town in Germany, a year or two before my arrival at Göttingen.... Many eminent physiologists and psychologists visited the town." Why do you not name a few out of the distinguished crowd?'[8] This anecdote, a rumour of a rumour of a Protestant explanation of a Catholic marvel, was told by Coleridge at least twenty years after the possible date. The psychologists copy it,[9] one after the other, as a flock of sheep jump where their leader has jumped. An example by way of anecdote may be permitted.

According to the current anthropological theory, the idea of soul or spirit was suggested to early men by their experiences in dreams. They seemed, in sleep, to visit remote places; therefore, they argued, something within them was capable of leaving the body and wandering about.

This something was the soul or spirit. Now it is obvious that this opinion of early men would be confirmed if they ever chanced to acquire, in dreams, knowledge of places which they had never visited, and of facts as to which, in their waking state, they could have no information. This experience, indeed, would suggest problems even To Mr. Herbert Spencer, if it occurred to him.

Conversing on this topic with a friend of acknowledged philosophical eminence, I illustrated my meaning by a story of a dream. It was reported to me by the dreamer, with whom I am well acquainted, was of very recent occurrence, and was corroborated by the evidence of another person, to whom the dream was narrated, before its fulfilment was discovered. I am not at liberty to publish the details, for good reasons, but the essence of the matter was this: A. and B. (the dreamer) had common interests. A. had taken certain steps about which B. had only a surmise, and a vague one, that steps had probably been taken. A. then died, and B. in an extremely vivid dream (a thing unfamiliar to him) seemed to read a mass of unknown facts, culminating in two definite results, capable of being stated in figures. These results, by the very nature of the case, could not be known to A., so that, before he was placed out of B.'s reach by death, he could not have stated them to him, and, afterwards, had assuredly no means of doing so.

The dream, two days after its occurrence, and after it had been told to C., proved to be literally correct. Now I am not asking the reader's belief for this anecdote (for that could only be yielded in virtue of knowledge of the veracity of B. and C.), but I invite his attention to the psychological explanation. My friend suggested that A. had told B. all about the affair, that B. had not listened (though his interests were vitally concerned), and that the crowd of curious details, naturally unfamiliar to B., had reposed in his subconscious memory, and had been revived in the dream.

Now B.'s dream was a dream of reading a mass of minute details, including names of places entirely unknown to him.

It may be admitted, in accordance with the psychological theory, that B. might have received all this information from A., but, by dint of inattention—'the malady of not marking'—might never have been *consciously* aware of what he heard. Then B.'s subconscious memory of what he did not *consciously* know might break upon him in his dream. Instances of similar mental phenomena are not uncommon. But the general result of the combined details was one which could not possibly be known to A. before his death; nor to B. could it be known at all. Yet B.'s dream represented this general result with perfect accuracy, which cannot be accounted for by the revival of subconscious memory in sleep. Neither asleep nor awake can a man remember what it is impossible for him to have known. The dream contained no *prediction* for the results were now fixed; but (granting the good faith of the narrator) the dream did contain information not normally accessible.

However, by way of psychological explanation of the dream, my friend cited Coleridge's legend, as to the German girl and her unconscious knowledge of certain learned languages. 'And what is the evidence for the truth of Coleridge's legend?' Of course, there is none, or none known to all the psychologists who quote it from Coleridge. Neither, if true, was the legend to the point. However, psychology will accept such unauthenticated narratives, and yet will scoff at first baud, duly corroborated testimony from living and honourable people, about recent events.

Only a great force of prejudice can explain this acceptance, by psychologists, of one kind of marvellous tale on no evidence, and this rejection of another class of

marvellous tale, when supported by first hand, signed and corroborated evidence, of living witnesses. I see only one escape for psychologists from this dilemma. Their marvellous tales are *possible*, though unvouched for, because they have always heard them and repeated them in lectures, and read and repeated them in books. *Our* marvellous tales are impossible, because the psychologists know that they are impossible, which means that they have not been familiar with them, from youth upwards, in lectures and manuals. But man has no right to have 'clear ideas of the possible and impossible,' like Faraday, *a priori*, except in the exact sciences. There are other instances of weak evidence which satisfies psychologists.

Hamilton has an anecdote, borrowed from Monboddo, who got it from Mr. Hans Stanley, who, 'about twenty-six years ago,' heard it from the subject of the story, Madame de Laval. 'I have the memorandum somewhere in my papers,' says Mr. Stanley, vaguely. Then we have two American anecdotes by Dr. Flint and Mr. Rush; and such is Sir William Hamilton's equipment of odd facts for discussing the unconscious or subconscious. The least credible and worst attested of these narratives still appears in popular works on psychology. Moreover, all psychology, except experimental psychology, is based on anecdotes which people tell about their own subjective experiences. Mr. Galton, whose original researches are well known, even offered rewards in money for such narratives about visualised rows of coloured figures, and so on.

Clearly the psychologist, then, has no *prima facie* right to object to our anecdotes of experiences, which he regards as

purely subjective. As evidence, we only accept them at first hand, and, when possible, the witnesses have been cross-examined personally. Our evidence then, where it consists of travellers' tales, is on a level with that which satisfies the anthropologist. Where it consists of modern statements of personal experience, our evidence is often infinitely better than much which is accepted by the nonexperimental psychologist. As for the agnostic writer on the Non-Religion of the Future, M. Guyau actually illustrates the Resurrection of our Lord by an American myth about a criminal, of whom a hallucinatory phantasm appeared to each of his gaol companions, separately and successively, on a day after his execution! For this prodigious fable no hint of reference to authority is given.[10] Yet the evidence appears to satisfy M. Guyau, and is used by him to reinforce his argument.

The anthropologist and psychologist, then, must either admit that their evidence is no better than ours, if as good, or must say that they only believe evidence as to 'possible' facts. They thus constitute themselves judges of what is possible, and practically regard themselves as omniscient. Science has had to accept so many things once scoffed at as 'impossible,' that this attitude of hers, as we shall show in chapter ii., ceases to command respect.

My suggestion is that the trivial, rejected, or unheeded phenomena vouched for by the evidence here defended may, not inconceivably, be of considerable importance. But, stating the case at the lowest, if we are only concerned with illusions and fables, it cannot but be curious to note their persistent uniformity in savage and civilised life.

To make the first of our two main positions clear, and in part to justify ourselves in asking any attention for such matters, we now offer an historical sketch of the relations between Science and the so-called 'Miraculous' in the past.

[Footnote 1: *Primitive Culture*, i. 156. London, 1891.]

[Footnote 2: *Ueber psychische Beobachiungen bei Naiurvülkern*. Leipzig,
Gunther, 1890.]

[Footnote 3: See especially pp. 922-926. The book is interesting in other ways, and, indeed, touching, as it describes the founding of a new Red Indian religion, on a basis of Hypnotism and Christianity.]

[Footnote 4: Programme of the Society, p. iv.]

[Footnote 5: Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i, 9, 10.]

[Footnote 6: Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, ii. p. 240.]

[Footnote 7: *Hallucinations and Illusions*, English edition, pp. 69-70, 297.]

[Footnote 8: Sir William Hamilton's *Lectures*, i. 345.]

[Footnote 9: Maudsley, Kerner, Carpentor, Du Prel, Zangwill.]

[Footnote 10: Coleridge's mythical maid (p. 10) is set down by Mr. Samuel Laing to an experiment of Braid's! No references are given.—Laing: *Problems of the Future.*]

II

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SCIENCE AND 'MIRACLES'

Historical Sketch

Research in the X region is not a new thing under the sun. When Saul disguised himself before his conference with the Witch of Endor, he made an elementary attempt at a scientific test of the supernormal. Croesus, the king, went much further, when he tested the clairvoyance of the oracles of Greece, by sending an embassy to ask what he was doing at a given hour on a given day, and by then doing something very *bizarre*. We do not know how the Delphic oracle found out the right answer, but various easy methods of fraud at once occur to the mind. However, the procedure of Croesus, if he took certain precautions, was relatively scientific. Relatively scientific also was the inquiry of Porphyry, with whose position our own is not unlikely to be compared. Unable, or reluctant, to accept Christianity, Porphyry 'sought after a sign' of an element of supernormal truth in Paganism. But he began at the wrong end, namely at Pagan spiritualistic *séances*, with the usual accompaniments of darkness and fraud. His perplexed letter to Anebo, with the reply attributed to Iamblichus, reveal Porphyry wandering puzzled among mediums, floating lights, odd noises, queer dubious 'physical phenomena.' He did not begin with accurate experiments as to the existence of rare, and apparently supernormal human faculties, and he seems to have attained no conclusion except that 'spirits' are 'deceitful.'[1]

Something more akin to modern research began about the time of the Reformation, and lasted till about 1680. The fury for burning witches led men of sense, learning, and

humanity to ask whether there was any reality in witchcraft, and, generally, in the marvels of popular belief. The inquiries of Thyraeus, Lavaterus, Bodinus, Wierus, Le Loyer, Reginald Scot, and many others, tended on the whole to the negative side as regards the wilder fables about witches, but left the problems of ghosts and haunted houses pretty much where they were before. It may be observed that Lavaterus (circ. 1580) already put forth a form of the hypothesis of telepathy (that 'ghosts' are hallucinations produced by the direct action of one mind, or brain, upon another), while Thyraeus doubted whether the noises heard in 'haunted houses' were not mere hallucinations of the sense of hearing. But all these early writers, like Cardan, were very careless of first-hand evidence, and, indeed, preferred ghosts vouched for by classical authority, Pliny, Plutarch, or Suetonius. With the Rev. Joseph Glanvil, F.R.S. (circ. 1666), a more careful examination of evidence came into use. Among the marvels of Glanvil's and other tracts usually published together in his 'Sadducismus Triumphatus' will be found letters which show that he and his friends, like Henry More and Boyle, laboured to collect first-hand evidence for second sight, haunted houses, ghosts, and wraiths. The confessed object was to procure a 'Whip for the Droll,' a reply to the laughing scepticism of the Restoration. The result was to bring on Glanvil a throng of bores—he was 'worse haunted than Mr. Mompesson's house,' he says-and Mr. Pepys found his arguments 'not very convincing.' Mr. Pepys, however, was alarmed by 'our young gib-cat,' which he mistook for a 'spright.' With Henry More, Baxter, and Glanvil practically died, for the time, the attempt to

investigate these topics scientifically, though an impression of doubt was left on the mind of Addison. Witchcraft ceased to win belief, and was abolished, as a crime, in 1736. Some of the Scottish clergy, and John Wesley, clung fondly to the old faith, but Wodrow, and Cotton Mather (about 1710-1730) were singularly careless and unlucky in producing anything like evidence for their narratives. Ghost stories continued to be told, but not to be investigated.

Then one of the most acute of philosophers decided that investigation ought never to be attempted. This scientific attitude towards X phenomena, that of refusing to examine them, and denying them without examination, was fixed by David Hume in his celebrated essay on 'Miracles.' Hume derided the observation and study of what he called 'Miracles,' in the field of experience, and he looked for an *a priori* argument which would for ever settle the question without examination of facts. In an age of experimental philosophy, which derided *a priori* methods, this was Hume's great contribution to knowledge. His famous argument, the joy of many an honest breast, is a tissue of fallacies which might be given for exposure to beginners in logic, as an elementary exercise. In announcing his discovery, Hume amusingly displays the self-complacency and the want of humour with which we Scots are commonly charged by our critics:

'I flatter myself that I have discovered an argument which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusions, and consequently will be useful as long as the world endures.'

He does not expect, however, to convince the multitude. Till the end of the world, 'accounts of miracles and prodigies, I suppose, will be found in all histories, sacred and profane.' Without saying here what he means by a miracle, Hume argues that 'experience is our only guide in reasoning.' He then defines a miracle as 'a violation of the laws of nature.' By a 'law of nature' he means a uniformity, not of all experience, but of each experience as he will deign to admit; while he excludes, without examination, all evidence for experience of the absence of such uniformity. That kind of experience cannot be considered. 'There must be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation.' If there be any experience in favour of the event, that experience does not count. A miracle is counter to universal experience, no event is counter to universal experience, therefore no event is a miracle. If you produce evidence to what Hume calls a miracle (we shall see examples) he replies that the evidence is not valid, unless its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact. Now no error of human evidence can be more miraculous than a 'miracle.' Therefore there can be no valid evidence for 'miracles.' Fortunately, Hume now gives an example of what he means by 'miracles.' He says:—

'For, first, there is *not to be found*, in *all history*, any miracle attested by a *sufficient number* of men, of such unquestioned *good sense, education*, and *learning*, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted *integrity*, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and

reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time attesting facts performed in such a *public manner*, and in so *celebrated a part of the world*, as to render the detection unavoidable; all which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.'[2]

Hume added a note at the end of his book, in which he contradicted every assertion which he had made in the passage just cited; indeed, be contradicted himself before he had written six pages.

'There surely never was a greater number of miracles ascribed to one person than those which were lately said to have been wrought in France upon the tomb of Abbé Paris, the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the people were so long deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, were everywhere talked of as the usual effects of that holy sepulchre. But what is more extraordinary, many of the miracles were *immediately proved upon the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity*, attested by *witnesses of credit and distinction*, in *a learned age*, and on the most *eminent theatre* that is *now in the world*. Nor is this all. A relation of them was published and dispersed everywhere; nor were the Jesuits, though a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, and determined enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the miracles were said to have been wrought, ever able *distinctly to refute or detect them*. Where shall we find such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact? And what have we to oppose to such a cloud of

witnesses, but the absolute *impossibility, or miraculous nature* of the events which they relate? And this, surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation.'

Thus Hume, first denies the existence of such evidence, given in such circumstances as he demands, and then he produces an example of that very kind of evidence. Having done this, he abandons (as Mr. Wallace observes) his original assertion that the evidence does not exist, and takes refuge in alleging 'the absolute impossibility' of the events which the evidence supports. Thus Hume poses as a perfect judge of the possible, in a kind of omniscience. He takes his stand on the uniformity of all experience that is not hostile to his idea of the possible, and dismisses all testimony to other experience, even when it reaches his standard of evidence. He is remote indeed from Virchow's position 'that what we call the laws of nature must vary according to our frequent new experiences.'[3] In his note, Hume buttresses and confirms his evidence for the Jansenist miracles. They have even a martyr, M. Montgeron, who wrote an account of the events, and, says Hume lightly, 'is now said to be somewhere in a dungeon on account of his book.' 'Many of the miracles of the Abbé Paris were proved immediately by witnesses before the Bishop's court at Paris, under the eye of Cardinal Noailles....' 'His successor was an enemy to the Jansenists, yet twenty-two *curés* of Paris ... pressed him to examine these miracles ... *But he wisely forbore*.' Hume adds his testimony to the character of these *curés*. Thus it is wisdom, according to Hume, to dismiss the

most public and well-attested 'miracles' without examination. This is experimental science of an odd kind.

The phenomena were cases of healing, many of them surprising, of cataleptic rigidity, and of insensibility to pain, among visitors to the tomb of the Abbé Paris (1731). Had the cases been judicially examined (all medical evidence was in their favour), and had they been proved false, the cause of Hume would have profited enormously. A strong presumption would have been raised against the miracles of Christianity. But Hume applauds the wisdom of not giving his own theory this chance of a triumph. The cataleptic seizures were of the sort now familiar to science. These have, therefore, emerged from the miraculous. In fact, the phenomena which occurred at the tomb of the Abbé Paris have emerged almost too far, and now seem in danger of being too readily and too easily accepted. In 1887 MM. Binet and Féré, of the school of the Salpêtrière, published in English a popular manual styled 'Animal Magnetism.' These authors write with great caution about such alleged phenomena as the reading, by the hypnotised patient, of the thoughts in the mind of the hypnotiser. But as to the phenomena at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, they say that 'suggestion explains them.'[4] That is, in the opinion of MM. Binet and Féré the so-called 'miracles' really occurred, and were worked by 'the imagination,' by 'self-suggestion.'

The most famous case—that of Mlle. Coirin—has been carefully examined by
Dr. Charcot.[5]

Mlle. Coirin had a dangerous fall from her horse, in September 1716, in her thirty-first year. The medical details

may be looked for in Dr. Charcot's essay or in Montgeron.[6] 'Her disease was diagnosed as cancer of the left breast,' the nipple 'fell off bodily.' Amputation of the breast was proposed, but Madame Coirin, believing the disease to be radically incurable, refused her consent. Paralysis of the left side set in (1718), the left leg shrivelling up. On August 9, 1731, Mlle. Coirin 'tried the off chance' of a miracle, put on a shift that had touched the tomb of Paris, and used some earth from the grave. On August 11, Mlle. Coirin could turn herself in bed; on the 12th the horrible wound 'was staunched, and began to close up and heal.' The paralysed side recovered life and its natural proportions. By September 3, Mlle. Coirin could go out for a drive.

All her malady, says Dr. Charcot, paralysis, 'cancer,' and all, was 'hysterical;' 'hysterical oedema,' for which he quotes many French authorities and one American. 'Under the physical [psychical?] influence brought to bear by the application of the shift ... the oedema, which was due to vaso-motor trouble, disappeared almost instantaneously. The breast regained its normal size.'

Dr. Charcot generously adds that shrines, like Lourdes, have cured patients in whom he could not 'inspire the operation of the faith cure.' He certainly cannot explain everything which claims to be of supernatural origin in the faith cure. We have to learn the lesson of patience. I am among the first to recognise that Shakespeare's words hold good to-day:

'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

If Dr. Charcot had believed in what the French call *suggestion mentale*— suggestion by thought-transference (which I think he did not)—he could have explained the healing of the Centurion's servant, 'Say the word, Lord, and my servant shall be healed,' by suggestion & distance (telepathy), and by premising that the servant's palsy was 'hysterical.' But what do we mean by 'hysterical'? Nobody knows. The 'mind,' somehow, causes gangrenes, if not cancers, paralysis, shrinking of tissues; the mind, somehow, cures them. And what is the 'mind'? As my object is to give savage parallels to modern instances better vouched for. I quote a singular Red Indian cure by 'suggestion.' Hearne, travelling in Canada, in 1770, met a native who had 'dead palsy,' affecting the whole of one side. He was dragged on a sledge, 'reduced to a mere skeleton,' and so was placed in the magic lodge. The first step in his cure was the public swallowing by a conjurer of a board of wood, 'about the size of a barrel-stave,' twice as wide across as his mouth. Hearne stood beside the man, 'naked as he was born,' 'and, notwithstanding I was all attention, I could not detect the deceit.' Of course, Hearne believes that this was mere legerdemain, and (p. 216) mentions a most suspicious circumstance. The account is amusing, and deserves the attention of Mr. Neville Maskelyne. The same conjurer had previously swallowed a cradle! Now bayonet swallowing, which he also did, is possible, though Hearne denies it (p. 217).

The real object of these preliminary feats, however performed, is, probably, to inspire *faith*, which Dr. Charcot might have done by swallowing a cradle. The Indians

explain that the barrel staves apparently swallowed are merely dematerialised by 'spirits,' leaving only the forked end sticking out of the conjurer's mouth. In fact, Hearne caught the conjurer in the act of making a separate forked end.

Faith being thus inspired, the conjurer, for three entire days, blew, sang, and danced round 'the poor paralytic, fasting.' 'And it is truly wonderful, though the strictest truth, that when the poor man was taken from the conjuring house ... he was able to move all the fingers and toes of the side that had been so long dead.... At the end of six weeks he went a-hunting for his family' (p. 219). Hearne kept up his acquaintance, and adds, what is very curious, that he developed almost a secondary personality. 'Before that dreadful paralytic stroke, he had been distinguished for his good nature and benevolent disposition, was entirely free from every appearance of avarice,... but after this event he was the most fractious, quarrelsome, discontented, and covetous wretch alive' (p. 220).