

THE "SPIRITUAL ESSENCE" IN MAN.

"The question of questions for mankind—the problem which underlies all others, and is more deeply interesting than any other—is the ascertainment of the place which man occupies in nature and of his relation to the universe of things. Whence our race has come ; what are the limits of our power over nature and of nature's power over us ; to what goal we are tending, are the problems which present themselves anew and with undiminished interest to every man born into the world."—Professor Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature*, 1863.

THE battle on the relation of man to the lower animals no longer rages round his physical structure ; it is transferred to his mental nature and development, with vast improvement in the tone and temper of the combatants. Professor Huxley, in commenting on the anathemas hurled against the wicked book quoted above, all the propositions in which are now taught in the textbooks, remarked to the present writer, "What a droll world it is!" The prejudices which Darwin tells us, in his preface to the *Descent of Man*, he feared to create by embodying detailed application of his theory to man in his *Origin of Species*, are "dead as a door-nail." How the whole atmosphere has changed for the better is shown in the reception of *Lux Mundi* as contrasted with the war-dance of Convocation round *Essays and Reviews*, and the self-mutilation of Dr. Temple for his share in that book when he accepted the Bishopric of Exeter.

But the struggle against the application of the theory of evolution to man's intellectual and spiritual nature will be long and stubborn, the more so because in this matter the foes of evolution include some of its own household, men who have gone one mile with Darwin, but who refuse to go twain, heedless of the French

proverb that "he who says A must say B." Among the notablest of this hesitating and hindering company is Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, whose self-effacement in the equal part which he played with Mr. Darwin as independent propounder of the theory of natural selection has won for him a respect which is as secure as the fame of his brother naturalist. Among lesser antagonists are Professor St. George Mivart and the late Dr. W. B. Carpenter. In his *Genesis of Species* St. George Mivart contends that "man's body was evolved from pre-existing material (symbolised by the term 'dust of the earth') and was therefore only derivatively created, *i.e.*, by the operation of secondary laws," but that, "his soul, on the other hand, was created in quite a different way . . . by the direct action of the Almighty (symbolised by the term 'breathing')" (p. 325). In his *Mental Physiology* Dr. Carpenter postulates an Ego or Will which presides over, without sharing in, the causally determined action of the other mental functions and their correlated bodily processes; "an entity which does not depend for its existence on any play of physical or vital forces, but which makes these forces subservient to its determinations." (p. 27.) Professor Mivart, as becomes a good Catholic, cites those distinguished biologists, St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman, in support of his theory of the special creation of the soul. Dr. Carpenter argues as becomes a good Unitarian.

It is not the attitude of men of science thus pledged to one or another form of the heterogeneous creeds of Christianity that, at first sight, troubles us so much as the attitude of a man like Mr. Wallace, who is a Darwinian of the Darwinians, in his contention on behalf of the overwhelming importance of natural selection over all other agencies in the production of new species. While other authorities hold that it is the *main* agent in the modification of life-forms, Mr. Wallace claims it as almost the *sole* agent. This is, he urges with apostolic ardour, the Darwinian faith, whole and undefied, as opposed to the heresies to which, as he fell away from the earlier and sounder creed, Darwin himself lent too willing ear: heresies which minimise the agency of natural selection and make it secondary to that of other agents, as the direct action of external conditions, use and disuse, intelli-

gence and heredity. Consequently he runs full tilt against the so-called Neo-Lamarckian school, of which Messrs. Herbert Spencer and Patrick Geddes, Professors Cope and Karl Semper, are cited as representatives, the tendency of which, he complains, is to set up in the place of natural selection certain fundamental principles of variation or laws of growth which, it is urged, are the real originators of the several lines of development and of most of the variety of form and structure in the vegetable and animal kingdoms.

Mr. Wallace fully accepts—I quote from his recent delightful-written book on *Darwinism*—"Darwin's conclusions as to the essential identity of man's bodily structure with that of the higher mammalia, and his descent from some ancestral form common to man and the anthropoid apes." He also admits, "at all events, provisionally, that the laws of variation and natural selection . . . may have brought about, first, that perfection of bodily structure in which he is so far above all other animals, and, in co-ordination with it, the larger and more developed brain by means of which he has been able to subject the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms to his service." But, although Mr. Wallace rejects the theory of man's special creation as "being entirely unsupported by facts, as well as in the highest degree improbable," he contends that it does not necessarily follow that "his mental nature, even though developed *pari passu* with his physical structure, has been developed by the same agencies." Then, by the introduction of a physical analogy which is no analogy at all, he suggests that the agent by which man was upraised into a kingdom apart bears like relation to natural selection as the glacial epoch bears to the ordinary agents of denudation and other changes in producing new effects which, though continuous with preceding effects, were not due to the same causes.

Applying this "argument" (drawn from natural causes), as Mr. Wallace names it, "to the case of man's intellectual and moral nature," he contends that such special faculties as the mathematical, musical, and artistic (is this faculty to be denied the nest-decorating bower bird?), and the high moral qualities which have given the martyr his constancy, the patriot his devotion, and the philanthro-

pist his unselfishness, are due to a "spiritual essence, or nature, superadded to the animal nature of man." We are not told at what stage in man's development this supernatural lymph was inserted.

Any perplexity that might arise at the line thus taken by Mr. Wallace vanishes at the remembrance that the author of the *Malay Archipelago* and *Island Life* has written a book on *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* in defence of both. The explanation lies in duality of mind, which in one compartment ranks Mr. Wallace foremost among naturalists, and, in the other compartment, places him among those Brummagem supernaturalists, the Spiritualists. Of this duality men like Faraday, the ex-President of the Royal Society, and Sir William Dawson are prominent examples. And Mr. Wallace's ready endorsement of Dr. Weismann's theory of the non-inheritance of modification acquired by the individual during life is probably due to a twofold cause. First, each agrees in not referring special mental endowments to the exercise of the brain in the same specific direction. Not that they are at one in their explanations, since Dr. Weismann regards "talents" as a sort of by-product of the mind, while Mr. Wallace attributes them to a supernatural agency. Second, in excluding the action of use and disuse, he doubtless sees a loophole of escape from that doctrine of continuity which has no "favoured-nation clause" for man.

The "spiritual essence or nature, capable of progressive development under favourable conditions" (what a word-haze floats about the sentence!), suggests comparison, as contrasted with the protective explanation of the Catholic biologist, with those weak, mimicking species of beetles and butterflies which diverge from their family type to imitate more flourishing species, and thus secure immunity from like enemies. Mr. Wallace's Spiritualism is mimetic. But with all respect and earnestness, we ask him whether, in seeking to except man's mental nature from the operation of the agency which has modified every other part of his organisation, he is not in danger of lessening that sense of mystery which envelops the highest and the lowest life alike, and of playing into the hands of that mechanical philosophy of the universe to which men like Darwin and Spencer and Huxley stand as strongly opposed as himself? Having, with the fact of the differences between the

largest and smallest healthy human brain being, in respect of volume, greater than the differences between the smallest healthy human brain and the brain of the largest anthropoid apes, abandoned the theory of any physical distinction between man and his nearest congeners, what remains to justify the theory of a psychical distinction as against the fact that the same brains reveal in their creasings and furrowings that the differences are qualitative, and not differences of kind?

Happily, in this matter we may appeal from Mr. Wallace the Spiritualist to Mr. Wallace the Naturalist. In his *Contributions to the Theory of Natural Selection*, published in 1870, he supplies the needed explanation of the specialisation of man's mental faculties. As that work is out of print* it may be convenient to give the following extract in justification of our appeal.

"From the time when the social and sympathetic feelings came into operation and the intellectual and moral faculties became fairly developed, man would cease to be influenced by natural selection in his physical form and structure. As an animal he would remain almost stationary, the changes in the surrounding universe ceasing to produce in him that powerful modifying effect which they exercise on other parts of the organic world. But, from the moment that the form of his body became stationary, his mind would become subject to those very influences from which his body had escaped; every slight variation in his mental and moral nature which should enable him better to guard against adverse circumstances and combine for mutual comfort and protection would be preserved and accumulated; the better and higher specimens of our race would therefore increase and spread, the lower and more brutal would give way and successively die out, and that rapid advancement of mental organisation would occur which has raised the very lowest races of man so far above the brutes (although differing so little from some of them in physical structure), and, in conjunction with scarcely perceptible modifications of form, has developed the wonderful intellect of the European races." (pp. 316, 317. Second edition, 1871.)

* The announcement of a new edition is welcome.

This argument has suggestive illustration in the fifth chapter of the *Origin of Species*. Mr. Darwin there refers to a remark to the following effect made by Mr. Waterhouse: "*A part developed in any species in an extraordinary degree or manner in comparison with the same part in allied species tends to be highly variable.*" This applies only where there is unusual development. "Thus, the wing of a bat is a most abnormal structure in the class of mammals; but the rule would not apply here, because the whole group of bats possesses wings; it would apply only if some one species had wings developed in a remarkable manner in comparison with the other species of the same genus." And when this exceptional development of any part or organ occurs, we may conclude that the modification has arisen since the period when the several species branched off from the common progenitor of the genus; and this period will seldom be very remote, as species rarely endure for more than one geological period.

How completely this applies to man, the latest product of organic evolution. The brain is that part or organ in him which has been developed "in an extraordinary degree, in comparison with the same part" in other primates, and which has become *highly variable*. Whatever may have been the favouring causes which secured his immediate progenitors such modification of brain as advanced him in intelligence over "allied species," the fact abides that in this lies the explanation of their after-history; the arrest of the one, the unlimited progress of the other. Increasing intelligence at work through vast periods of time originated and developed those social conditions which alone made possible that progress which, in its most advanced degree, but a small proportion of the race has reached. For in this question of mental differences the contrast is not between man and ape, but between man savage and civilised; between the incapacity of the one to count beyond his fingers, and the capacity of the other to calculate an eclipse of the sun or a transit of Venus. It is, therefore, in the intermediate, and not in the initial stage, that Mr. Wallace should introduce his "spiritual essence, or nature."

To quote from Professor Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature* once more: "Identical in the physical processes by which he originates

—identical in the early stages of his formation—identical in the mode of his nutrition before and after birth, with the animals which lie immediately below him in the scale" (and which have come to be what they are by processes of gradual modification)—"man, if his adult and perfect structure be compared with theirs, exhibits, as might be expected, a marvellous likeness of organisation. He resembles them as they resemble one another—he differs from them as they differ from one another." (p. 67.) To these facts might be added the powerful evidence based on brain structure and cranial capacity. In this latter feature men differ more widely from one another than they do from the man-like apes, and in respect of brain-surfaces the differences between the two lie in the convolutions, and not in the weight, which is greater as between the lowest and highest men than as between the lowest men and the highest apes.

But the inclusion of the "soul" or "spiritual essence" or "Ego," or by whatever other names it is called among barbaric and civilised folk, in the orderly processes of man's development may rest, first, on the doctrine of continuity, and, second, on the ascertained mode of origin of belief in a soul as something *in*, yet not *of* the body.

1. Among the intellectual gifts which have enriched our age, perhaps the chiefest, because the farthest-reaching in its import and consequences as bearing on man's progress, is that of the doctrine of the unity and continuity of all phenomena. That for which priests and prophets of science in the past longed, and "died without the sight," has become to us a familiar possession. Astronomy, aided by the spectroscope, has not more convincingly proved the practical identity of stuff of which the whole universe is made than the comparative biologist has shown the practical identity of moss and man. Such identities might have co-existed as isolated units, whereas they exist in unbroken relation. Vain, as the Psalmist's search after some place where the Great Presence might escape him, would our search be after realms in space where the mighty forces and energies have independent sway; and nowhere, as we trace the long succession and ascent of life-forms from zoophyte to man, can we lay finger and say, Here there is a break; the old has ceased, the new

has begun. Into this argument we might press the evidence from heredity, whatever differences of opinion there be as to the mode of transmission. But, as against Mr. Wallace and others of his school, it may have small weight, since they do not deny the transmission of mental tendencies and characteristics, which they contend are the outcome of the specially inserted or superadded "spiritual essence" for the origin of which "we can only find an adequate cause in the unseen universe of spirit." (*Darwinism*, p. 478.) At least, so we infer, although it is not clear whether the "spiritual essence" was inserted once and for all in that *lusus naturæ*, "primitive" man, with potentiality of transmission through Palæolithic folk to the "foremost in the files of time," or whether a fresh insertion is made in every human being at birth. But upon so momentous an issue as this question of a separate entity in man, which at his death passes into another state, either psychopannychistic, that is, of sleep till the resurrection; or of reward, punishment, or suspense, something more than a "pious opinion" is necessary.

Superficial sceptics are in the habit of asking for proofs of the "missing link" between the big apes and man. No such link ever existed. Evidence goes to show that, by the time the middle Tertiaries had been reached, the monkey group, which is the common ancestor of apes and men, had split off into two or more groups, one division branching off into the anthropoid apes, among whose successors in our day are the ourang-outang, the chimpanzee, and the gorilla; and another division branching off into the earliest immediate ancestors of man, possibly represented by the creatures, of whom traces are found in rudely-split flint flakes and notched bones in deposits of the middle Miocene age at Thenay. Is it to such a creature that the "spiritual nature," marking it off from contemporary anthropoid apes—*Dryopithecus* and others—was "superadded"? Was such a creature too near the ape to be a man, or too near the man to be an ape?

If, however, this "spiritual essence" or "nature" is an individual endowment, how and when is its existence manifest? Is it present in the germ-plasm with which Dr. Weismann credits all potentialities of physical and mental structure, and, if so, do both

parents contribute it in equal shares? or is it introduced only at a given stage of foetal development, and what is its destiny in the case of stillborn offspring that it tenants? These are not captious questions, neither do they arise out of any special difficulties created by the theory of evolution. They are "as old as the hills," and have exercised the ingenuity of theological casuists for centuries, into whose minds no doubt of the existence of the soul ever entered. These were, as the Arabs call pre-Mohammedan times, the "days of ignorance." But now that the old ideas seek inclusion in the Darwinian faith, to the denial of its fundamental tenet of continuity, their mere reassertion suffices not. They have to justify their claim, or take their place among the illusions through which man has toilfully passed to realities.

2. The theory of the origin and growth of the belief in souls and spiritual beings generally, and in a future life, which was put into coherent form by Dr. Tylor some twenty years ago, is based upon an enormous mass of evidence gathered by travellers among existing barbaric peoples; evidence agreeing in character with that which results from investigations into beliefs of past races in varying stages of culture. Only brief reference to it here is necessary or possible, but the merest outline suffices to show from what obvious phenomena the conception of a soul was derived, a conception of which all subsequent forms are but elaborated copies. As in other matters, crude analogies have guided the barbaric mind in its ideas about spirits and their behaviour. A man falls asleep and dreams certain things; on waking, he believes that these things actually happened; and he therefore concludes that the dead who came to him or to whom he went in his dreams, are alive; that the friend or foe whom he knows to be far away, but with whom he feasted or fought in dreamland, came to him. He sees another man fall into a swoon or trance that may lay him seemingly lifeless for hours or even days; he himself may be attacked by deranging fevers and see visions stranger than those which a healthy person sees; shadows of himself and of objects, both living and not living, follow or precede him and lengthen or shorten in the withdrawing or advancing light; the still water throws back images of himself; the hillsides resound with mocking echoes of his words and of

sounds around him ; and it is these and allied phenomena which have given rise to the notion of "another self," to use Mr. Herbert Spencer's convenient term, or of a number of selves that are sometimes outside the man and sometimes inside him, as to which the barbaric mind is never sure. Outside him, however, when the man is sleeping, so that he must not be awakened, lest this "other self" be hindered from returning ; or when he is sick, or in the toils of the medicine-man, who may hold the "other self" in his power, as in the curious soul-trap of the Polynesians—a series of cocoa-nut rings—in which the sorcerer makes believe to catch and detain the soul of an offender or sick person.

Although the difference presented by such phenomena and by death is that it is abiding, while they are temporary, to the barbaric mind the difference is in degree, and not in kind. True, the "other self" has left the body, and will never return to it ; but it exists, for it appears in dreams and hallucinations, and therefore is believed to revisit its ancient haunts, as well as to tarry often near the exposed or buried body. The nebulous theories which identified the soul with breath and shadow and reflection slowly condensed into theories of semi-substantiality still charged with ethereal conceptions, resulting in the curious amalgam which, in the minds of cultivated persons, represents the disembodied soul.

Therefore, in vain may we seek for points of difference in our comparison of primitive ideas of the origin and nature of the soul with the later ideas. The copious literature to which these have given birth is represented in the bibliography appended to Mr. Alger's work on *Theories of a Future Life*, by 4,977 books, exclusive of many published since his list was compiled. Save in refinement of detail such as a higher culture secures, what is there to choose between the four souls of the Hidatsa Indians, the two souls of the Gold Coast natives, and the tripartite division of man by Rabbis, Platonists, and Paulinists, which are but the savage other-self " writ large " ? Their common source is in man's general animistic interpretation of nature, which is a *vera causa*, superseding the need for the assumptions of which Mr. Wallace's is a type. That particular assumption represents the shifts to which such defenders are driven. For it no longer seeks support from the old and discredited asser-

tions that the belief in a soul and future life is universal, and therefore intuitional ; nay, it denies the intuitions themselves save in so far as they are interpreted, in Mr. Spencer's words, as capitalised experiences. And it has ceased to appeal to a "revelation" which contradicts that term in the obscurity of its utterances and the consequent conflicting meanings given them, by sectarian interpreters.

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