

ingaccustomed to a plurality of visible objects, men, mountains, trees, cattle, and such like, they are naturally led to imagine the same plurality in things not visible; and from that slight bias, slight indeed but natural, is partly derived the system of Polytheism, universal among savages. The other is, that savages know little of the connection between causes and effects, and still less of the order and government of this world: every event that is not familiar, appears to them singular and extraordinary; and if such event exceed human power, it is without hesitation ascribed to a superior being. But as it occurs not to a savage, nor to any person who is not a philosopher, that the many various events exceeding human power and seemingly unconnected, may all proceed from the same cause; they are readily ascribed to different beings. Pliny ascribes Polytheism to another cause, viz. the consciousness men have of their imbecility: "Our powers are confined within narrow bounds: we do not readily conceive powers in the Deity much more extensive; and we supply by number what is wanting in power." Polytheism, thus founded, is the first stage in the progress of theology; for it is embraced by the rudest savages, who have neither capacity nor inclination to pierce deeper into the nature of things.

The next stage is distinguishable from others, by a belief that all superior beings are malevolent. Man, by nature weak and helpless, is prone to fear, dreading every new object and every unusual event. Savages, having no protection against storms, tempests, or other external accidents, and having no pleasures but in gratifying hunger, thirst, and animal love, have much to fear, and little to hope. In that disconsolate condition, they attribute the bulk of their distresses to invisible beings, who in their opinion must be malevolent. This seems to have been the opinion of the Greeks in the days of Solon; as appears in a conversation between him and Cræsus King of Lydia, mentioned by Herodotus