

AGNOSTICS' APOLOGIES:
THE MEANING OF VICTORIAN AGNOSTICISM

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Abstract

The underlying purpose of this thesis is an investigation into the meaning of nineteenth-century agnosticism in its movement as both word and experience between faith and doubt. I offer an initial contrast between what is essentially a form of religious agnosticism in the use of analogy and probability in Bishop Butler's eighteenth-century work The Analogy of Religion, with the later development of agnosticism as a form of rigorous scepticism. The project is then to investigate how Butler's creative form of agnosticism as a form of belief could or could not be sustained in a more sceptical age. The thesis is divided into six chapters for which the majority of research has been undertaken in St Deiniol's Library, the library of William Gladstone whose own edition of the Analogy was published in 1896.

Chapter 1 pursues Richard Hutton's identification of an 'agnostic element' in Tennyson by asking how Tennyson's agnosticism differs from that of Thomas Huxley who coined the phrase in 1869. A middle ground of uncertainty and disorientation is marked out as the crucial area for investigation by both Tennyson and this thesis. With particular reference to key readers of Butler, Chapter 2 briefly considers the Analogy in its eighteenth-century context before investigating its major impact up to 1850 on nineteenth-century religious and philosophical thought. The literary testing ground for the ideas from Chapter 2 is provided in Chapter 3 by Christina Rossetti and by Tennyson. Chapter 4 shows how and why the Analogy could not survive in a post-Kantian world in the increasing breakdown of the relation between reason and faith after 1850. Outside literature Newman alone both realized the importance of an essentially analogical language and had the finely-crafted literary syntax necessary to produce it. Chapter 5 resumes the story of the recovery of creative analogy in the poets. It considers the relation of Newman to Hopkins, and Hopkins to both Ruskin and Rossetti, bearing in mind the distinctions between analogy and projection or pathetic fallacy, and between analogy and haecceitas. As In Memoriam finally rediscovers a sense of analogical relation in a movement from reiteration to echoing from the other side of this life, which Rossetti foreknows, the last chapter draws on Chapters 1 and 3 in particular to confirm Tennyson as heir in nineteenth-century poetry to the agnostic position that Butler was able to maintain in eighteenth century theology.

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PREFACE

The title of this thesis is of course suggested by Sir Leslie Stephen's work An Agnostic's Apology, but it must at once be made clear that my work is not to be about agnosticism as Leslie Stephen or Thomas Huxley, who coined the word, understood it. Each of these men had slightly different definitions of agnosticism, as I shall explain in Chapter One, but neither was compatible with religious faith. When, it was argued, nothing could be known of God's existence or of anything beyond the limits of this world, agnosticism often ceased to be neutral and became a different name for a form of doubt that takes scepticism to the very border of atheism. It will be the task of this thesis to undertake an investigation into the meaning of agnosticism not as Huxley and Stephen defined it, in the name of science and secularisation, but as a precise and finely balanced religious position which is finally consistent with belief in God. It is that meaning which, I argue, Tennyson above all preserved, in descent from Bishop Butler.

In his book Does God Exist? the philosopher Mark Corner quotes from one of John Henry Newman's University Sermons. Corner's question and the quotation from Newman subsequently proved to be my starting point for an investigation into the meaning and literary expression of agnosticism in the nineteenth century:

We are so constituted, that if we insist upon being as sure as is conceivable, in every step of our course, we must be content to creep along the ground, and can never soar. If we are intended for great ends, we are called to

great hazards; and, whereas we are given absolute certainty in nothing, we must in all things chose between doubt and inactivity, and the conviction that we are under the eye of One who, for whatever reason, exercises us with the less evidence when He might give us the greater.¹

Here, surprisingly, was a man of great faith seemingly endorsing the agnostic law - absolute certainty in nothing. It seemed as if Newman represented an almost forgotten possibility - that it is the necessary risk of faith rather than knowledge or reason which is the principle of action. In 1839 Newman taught that religious experience is analogous to 'all' areas of human existence. A certain degree of what came to be called agnosticism - or knowing that we cannot know - is common to secular and religious experience and perfectly compatible with belief - be it God, in the self, in the existence of external reality. Newman's risk of faith, is what Corner refers to as 'the willingness to venture into what Newman elsewhere called a "certainty of commitment" without a "certainty of understanding"'.² Newman could and did separate the reasons for his belief and the faith with which he held it. Having made his own choice between doubt and inactivity, he soars with an ancient sense of greater dimensions. Indeed a young William Gladstone, listening to Newman deliver a sermon, recognised 'a completeness' belonging to one who had faith in the existence of an anterior reality of being

¹ John Henry Newman, Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford, 3rd edition (1843; London: Rivingtons, 1872), p.215, hereafter cited as US.

² Mark Corner, Does God Exist? (Bristol: Bristol Press, 1991), p.29, hereafter cited as 'Corner'.

whence the religious words 'called' and 'given' must surely arise.³

But some thirty years after the delivery of his sermon 'On the Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason', Newman found it necessary to clarify his terms in a footnote to the 3rd edition, lest his meaning should now be misunderstood and the objective condition of doubt be confused with subjective doubting:

By 'absolute certainty in nothing' is meant, as I believe, 'proofs such as absolutely to make doubt impossible;' and by 'between doubt and inactivity,' is meant, not formal doubt, but a state of mind which recognizes the possibility of doubting.

US, p.215, footnote.

By 1871, in a changed climate, Newman had now more explicitly to distinguish between the practical certainty necessary for action and an impossibly absolute certitude in the reality of God. The distinction between personal certainty and objective certitude was at the very heart of his Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent published in 1870.

Not only the evidence of science, but the claims of philosophy did much to obscure for others the sense which Newman had of an analogical relation between religion and the rest of life, and such an ever widening divide in human experience effectively separated Newman from many of those whom he had once sought to include within his generous use of 'we'. The ordinary secular man of the late nineteenth century creeps along the ground with a

³ R.H. Hutton, Cardinal Newman (London: Methuen, 1891), p.1, hereafter cited as Cardinal Newman.

lost sense of wholeness; unsure, uncertain, needing the permission of evidence, surety and rationality to come before belief in order to hold belief. Thus a recent critic finds that 'Newman is separated from most of us by an immense gap in sensibility, in what he calls "first principles", a rift which the twentieth century bridges only with a considerable intellectual effort'.⁴ Once it had been possible to believe unless there was a reason not to believe; the legacy of the late nineteenth century seems to make it impossible to believe without first having reason to believe. That is the legacy of scientific agnosticism, so-called.

In the second half of the nineteenth century literature was reflecting the 'rift' - the disconnection of secular and religious areas of being, of reason from faith in all that loss of a certain sensibility which could incorporate a degree of doubt within faith rather than merely experiencing it as something contrary to faith. For Clough, for example, doubt was never a necessary component of faith, but a crippling force preventing action. But Tennyson in 1850, poised on the vital question of In Memoriam 'Are God and Nature still at strife?', finds himself shifting precariously from an ancient sense of groundedness to a modern sense of being ungrounded.

My concern has been to discover if the movement from Newman to Tennyson must inevitably be the movement from ancient to modern sensibility or whether it was still possible to get back to a creative and practical holding

⁴ Thomas Vargish, Newman: The Contemplation of Mind (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p.viii.

of faith just short of knowing.

Huxley coined the word 'agnostic' at the first meeting of the Metaphysical Society. This Society is not only the starting point of but a naturally occurring link in my research. In a period of fragmentation and diversification, this society came together in 1869 with the express purpose of examining the relation between the realms of science, religion, politics, philosophy and literature. Among the founder members were the great agnostic Thomas Huxley, the Poet Laureate Tennyson, and the Prime Minister Gladstone. As the society itself provided a context for metaphysical debate, so its membership provides a framework for my thesis on the meaning of nineteenth-century agnosticism in the context of faith and doubt. Interesting as the forms, structures and papers of the Society are, they have had to be largely restricted within my enquiry for reasons of space. For I am chiefly concerned with the membership as it relates to Gladstone's interest in Bishop Butler's Analogy of Religion (1736) which was edited by Gladstone in 1896. For it is with the Anglican Bishop Butler, standing behind Newman, that we find a religious form of agnosticism in terms of the use of probability which contrasts with the agnosticism that the Victorians came to equate with unbelief.⁵ A twentieth-century philosopher has recently said of Butler that 'there is a

⁵ For this reason I shall be concerned with Butler's Analogy rather than his Sermons which, so far as they inquire into the matters of conscience and personal identity, are more applicable to ethics than to cosmology.

strong dose of agnosticism in his intellectual make up',⁶ but this is only to reiterate something that Leslie Stephen and Huxley had already stated. 'Butler was really one of us', Huxley quipped, while Stephen remarked 'the great argument of Butler... is an argument for Agnosticism'.⁷ I repeat: it is my purpose to wrench the claim of agnosticism away from the unbelievers and by calling Bishop Butler 'agnostic' to re-open the possibility of agnosticism as a creative form of belief.

Even where there is no positive documentary evidence, it can be safely assumed that every well-educated Victorian would have read Butler's Analogy. For example, there is no record that Tennyson had read Butler, but the Analogy of Religion was a set text at Cambridge when Tennyson was a student there. In contrast Newman directly acknowledges his debt to Butler in respect of his two great principles of analogy and probability.

Moreover, documentary sources are plentiful in one resource from which this thesis draws. My research has centred on St Deiniol's Library in Hawarden, created by Gladstone in the interests of what he called Divine Learning. The library contains the nucleus of Gladstone's extensive reading, of which he kept good record. Such was this eminent Victorian's range and

⁶ Basil Mitchell, 'Butler as a Christian Apologist' in Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.101 hereafter cited as Tercentenary Essays.

⁷ Huxley's remark was remembered by W.G Ward, Problems and Persons (London: Longmans, 1903), p.251, and is cited by Bernard Lightman in Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 207, footnote 62, hereafter cited as 'Lightman'. Bernard Lightman makes very little use of Butler in this work.

Leslie Stephen, An Agnostic's Apology (London, Smith and Elder, 1893), p.33 hereafter cited as AA.

diversity of interest and concern, that almost all the works referred to in this thesis which were published before Gladstone's death in 1898 are in his library; the majority contain some signs of his having read them although with the exception of his working copy of the Analogy of Religion his annotations are always very brief. Gladstone's abiding interest in all things Butlerian makes St Deiniol's Library a unique and invaluable study-centre.

Butler's direct influence on nineteenth-century theological and philosophical thought is well documented. His indirect influence on Victorian poetry considerably less well so, with the exception of his influence on the analogical poetry of Christina Rossetti via Tractarian thought. Although the function of analogy in Victorian poetry is by no means an undeveloped area of thought, my own contribution to the field of knowledge will be the argument that Butler's particular form of religious analogy, and in particular as it came to be amended by Bishop Copleston at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had a specific and valuable contribution to make to the whole problem of Victorian doubt. By looking at Butler's commentators - Edward Copleston, Thomas Chalmers, James Buchanan, and George Henry Lewes, among others, as well as Gladstone himself, I shall argue that only a part of Christina Rossetti's poetry can demonstrate a strict relation to Butler's analogical method and that it is in In Memoriam that Tennyson is shown to be the nineteenth-century heir of Butler's form of religious agnosticism.

The missing chronological period between Butler and Tennyson is occupied by Wordsworth and Coleridge, an area and a relationship already well investigated, particularly in the work of Stephen Prickett. My thesis begins from the loss of a vision of the one world set forth by Wordsworth and Coleridge. For the post-Romantic Tennyson it was no longer possible to return to that direct and whole vision of all things at one with the world-soul. Hallam himself attests to Tennyson's Romantic inheritance deriving from Keats rather than Wordsworth. But Butler's austere analogy of religion is, as I shall argue, an indirect interpretation of a higher dimension from a lower fallen world. Butler comes into his own again when he is re-owned by a sceptical society, finding in his very particular form of not knowing a form of faith. Coleridge, an admirer of Butler, foresaw the potential of the Analogy in this respect: 'I think, that Butler's Analogy aided by well-placed notes would answer irresistibly all the objections to Christianity founded on a priori reasonings'.⁸ But for Coleridge and Wordsworth analogy had less to do with probability, and everything to do with a direct intuition of one life in creation that effectively transcended analogy itself. Butler's defence of faith is built not around likeness, but around the probability of *not unlikeness*. Where Wordsworth and Coleridge represent certainties, Butler is most valuably relevant in dealing with incomplete and partial knowledge. After Darwin's reversion of Paley's argument from design, the direct apprehension of God in

⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. by E.L. Griggs, 6 vols (1956; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), i, Letter 232, p.385.

Nature was lost. 'We do not get faith from Nature', said Tennyson, 'but from ourselves, from what is highest within ourselves'.⁹ Only Ruskin perhaps represents a tenacious retention of the Wordsworthian vision. After Lyall, Chambers and Darwin that vision had to be re-learned and re-adapted into the context of an age of uncertainty. It is true that Darwin can be linked to Butler both by his use of a quotation from the Analogy before the title page of The Origin of Species and by his use of analogy as an evolutionary term: 'As all the species of the same genus are supposed to be descended from a common progenitor, it may be expected that they would occasionally vary in an analogous manner'.¹⁰ The Origin begins from the analogy between artificial selection and natural selection, but Darwinian evolution is, I suggest, a counter-story to that of Butler's sense of economy. For Darwin analogies are either merely metaphorical or are finally resolvable into literal and physical correspondences by descent. Butler's analogies are not scientifically homological, a fact that Huxley disparagingly drew to Darwin's attention:

Infinite benevolence need not have invented pain and sorrow at all - infinite malevolence would very easily have deprived us of the large measure of content and happiness that falls to

⁹ Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1897), i. p.314, hereafter cited as Memoir.

¹⁰ The frontpiece reads: 'The only distinct meaning of the word 'natural' is stated, fixed or settled; since what is natural as much requires and presupposes an intelligent agent to render it so, i.e., to effect it continually or at stated times, as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once. Butler: Analogy of Revealed Religion'. The epigraph was first used in the second edition of The Origin doubtless for defensive reasons, in the face of theological objections.

Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection, 6th edn (1859; London: John Murray, 1875), p.126.

our lot. After all, Butler's *Analogy* is unassailable, and there is nothing in theological dogmas more contradictory to our moral sense, than is found in the facts of Nature. From which, however, the Bishop's conclusion that the dogmas are true doesn't follow.¹¹

For Huxley, there is a solely physical basis of life whereas for Butler analogy deals with the veiled relation between two worlds. I could have included the work of Herbert Spencer as indeed a scientific agnostic's attempt to see analogies evolving throughout the world, in relation to the Unknowable on the other side of this earth. But I take Sidgwick's view of Spencer - that his was a philosophical and not a theological agnosticism,¹² and offer Ruskin as a genuinely theological alternative in respect of finding analogies in the world of Nature.

Increasingly throughout this thesis I argue that theology had to go on within a literary rather than a philosophical language in the later nineteenth century. As John Coulson has indicated in Religion and Imagination, Newman is central to such an argument. It was through beginning with Newman that I came to see that my investigation, which I had originally intended should include the Victorian Novel, would in fact confine itself to the language of poetry. For it is as Newman knew that the language of religious experience must be closer to a literary rather than a philosophical language and within the literary convention it is the language of poetry that is most expressive of realities that are latent within

¹¹ Thomas Huxley to Charles Darwin, Dec 28th 1880. Thomas Huxley Life and Letters of T.H. Huxley, ed. by L.H. Huxley, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1900), ii, p.15, hereafter cited as Huxley Letters.

¹² see Henry Sidgwick, Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant (London: Macmillan, 1905), pp.276-7.

and behind the mind, and thus most likely tentatively to test and maintain a relation between two worlds by its approximation and intimation of something beyond the limits of itself.

If Huxley was wrong about Butler, he was right in his respect for Tennyson. For Tennyson, as Huxley freely admitted to the scientist John Tyndall, was 'the first poet since Lucretius to understand the drift of science' (Huxley, Letters, Oct 15th 1892, ii, p.338). Samuel Laing, who set out at Gladstone's request, Articles of the Agnostic Creed, therein spoke of Tennyson as 'the great poet of modern thought' in saying 'Behold I know not anything' and pointing 'Behind the veil, Behind the veil'.¹³ Laing's agnosticism was closer to Huxley's than to Butler's - as Gladstone saw. But it is finally to Tennyson that we must turn in order to find an agnostic position within the tradition of analogy as it was established by Butler - for all that it had been damned as 'drivel' by Huxley ('Huxley' Letters, vol i, p241).

In 1876 Matthew Arnold delivered a lecture 'Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist' at the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution. Arnold had great respect for Butler but against the 'break up of traditional and conventional notions respecting our life, its conduct, and its sanctions', Arnold found the Analogy to be weak and ineffectual:

¹³ Andrew Pyle ed., Agnosticism: Contemporary Responses to Spencer and Huxley (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995), p.125.

The Analogy, the great work on which such immense praise has been lavished is, for all real intents and purposes now, a failure; it does not serve. It seemed once to have a spell and a power; but the Zeit-Geist breathes upon it, we rub our eyes, and it has the spell and the power no longer.¹⁴

Caught up in the spirit of the age, Arnold lost sight of the permanent value of Butler's great argument. The Analogy endures; its power abides. It is time to look again and to re-write 'Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist'.

¹⁴ Matthew Arnold, 'Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist' in Last Essays on Church and Religion, in Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1960-77), pp.11-62 (p.57).

CHAPTER 1

Orientations:

Agnosticism and Christianity

1.i. The Disorientated Predicament

On October 1st, 1833, Alfred Tennyson received tragic news in a letter from Henry Elton in Bristol:

Your friend, Sir, and my much loved nephew,
Arthur Hallam, is no more - ¹

The sentence breaks, like a life prematurely cut off:

No more?...

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

In Memoriam, LVI. 21 and 25-8.²

With Hallam's death there is 'no more' certainty that 'life' itself has any meaning or purpose. The shock of Tennyson's grief comes out of a sudden end, felt as both finite and incomplete, a cutting short of life with the residue left aimless. His sense of loss involves not only the loss of past expectations of more life to come, but a continuance of that loss into a future which now can hold no hope.

Yet even as he speaks of the futility of this temporal life Tennyson has intimations of another

¹ Peter Levi, Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1994), p.105, hereafter cited as 'Levi'.

² The Poems of Tennyson incorporating Trinity College Manuscript, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Harlow: Longmans, 1987).

dimension, another future, not in front of him but rather 'behind the veil' as if in waiting. But the anticipation of this other dimension is cut off even as he anticipates it. He cannot yet know anything of what is or is not 'behind the veil', but must remain in the midst of a life where what he only knows for certain is this death. Even in moments of profound grief In Memoriam has unsteady intimations which, if they cannot be immediately pursued, will recur later in another section of the poem when perhaps they may be held onto longer and explored.

But in the first shock of grief all attention is focussed not behind the veil, but beneath the ground:

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the under-lying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

II. 1-4.

The roots and fibres flourish in death, like replacement bodies and substitute brains. Here in the grave, growth is almost grotesquely the condition of death not life. This is a dark world where Death becomes not the last thing but the first thing, from which Tennyson must begin again - and it holds a fatal attraction:

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
 I seem to fail from out my blood
 And grow incorporate into thee.

II. 13-16.

Tennyson seems almost to 'grow' 'out' of life and into the sullen embrace of Death. If poetry is to be the means of the recovery of a devastated life, it must register a rhythmic, lifelike pulse, and feeling must be the way of life that is felt in the blood. But the bloodless existence which lyric II invites is, in

reality, an incorporate dead end, the verse as yet being only the 'sad mechanic exercise' or narcotic (V,7). If the end of Life heralds the birth of Death, Tennyson fears for the survival of Love itself:

O me, what profits it to put
 An idle case? If Death were seen
 At first as Death, Love had not been.
 XXXV. 17-18

Love is no longer the first thing in the world. Indeed it never really was. Death, apparently that last thing, was already there from the very beginning. That thought is what changes memory itself. No matter how much Tennyson feels the need for 'Love' to come in every sense before Death, he can no longer be certain of the truth of Love after it. There is no getting over chronology now, in the loss of clear ontological principles. For the underlying suspicion is that even while life was being lived in the confidence of Love, it had all the time been a false trust. In Memoriam will not be about the loss of Hallam alone, but about the retrospective loss of a certain sort of order and logic when the 'shock so harshly given'(xvi.11) affects the very core of existence itself:

And made me that delirious man
 Whose fancy fuses old and new,
 And flashes into false and true,
 And mingles all without a plan?
 XVI. 17-20.

The sense of form has gone. When Hallam was alive there was a logical order to life; now in the residual limbo of his death, Tennyson tries to make his way out of the confusion of capricious thought. But the way out might only lead to the end of the poem, not to some resolving

conclusion of thought. For displaced time and broken truth is all he has to accompany dreary survival itself:

Still onward winds the dreary way;
 I with it; for I long to prove
 No lapse of moons can canker Love,
 Whatever fickle tongues may say.
 XXVI. 1-4.

There is no sense of recognisable direction in 'onwards'. Tennyson has to create what he also depends upon finding: he has to prove in his very self that love is constant, but his dilemma is that he needs that proof first in order to have confidence in carrying on. Otherwise he faces the fear of finding -:

In more of life true life no more
 And Love the indifference to be.
 XXVI. 11-12.

That Arthur Hallam is 'no more' signifies not only an end but the beginning of 'more' of life without belief in a true purpose and order. All Tennyson can do perhaps is endure more of life without confidence in the truth of past or future love. However much Tennyson might foresee the future proof and comfort which he so desires and needs, he has to stay in time with the process of bereavement and continually come back to the middle of the pain and confusion of shattered thought and life. Indeed the very anticipations and sporadic intimations threaten to disauthenticate the process, by creating what he needs 'factitiously' as Clough would put it.³

³ 'I am a coward and know it.
 Courage in me could be only factitious,
 unnatural, useless'.

Torn between the thought of not knowing where he is, the fear of not getting anywhere and the presumption of anticipating comfort, a disorientated Tennyson finds that death in In Memoriam means the loss of a clear and recognisable starting point. Often Tennyson's only remaining starting point in an approach to an idea is the invocation of its loud formal name - 'O Heart, Love, Life, Friendship, Grief, Regret'(IV,5; XXXV,6; LVI,25; LXXXV,33; LXXVIII, 16,17) - in lieu of Hallam's name:

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
 O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
 O sweet and bitter in a breath,
 What whispers from thy lying lip?
 III. 1-4.

The very loudness that is intended to bring relief here blocks the means of getting beyond the pain, by drowning out other thought and immersing the speaker in 'Sorrow' both 'sweet and bitter'. Tennyson cannot even be certain now of the truth of 'Sorrow' which breathes the very breath of 'Death'. The sweetness and bitterness are not simply contrasting moods but, together, a place of confusion in his veering between them. Thus, not knowing where or how or even whether to begin again, Tennyson in In Memoriam makes a series of false starts, starts that are not in themselves principles, but at least serve to set the poetry in motion. The customary elegiac form might have seemed a suitable starting point for a working out of grief:

I sing to him that rests below,
 And, since the grasses round me wave,
 I take the grasses of the grave,
 And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
 And sometimes harshly will he speak:

'This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men.'

Another answers, 'Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth: 'Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

'A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?'

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stolen away.

XXI.

The poet can 'take' the grasses without stealing, for the pastoral world of the first verse lends itself to sorrow. Poetry as metaphor is here allowed to soothe and stabilise grief. Yet the intimacy of the first verse is barely established before it is interrupted, as if the bereaved poet cannot write an elegy without anticipating an external audience. But as the travellers' voices intrude public issues upon private sorrow, their realist criticisms seem to undermine the idea of elegy as a starting point, making it no longer an unquestionable principle. As lyric XXI moves farther away from the pastoral opening, the smaller and weaker the piper appears. Yet Tennyson almost needs the objections made explicit in order to resist them: 'I do but sing because I must'(1.23). The apparent solidity of 'but' is only an instinctive falling back on self, yet Tennyson seems to sense the potential power of its resisting force and re-

employs it in line 24 - 'And pipe but as the linnets sing' - in order defensively to redirect the course of this lyric back towards the elegiac pastoral convention. Yet nothing is finally resolved in the last verse, such as it is, as if this 'barren' song was always born of death. The return to pastoral form produces thoughts which Tennyson can neither follow through, nor prevent from forming. The birds might be two rhyming sides of the same coin in their different attitudes towards the same loss. For while Tennyson can anticipate the idea that would turn one such as he from 'sad' back to 'glad' - that the dead one is with God; what he cannot produce is the actual change of feeling that brings the idea back to life. The lyric has proved to be no starting point and ends with no sense of resolve. All it can do is provide a place for thoughts, that hardly seem to belong to this poetic moment, to be temporarily held.

The ability to anticipate something that is beyond his current predicament causes problems in the time-warped writing of In Memoriam as it does in the reading of it. The reader will often find himself diverted in the course of an argument, losing and having to come back to his original track of thought. As Tennyson jumps ahead of himself through the course of lyric XXI, the question of verse 4, 'Is this an hour/ For private sorrow's barren song', is found to have been left pressing but unanswered when the lyric changes direction in the final verse. It is as if Tennyson can only anticipate the question, when it is not yet the 'hour' for the answer. Thus W.H. Mallock's retrospective appraisal of In Memoriam over-clarifies the experience of reading the poem:

[In Memoriam] is in form but the personal expression of one man's regret for another. In reality it is a revelation to an age of its own struggle after some new spiritual standpoint.⁴

It is only in retrospect that it is possible to understand that bereavement suffered so subjectively was, all the time, in keeping with the struggle of the 'age' in its universal sense of trouble and loss. At the time, and from the middle of a self-enclosed sorrow, Tennyson can only understand the questioning of the relation of private to public in XXI verse 4, as something contributing to the immediate feeling of confusion and vulnerability in which he feels himself enveloped. When Mallock identifies the 'struggle after some new spiritual standpoint', he is identifying a cause which at the time of writing, could not have been readily understood as such, but which is tacitly evident in In Memoriam's constant shifts of position. It is as if the poet is instinctively searching for a place or even time from which to make a stand, for place and time have become almost indistinguishable in the delirium in which 'all' is mingled without a plan. Yet Tennyson's friend Henry Sidgwick thought in retrospect that the poet had indeed found such a 'standpoint' from which he was able to balance opposing ideas:

Perhaps a certain balancedness is the most distinctive characteristic of Tennyson among poets...Perhaps this specially makes him the representative of an age whose most

⁴ W.H. Mallock, 'Ballads and Other Poems by Alfred Tennyson, 1880 and The Works of Alfred Tennyson Poet Laureate, 1881', The Edinburgh Review, vol.154 (1881), pp.486-515 (p. 505).

characteristic merit is to see both sides of a question.⁵

Even so the value judgment made upon In Memoriam from the distance of half a century is quite out of touch with the source of the poetry. This poetry is not in balancing control of thought as Sidgwick seems to suggest, rather it is thought that is in control of the bereaved poet, leaving him stuck in the middle of equivocal balance. Being able to see both sides of a question is indeed in liberal eyes a 'merit', but it can also feel like a curse if this makes finding an answer difficult or even impossible, precisely because of the mental predicament understood in being so placed in the middle of things. Thus in In Memoriam, Tennyson's 'balancedness' is never a constant equilibrium, but something resulting from continual movement and shifts of position from one side to another. Here is one side:

And all we met was fair and good,
 And all was good that Time could bring,
 And all the secret of the Spring
 Moved in the chambers of the blood;
 XXIII. 17-20.

By the next poem the negative side of this positive thought has presented itself:

And was the day of my delight
 As pure and perfect as I say?
 XXIV. 1-2.

There is no 'yet' or 'but' to bring in the negative thought. The new verse simply follows the pattern of the previous lines beginning with 'And', so that the

⁵ Arthur and Eleanor Sidgwick, Henry Sidgwick, A Memoir (London: Macmillan, 1906), pp.468-9.

question, slipping in so easily, seems to take him unawares, but then gathers a momentum of its own:

And is it that the haze of grief
 Makes former gladness loom so great?
 XXIV. 9-10

Or that the past will always win
 A glory from its being far;
 And orb into the perfect star
 We saw not, when we moved therein?
 XXIV. 13-16.

It is as if memory is superseded by a thought that then turns back on itself leaving the poet poised in the middle of unanswerable questions. Whereas memory is a looking back, the thoughts that turn back are not backwards in the way of memory but attempt a backward re-working. But in the compounded difficulties of this lyric, line 16 does not even know whether the 'glory' in line 14 was a fiction or a just reappraisal by a later perspective. So while the movement from XXIII to XXIV seems to show Tennyson trying to display a reasonable sense of balance between memory and fact, his very 'balancedness' as understood by Sidgwick - the ability to see 'both sides' of a situation - paradoxically threatens to knock him off balance:

Or that the past will always win
 A glory from its being far...?

In this extra unbalancing thought Tennyson is caught up in an idea of time, as at once separating him from what was 'good', while 'always' tantalisingly over-perfecting it. 'Time' is no longer a chronology which he simply and readily moves through, backwards or forwards. Here in the aimless residue of Hallam's death, 'Time' is something

trapped within his head in which left-over thoughts move bafflingly backwards and forwards.

When Tennyson does return to a broken or unresolved train of thought, his ability to see both sides of a question feels more like a curse than a blessing. He may cry out loudly against 'Sorrow', as we have seen:

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
III. 1.

- but against even the threatened falsity of sorrow, lyric LXXVII suddenly and dreadfully perceives a worse alternative:

O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
LXXVIII. 15-17.

Tennyson has not achieved the poise of balancedness, but realized, as thought once again turns round upon itself, the further threat of a second stage of loss. Here is the secondary sorrow over sorrow itself abating; the grief that grief can make recovery; the regret that even regret itself, like Hallam, can die. Tennyson finds himself suspended between treacherous alternatives, neither of which are fact, but open-ended questions. All too often Tennyson will find himself being helplessly turned from one side of a question to the other:

What words are these have fallen from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take
The touch of change in calm and storm;
But knows no more of transient form
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
 Hung in the shadow of a heaven?
 Or has the shock, so harshly given,
 Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
 And staggers blindly ere she sink?
 And stunned me from my power to think
 And all my knowledge of myself.

XVI. 1-16.

The first stanza is only balanced in the sense that the confusion that was felt so painfully inside is now plainly visible even to himself outside. It is as if the placing of 'calm despair and wild unrest' on the same line is a formal attempt to put the very changeability of sorrow into some sort of balanced perspective. But the 'single breast' can never maintain such an equilibrium. This is the unbalancing thought which sends him spinning through a series of ever-worsening alternative questions: 'Or doth she only seem to take...?'; 'But knows no more of transient form...?'; 'Or has the shock, so harshly given/ Confused me...?' Even the end of a stanza is not enough to stop the free fall of the lines of verse into unanswerable questions. The middle ground which Sidgwick had seen as 'characteristic' is no holding place; everything here gives way and nothing will stand. Tennyson is not magisterially turning from one side of a question to another, but being turned by the force of questions presenting themselves unbidden. I am saying that this middle ground is not a position that Tennyson consciously adopts, but a bereft, disorientated position in which a man who finds himself stunned from his power to think thoughts for himself finds that thoughts and questions are being, as it were, done to him.

In the immediate aftermath of a death the first thoughts to crowd the mind are just such bewildered and

bewildering questions. But unanswerable questions are most impatient of an answer, as the answering silence exposes deeper fears. Consequently questions which might hope to hang suspended in mid-air can find no foothold, so to speak, and are dragged down into the mingled confusion of things or just left to the passing of time:

And saying; 'Comes he thus my friend?
 Is this the end of all my care?'
 And circle moaning in the air:
 'Is this the end? Is this the end?'
 XII. 13-16.

The asking of one question only seems to reveal another behind or even ahead of it, as if all that questions can do is breed more questions, which are sent out into a spiritual vacuum.

Thus the danger, from the very start of the project of writing out his grief, is that Tennyson will just go on circling because of the lack of real start, end or direction now:

With weary steps I loiter on,
 Though always under altered skies
 The purple from the distance dies,
 My prospect and horizon gone.
 XXXVIII. 1-4.

Weariness is the effect of loitering as well as its cause; the exhaustive circling leads only to despair. 'On' has no sense of direction, for direction cannot be known without 'prospect' or 'horizon'; rather it is just wearying thought of more disorienting loitering. While 'altered' holds the memory of that which was before, and is conscious of ever-present change, Tennyson cannot be moving forward, but appears to be only floating. R.H.Hutton explains this dilemma as being representative of the age:

Either we are on the eve of a long and uncertain era of spiritual suspense, - scepticism qualified by yearning hope, - or that the way is preparing for a day of clearer and more solid trust than the world has yet known.⁶

This is what Sidgwick described as 'balancedness' - 'the ability to see both sides' of the controversy between 'scepticism' and 'solid trust'. But in contrast to Sidgwick's retrospective analysis, Hutton still finds himself involved 'in' the contemporary troubles of the era. A balanced overview is quite out of sight to the individual deep in the middle of personal confusion. The initial stages of grief find Tennyson in just such a state of 'spiritual suspense', unable to go back or to move forward and with no standpoint secure and solid beneath him. There is, as Hutton noted 'an agnostic element in Tennyson, as perhaps in all the greatest minds, though in him it kept reiterating: We have but faith, we cannot know' (Aspects, p.406). As shock leaves Tennyson in the midst of 'stunned' thought, it is almost inevitable that there would be reiteration in his poetry as blocked or stranded thoughts turn back upon themselves. That Hutton should refer to this as an 'agnostic element' is an issue that must now be carefully considered.

⁶ R.H. Hutton, Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought, ed. by Elizabeth M. Roscoe (London: Macmillan, 1899), p.386, hereafter cited as Aspects.

1. ii. Introducing the Variable Middle Ground of Agnosticism

Although Richard Hutton used the term 'agnostic' in 1892 to describe the nature of Tennyson's religious belief, there had been, at the time of writing In Memoriam, no such defining word in existence. The word 'agnostic' was coined by the scientist Thomas Huxley in 1869, at a social gathering to celebrate the inauguration of The Metaphysical Society.⁷ This was a society formed for the purpose of discussing philosophical and theological problems of the time, of which Tennyson and Hutton were also founder members. Huxley remembers that as his colleagues were all philosophical or theological 'ists' of one kind or another,⁸ he had invented a word to describe his own otherwise anomalous or equivocal or negative spiritual dimension, 'as suggestively antithetic to the gnostic of Church history' ('Agnosticism', p.183). 'Agnosticism', Huxley later explained, 'is not a creed but a method, the essence of which lies in the rigorous application of a single principle' ('Agnosticism', p.186). In 1869 Huxley gave a name to a long-held 'method' of justification which twenty years later, in his essay 'Agnosticism', had hardened into 'a single principle' upon which he firmly stood.

Even before his method of 'justification by

⁷ R.H. Hutton, 'The Metaphysical Society - A Reminiscence', The Nineteenth Century, No.102 (1885), pp. 177-196 (p.177).

⁸ T.H. Huxley, 'Agnosticism', The Nineteenth Century, vol 25 (1889), pp.169-194 (p.183), hereafter cited as 'Agnosticism'.

verification' had been named,⁹ Huxley's standpoint had been put to the severest test. Huxley, the man of science, was also the father who in 1860 had suffered the terrible loss of his beloved eldest son. In reply to Charles Kingsley's letter of condolence he declared his agnostic faith more passionately than methodically:

The universe is one and the same throughout; and if the condition of my success in unravelling some little difficulty of anatomy or physiology is that I shall rigorously refuse to put faith in that which does not rest on sufficient evidence, I cannot believe that the great mysteries of existence will be laid open to me on other terms. It is no use to talk to me of analogies and probabilities, I know what I mean when I say I believe in the law of the inverse squares, and I will not rest my life and my hopes upon weaker convictions. I dare not if I would. ¹⁰

The agnostic element which Hutton identifies in Tennyson's poetry - 'We have but faith, we cannot know'- puts faith traditionally in that which rests upon insufficient evidence. But in contrast Huxley, facing a similar personal crisis, resists what he feels are 'weaker convictions' by the force of his stronger secular belief in the reliability of logical evidence. Evidence must never be confused with faith, for faith can never be evidence of objective reality despite our strongest hopes. Kingsley's proffered 'analogies and probabilities' belong to the territory of Christian faith in which Huxley is a foreigner, but a territory which I shall shortly ascribe as marked out through the influence of Bishop Butler in particular. In the scientist's

⁹ Aspects 'The Great Agnostic', p.102.

¹⁰ T.H. Huxley, letter to Charles Kingsley, September 23rd, 1860, i, p.217.

creed, which must now be called a method, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty'¹¹ is changed to 'I believe in the law of inverse squares' as a mathematical certainty. For the rest, 'I shall rigorously refuse...', 'I cannot believe...', 'I will not rest my life...', make the strength of what Hutton calls a 'creedless creed' appear a negative rather than a positive strength (Aspects, p.101). Yet Huxley would deny this judgment:

Agnosticism is not properly described as a 'negative' creed, nor indeed as a creed of any kind, except in so far as it expresses absolute faith in the validity of a principle which is as much ethical as intellectual. This principle may be stated in various ways, but they all amount to this: that it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of the objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that certainty. This is what Agnosticism asserts; and, in my opinion, it is all that is essential to Agnosticism. That which Agnostics deny and repudiate, as immoral, is the contrary doctrine, that there are propositions which men ought to believe, without logically satisfying evidence; and that reprobation ought to attach to the professor of disbelief in such inadequately supported propositions. ¹²

Even so, Agnosticism's assertion is phrased in negative form: 'it is wrong for a man to say that he is certain of objective truth of any proposition unless he can produce evidence which logically justifies that evidence'; it is 'immoral' to assert that there is an obligation to believe certain propositions without evidence. It appears that science's 'Thou shalt not' stands now in place of Christianity .

¹¹ The Book of Common Prayer.

¹² T.H.Huxley, 'Agnosticism and Christianity', The Nineteenth Century, vol 25 (1889), pp.937-64 (pp.937-8), hereafter cited as 'Agnosticism and Christianity'.

Despite his insistence that agnosticism is not a negative creed but a positive method, Huxley quotes from Kant Kritik der reinen Vernunft in his essay 'Agnosticism', to explain how he had arrived at such a conclusion:

The greatest and perhaps the sole use of all philosophy of pure reason is after all, merely negative, since it serves not as an organon for the enlargement [of knowledge], but as a discipline for its delimitation; and, instead of discovering truth, has only the modest merit of preventing error.

'Agnosticism', p.182.

Here Huxley is offering Kant as a support to his agnostic authority. However, a little later in his paper, Huxley positions the positive use of reason before the negative:

Positively the principle may be expressed: In matters of the intellect, follow your reason as far as it will take you, without regard to any other consideration. And negatively: In matters of the intellect, do not pretend that conclusions are certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable.

'Agnosticism', pp.186-7.

'As far as it will take you' is not quite the 'modest' achievement of pure reason which Kant is said to offer, since it is at once potentially bold and potentially delimited. This is not to say that Huxley is merely and suddenly contradicting himself, but that it is necessary for him in the balancing act in defence of agnosticism to stress its open-minded, positive force within the area of unbelief. In 1889, as Adrian Desmond points out, Huxley was 'in continual engagement with the positivist Frederick Harrison who defined agnosticism as a "paralysis of religious faith". Huxley was showing by

contrast that it was an active elevating moral position'.¹³

However, in his comprehensive series of lectures on Agnosticism, delivered in Edinburgh during 1887-8, Robert Flint admits that in the course of its history, the term scepticism 'has acquired an offensive connotation', but that 'agnosticism has during its brief span of existence, unfortunately acquired just the same connotation'.¹⁴ However much Huxley saw his method as not exclusively negative, it seems to have taken only a short time for it to become confused not only with the negative spirit of scepticism, but also with atheism itself, leaving non-agnostics to see it as a 'theory of knowledge which ends in doubt or disbelief' ('Flint', p.16). Moreover, by 1889, Huxley is defending his fellow agnostics not just from the charge of being negative sceptics, but 'Infidels'.¹⁵ Dean Wace's assertion 'If I am not a Christian, then I am an infidel' ('Agnosticism', p.179) seeks to deny Huxley's agnosticism the middle ground.

But Huxley defends his position by arguing that Wace and others are not employing the term 'agnostic' in the sense in which it was originally used. The moral vigour of Huxley's agnosticism is not a liberal compromise between Infidelity and Christian belief. As far as Huxley is concerned, agnosticism is to do with the honourable maintenance of a clear and distinct middle

¹³ Adrian Desmond, Huxley, 2 vols (London: Michael Joseph, 1997), ii, n.16, p.306, hereafter cited as Huxley.

¹⁴ Robert Flint, Agnosticism (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1903), p.4 hereafter cited as 'Flint'.

¹⁵ Dean Wace, Principal of King's College, had charged Huxley with being an 'Infidel' at a meeting of the Church Congress in Manchester, October 1888 ('Agnosticism', p.169, n.1).

ground that is neither belief nor disbelief. Despite Huxley's satisfaction that 'the Spectator had stood godfather' to the term 'agnostic',¹⁶ it is clear that even Richard Holt Hutton's use of the word to describe 'an agnostic element in Tennyson' is out of line with Huxley's definition. If Wace makes Agnosticism into a heavily negative creed, Hutton's claim makes it seem more positive than Huxley could have meant. The only standpoint for Huxley is evidence. Beyond what can be logically known, Huxley refuses to venture.

The Metaphysical Society brought together Huxley, Leslie Stephen, W.K.Clifford and John Tyndall 'and impelled them towards formulating their creed'(Lightman, p.94). Huxley is the first to admit that 'the agnostic principle will vary according to individual knowledge and capacity and the general condition of science'('Agnosticism',p.187). It is inevitable that each man may have his own definition according to the state of epistemology as he sees it. Here is Leslie Stephen's:

The Agnostic is one who asserts - what no one denies - that there are limits to the sphere of human intelligence.

AA. p.1

Putting 'limits to the sphere of human intelligence' is to imply on the other side of those limits the existence of the unknowable. Huxley's intellectually vigilant agnosticism is wary of such potential ambiguities - 'I do not very much care to speak of anything as unknowable'

¹⁶ Richard Holt Hutton was editor of The Spectator from 1861-97 ('Agnosticism', p.183).

('Agnosticism and Christianity', p.938). If we confess ourselves ignorant,¹⁷ we cannot then claim to know that there is objectively an unknowable. The application of the agnostic principle requires 'the suspension of judgement concerning a number of propositions respecting which our contemporary ecclesiastical "agnostics" profess entire certainty' ('Agnosticism and Christianity', p,938). In other words, the existence of God is a proposition in which the agnostic would have no proper reason to believe or disbelieve. The certainty of 'agnostics' and theologians is what agnosticism challenges:

It was inevitable that a conflict should arise between Agnosticism and Theology: or rather I ought to say between Agnosticism and Ecclesiasticism. For Theology, the science, is one thing: and Ecclesiasticism, the championship of a foregone conclusion as to the truth of a particular form of Theology is another. With scientific Theology, Agnosticism has no quarrel.

'Agnosticism and Christianity', p.939.

The quarrel here is above all with J.H. Newman, the champion of a 'foregone conclusion'. Huxley is referring to Newman's Tract 85, in which Newman writes 'Let us maintain, before we have proved. This seeming paradox is the secret of happiness'.¹⁸ Huxley thought Newman's dogmatic Ecclesiasticism put the attainment of faith before the establishment of truth and Huxley called this

¹⁷ Adrian Desmond notes that as late as 1889 Huxley was 'still defining 'agnostic' as a 'confession of ignorance': T.Huxley. to J.A. Skilton, 10th Dec. 1889, Huxley Papers 30.152 (Huxley, n.15, p.306).

¹⁸ The reference for this quotation from Tract 85, p.85 is given by Huxley in a footnote in 'Agnosticism and Christianity', p.939. In the next paragraph Huxley quotes from Newman's Essay on Development. The reference is again given in a footnote.

faith 'an abomination' ('Agnosticism and Christianity', p.939). Huxley and Newman alike believed that there could be no peace between Huxley's Agnosticism and Newman's Faith: 'he [Newman] believed that his arguments [on miracles and development] led either Romeward, or to what ecclesiastics call "Infidelity" and I call Agnosticism. I believe that he was quite right in this conviction; but while he choses the one alternative I choose the other' ('Agnosticism and Christianity', p.954).

By 1889 Newman had entered the Roman Catholic Church, having found that the Anglo-Catholic *Via Media* could not be maintained as a positive religious system. As the middle way it was always, for Newman, in danger of degeneration into a form of liberal compromise. Huxley and Newman at the ends of their separate roads could at least agree on the danger of compromise, having each separately arrived at their own creed. Thus, from the end of his chosen road, Newman writes:

I am a Catholic by virtue of my believing in a God; and if I am asked why I believe in a God, I answer that it is because I believe in myself, for I feel it is impossible to believe in my own existence (and of that fact I am quite sure) without believing also in the existence of Him, who lives as a Personal, All-seeing, All-judging Being in my conscience. ¹⁹

The sentence goes round and round like a thought which is circular, not in aimlessness but with purpose, for the intimate relation between 'I' and 'God' is inextricably bound up. When asked why he believes, Newman does not

¹⁹ J.H. Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (1864; London: J.M. Dent, 1912; repr. 1934), p.186, hereafter cited as Apologia.

answer with logically objective evidence, but with 'personal' conviction. Truth cannot be externally imposed, but must be internally experienced. R.H. Hutton said of Newman's absolute certitude of the relationship of God and the soul of man that 'that conviction may be regarded as the very root of all he had to say in the world'.²⁰ This is not to say that Newman's personal sense of God depends upon an exceptional self, but that as he experiences God as a living reality in himself as an emphatically created being, so he experiences a strong sense of groundedness. Belief must ultimately rest upon something which itself is the unprovable ground for all proof; that is why it is vital for Newman to get at first principles:

Resolve to believe nothing, and you must prove your proofs and analyse your elements, sinking further and further, and finding "in the lowest deep a lower deep," till you come to the broad bosom of scepticism. I would rather be bound to defend the assumption that Christianity is true, than to prove a moral governance from the physical world. Life is for action. If we insist on proof for everything, we shall never come to action; to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith.²¹

For Newman, faith is the principle of action; religion cannot begin with scientific proof for the pursuit of undue reason leads away from action. Newman is an Aristotelian in the sense both that he is rationally opposed to the inappropriate use of reason and that he argues from man's natural function, which is action, and

²⁰ R.H. Hutton, 'Newman and Tennyson', Brief Literary Criticisms, Selected from The Spectator, ed. by E.M. Roscoe (London: Macmillan, 1906), p.198.

²¹ J.H. Newman (Catholicus), Letters on an Address Delivered by Sir Robert Peel on the Establishment of a Reading Room at Tamworth (London: John Mortimer, 1841), Letter VI, p.34.

makes deductions from that accordingly. The justification by faith rather than verification is the subject of Newman's work An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent: as if in answer to the Agnostic challenge, Newman inquires how it is possible to have faith before we know.

In the Grammar of Assent Newman uses reason itself to differentiate between logical and personal ways of apprehending truth or between what he calls certainty and certitude:

In these pages, without excluding, far from it, the question of duty, I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth.

Certitude is a mental state: certainty is a quality of propositions. ²²

Certitude does not rest upon antecedent reasoning. There are no grades or qualities of certitude as there are of certainty; certitude is simply certitude. How then is it possible to advance from certainty to certitude? As a religious thinker Newman would protest that this was a wrong formulation of the question:

How it comes about that we can be certain is not my business to determine; for me it is sufficient that certitude is felt.

Grammar, pp.270.

Newman's is an ancient self - 'I am what I am, or I am nothing. I cannot think, reflect, or judge about my being, without starting from the very point which I aim at concluding' (Grammar, p.272). It is riskily

²² J.H. Newman, An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent (1870; Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1979; repr. 1992), pp.272-3, hereafter cited as Grammar.

grounded in faith not in modern doubt and science. Turning upon that self as the product of authoritative creation, An Essay In Aid of A Grammar of Assent was the book that Newman struggled to begin until he realized that he was trying to begin at the wrong or latter end: 'You are wrong in beginning with certitude - certitude is only a kind of assent - you should begin with contrasting assent and inference'.²³ 'Inference', Newman says 'is the conditional acceptance of a proposition, Assent is the unconditional. The object of Assent is a truth, the object of Inference is the truth-like or a verisimilitude' (Grammar, p.209.). Certitude is a complex assent, or a conscious assent to an assent, which wonderfully and thankfully turns out to be something simple:

Certitude, as I have said, is the perception of truth with the perception that it is the truth, or the consciousness of knowing, as expressed in the phrase, "I know that I know," or "I know that I know that I know," - or simply "I know;" for one reflex assertion of the mind about self sums up the series of self-consciousnesses without the need of any actual evolution of them.

Grammar, p.163.

I simply know. Yet in defence of that simplicity, no legal document could be drawn up with more precise attention to wording. Newman weaves safety nets with words; he leaves no loopholes, only a pervasive sense of his presence in the deliberation of his language. We read forward, while Newman working towards a complete

²³ Newman is in correspondence with William Froude, for whom a Grammar of Assent was undertaken. J.H. Newman, Autobiographical Writings, ed. by H. Tristram (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), pp. 269-70. Also quoted by Nicholas Lash in the introduction to Grammar, p.7.

explanation, reinforces his meaning from behind ('as I have said'), changing and reforming, constantly building on and strengthening. A Grammar of Assent does indeed seem written backwards, not towards certitude but towards the recognition of certitude as itself pre-existent, even as a man circles back and meets and recognises a truth for himself - 'I know that I know'. It is a great moment of recognition when we recall to ourselves that what has been recognised is that which was already there and known, but not recognised as known until recognised dynamically. Always Newman stresses the anterior existence of creation and, behind that, its Creator.

*

If Tennyson's agnosticism is not the same as Huxley's, is it less than Newman's certitude? As Tennyson begins the task of the writing out of grief in In Memoriam, he finds himself stuck in the middle of equivocal balance, where being able to say 'I know that I know' is not simple, but a difficulty:

Behold, we know not anything;
We can but trust that good shall fall
At last-

LIV. 13-14.

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
Prologue. 21-22.

Hutton has said that this is the 'agnostic element' in Tennyson that keeps 'reiterating'. Repetition or reiteration arises from the blocked disadvantages of the inextricable position in which Tennyson finds himself; they are symptomatic of the 'agnostic' dilemma. Tennyson, it had been said, 'held that faith falls

immensely short of certainty' (Aspects, p.407), so that we might understand Tennyson's position to be somewhere between Huxley and Newman, in a mid-nineteenth century itself existent between Modern and Ancient. But the danger of the 'agnostic element' in a man who is experiencing a loss of order is that the reiteration of 'we cannot know' may eventually harden up into a form of agnosticism that is closer to scepticism than to religion. While Huxley would say, with scorn, that faith 'is the power of saying you believe things which are incredible' ('Agnosticism and Christianity', p.939), Newman is not so far beyond Tennyson's particular difficulty that he cannot understand the dilemma:

Can I believe as if I saw? since such a high assent requires a present experience or memory of the fact, at first sight it would seem as if the answer is in the negative; for how could I assent as if I saw, unless I have seen? but no one in this life can see God. Yet I conceive a real assent is possible.

Grammar, p.96.

In making a connection between personal experience of empirical reality and personal faith, Newman takes the Being of God to be not just an idea, but a reality, 'as if I saw' at some level analogous to perception. Newman is saying that we have but faith and we can know 'as if' we had seen. There is justification for believing what we cannot prove, although it is only 'as if' it were a physical reality, now in a more-than-physical realm. For Newman, as we have seen, draws a distinction between the strength of his explicit argument for belief, and the certitude with which he held it:

My argument is in outline as follows: that the absolute certitude which we were able to possess, whether as to truths of natural theology, or as a fact of revelation, was the result of an assemblage of concurring and converging probabilities, and that both according to the constitution of the human mind and will of its Maker; that certitude was a habit of mind and, that certainty was a quality of propositions; that probabilities which did not reach to logical certainty, might create a mental certitude; that the certitude thus created might equal in measure and strength the certitude which was created by the strictest scientific demonstration.

Apologia, p.46.

If a single probability is not enough to amount to evidence, several instances seen together may well fall short of logical certainty but be sufficient in mass 'to create a mental certitude'. Faith, Newman said, in one of his sermons 'is created in the mind, not so much by facts, as by probabilities'(US, p.191), the probabilities we have seen Huxley scorning. As a mind assembles and connects overlapping 'probabilities' and 'presumptions' Newman's interior vision opens up the creative experience of implicit thinking and tacit knowing:

However, a very little consideration will make it plain also, that knowledge itself, though a condition of the mind's enlargement, yet, whatever be its range, is not the very thing which enlarges it. Rather the foregoing instances show that this enlargement consists in the comparison of the subjects of knowledge one with another. We feel ourselves to be ranging freely, when we not only learn something, but when we refer it to what we knew before. It is not the mere addition to our knowledge which is the enlargement, but the change of place, the movement onwards, of that moral centre, to which what we know and what we have been acquiring, the whole mass of our knowledge, as it were, gravitates. And therefore a philosophical cast of thought, or a comprehensive mind, or wisdom in conduct or policy, implies a connected view of the old with the new; an insight into the bearing and influence of each part upon every other; without which there is no whole, and could be

no centre. It is the knowledge, not only of things, but of their mutual relations. It is organized, and therefore living knowledge.
University Sermons, p.287.

The way to truth is not simply onwards and upwards, but it involves a type of indirect lateral thinking which moves across and through personal experience reassembling and recovering 'what we knew before': this, Newman believes, is the always rearranging 'movement onwards' towards a Christian wisdom. A man recalls, as he goes forward, where he has come from. This turn-around of thought is not backwards in the way that memory is a looking back, but a direction of thinking that brings back original religious truth rather than aspiring progressively forwards to scientific discovery. For the sake of his spiritual survival, it was crucial that Tennyson came to see that the predicament of his thoughts turning back on himself was potentially promising in this respect. That, as we shall see in Chapter 3, is the most vital 'change of place', in Newman's phrase.

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At any rate, what is clear here is that behind Newman as a creative influence, in this matter of the religious re-direction of thought, is Bishop Butler's eighteenth-century work The Analogy of Religion, 'the study of which has been to so many, as it was to me, an era in their religious opinions' (Apologia, p.36).

In The Analogy of Religion Butler suggests that we continually use, in life and in practice, a method of analogy which argues from something which we see and know to something createdly like it which is less well known. While he does not suggest that the analogical argument

offers demonstrative proof, Butler proposes that religion is particularly subject to the rule of probability. For that which 'constitutes Probability is expressed in the word Likely, i.e., like some truth' ²⁴.

It may not be possible to reach religious certainties, but with varying degrees of probability, it is possible to infer from what we see or know to what we hope, fear, or expect. For example, as childhood in this life is a preparation or probation for adulthood, so it seems 'likely' or probable that that would be analogous to the thought of man's earthly life as a preparation or probation for the life hereafter. We might infer from the first to the second, but the second is always the primary thing. In other words what Butler is offering, like Newman is backward and upward inference, rather than forward-leading conviction.

As an Aristotelian, Butler demonstrates that an appropriate use of reason is compatible with faith :

Any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter [of faith], may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not, however, so clear a case, that there is nothing in it. There is, I think, strong evidence of its truth; but it is certain no one can, upon principles of reason, be satisfied with the contrary.

Analogy, Advertisement,
Prefixed to the First Edition, p.xxxiii.

The double negative is the clue to this oddly creative method: 'it is not, however, so clear a case, that there is nothing in it'. Butler does not argue that

²⁴ Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion (1736; London: J.M. Dent, 1906; repr. 1936), p.xxiv, hereafter cited as Analogy. All quotations from the Analogy are taken from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

Christianity is probably true, so much as speculate that it is probable that it is not untrue. So long as one side of a question is found to be as credible as the other, or so long as there is the smallest presumption, Butler believes that we are under a formal obligation to act upon that presumption 'even though it be so low as to leave the mind in very great doubt which is the truth' (Analogy, p.xxv).

In the tough-minded eighteenth century Butler emphasises the ability to use and not simply fear doubt. But in the later nineteenth century, Huxley categorically believes it to be 'immoral' 'that there are propositions which men ought to believe without logically satisfying evidence' ('Agnosticism and Christianity', p.938). On the other hand Newman, leaves the Anglican Church because, as Hutton puts it, he felt himself repressed into 'the habit of schooling himself to act upon assumptions of which there could be no certitude.'²⁵ Clearly nineteenth-century doubt is no longer what it was for Butler: the Victorian dilemma is not a potentially tough position.

Agnosticism may not be an eighteenth-century word, but there is in Butler an agnostic form of being which provides something the nineteenth century lost. Butler offers an agnostic argument for limited knowledge: 'Probable evidence, in its very nature affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities' (Analogy, p.xxv). Probability is always related to doubt, but Butler's double-negative form of religious argument has

²⁵ R.H. Hutton, Cardinal Newman (London: Methuen, 1891),p.55, hereafter cited as Cardinal Newman.

creative and positive intention. As Henry Scott Holland says, 'For him [Butler] the limitations of our faculties are drawn from their knowledge, not from their ignorance; from their exercise, not from their impotence.'²⁶ As we have seen, Huxley's emphasis on humanity's total ignorance beyond the realm of material phenomena means, in contrast, that however much he wishes to emphasise the positive side of his agnosticism, his creed inevitably leans towards a negative scepticism. Yet Butler is the eighteenth-century man holding to the limits of reason and reasoning about the limits of reason, and in the remains of this chapter and in Chapter Two I shall show that Butler's religious position is the resolute occupation of the middle ground, with a faith that firmly rests upon probable evidence.

Newman's idea of certitude arising from 'an assemblage of concurring and converging probabilities' was a principle that Newman had expressly learned from Butler:²⁷

When we determine a thing to be probably true, suppose that an event has or will come to pass, it is from the mind's remarking in it a likeness to some other event, which we have observed has come to pass. And this observation forms, in numberless daily instances, a presumption, opinion, or full conviction that such an event has or will come to pass.

Analogy, p.xxiv.

²⁶ Henry Scott Holland, 'The Optimism of Butler's Analogy', The Romanes Lecture, 1908 (Oxford and London: Clarendon Press, 1908), p.22, hereafter cited as 'Scott Holland'. This lecture in pamphlet form is in the collection at St Deiniol's Library.

²⁷ Butler's doctrines of analogy and probability 'are the underlying principles of a great portion of my teaching'... 'Butler's doctrine that probability is the guide of life, led me, at least under the teaching to which a few years later I was introduced to the question of the logical cogency of faith'. Apologia, p.36.

It may not be possible to say that something is probably true if there is only a slight presumption for it, but the repetition or 'assemblage' of 'numberless daily instances' might amount to probability or even to certainty. Suddenly it seems possible that when Hutton speaks of 'reiteration' in Tennyson's poetry, or when he remarks that Tennyson 'dwells again and again on the dimness and faintness of the higher hope' (Aspects, p.406), that the apparently disabling predicament of repetitions, echoes and circling reiterations in which Tennyson finds himself makes for more promise than he realizes and could be turned to advantage. Tennyson's occupation of the middle ground may become, as I might put it, an area in which unconsciously Tennyson could hold onto Butler without having to become the fully Catholic Newman. At any rate, Tennyson must position himself and hold with intention this middle way if he is to avoid the fall into what Newman calls 'the broad bosom of scepticism'. I shall be further examining Tennyson's position in this respect in Chapter Three. Newman, for his part, in the middle of the nineteenth century, could not finally rest upon what he came in his own age to see as the potential weakness of Butler's commitment to probability. As Hutton put it:

Newman accepted Butler's teaching only so far as it displayed the rational *preparation* for belief, but rejected it so far as it suggested that any doubt as to the highest truths might remain.

Cardinal Newman, pp.96-7.

Butler held that 'probability is the very guide of life' (Analogy, p.xxv), but whereas Newman's debt to

Butler was strong, Newman felt it imperative in the conditions of the nineteenth century to go further than Butler's probability, since the doctrine of probability was too easily translated into an argument for disbelief. We have seen Huxley boldly urge, 'Follow your reason as far as it will take you'; but Newman sets limits and accepts Butler's reasonable faith 'only so far as it displayed the rational preparation for belief'.

A century after the publication of The Analogy of Religion, Newman published his Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism, the subject of which was the doctrine of the *Via Media*. In the Apologia he looks back to this volume in the knowledge that he had himself finally rejected this doctrine of the middle way for the Church of Rome:

There I say, 'It still remains to be tried, whether what is called Anglo Catholicism, the religion of Andrewes, Laud, Hammond, Butler and Wilson, is capable of being professed, acted on, and maintained on a large sphere of action, or whether it be a mere modification or transition-state of either Romanism or more popular Protestantism.' I trusted that some day it would prove to be a substantive religion.
Apologia, p.83.

In 1832 R.D. Hampden brought The Analogy of Religion onto the Literae Humaniores required reading list at Oxford. The question as to whether Butler's High Anglican religious argument was 'capable of being professed, acted on, and maintained on a large sphere of action', was very much in the air as Tennyson began work on In Memoriam in 1833. By the middle of the nineteenth century and 'on the eve of a long and uncertain era of

spiritual suspense' (Aspects, p.386), Tennyson finds himself in the middle of the struggle of faith with doubt. The road ahead becomes an issue when the via media is divided. One way leads to Huxley, the other to Newman. I shall argue that the 'agnostic' position which Tennyson occupies in the nineteenth-century is actually close to a position that Butler was able to hold in the eighteenth century. Although Newman in the Church of England appears to be Butler's successor, Newman feels forced to modify Butler to such an extent as to make it impossible to hold the middle position for which Butler really stands. As with Newman, so with Huxley: the profession and maintenance of the middle ground becomes increasingly harder, and the squeezing of the middle state inevitably produces a bifurcation which is exactly the problem of the nineteenth century. Before turning to Tennyson again, it will be necessary first to turn back to Butler to see how eighteenth-century sensibility could hold something that was going to prove so difficult to retain in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 2

The Analogy of Religion:
Some Experiments in The Middle Way (1736-1850)

In the first chapter I have pointed out that as an agnostic scientist, Thomas Huxley declared he dared not rest his life upon the weak evidence of analogy and probability. It must seem, therefore, somewhat remarkable that he should have been a member of a debating society of which the president held the completely opposite view:

Probable knowledge, or, to speak more accurately, probable evidence, may entail the obligation of action, the obligation of belief, as truly as knowledge which is demonstrative, and this probable knowledge is 'the guide of life'.¹

For W.E. Gladstone, probability was 'the guide of life'. This guiding principle which Gladstone followed for over sixty years had been 'gleaned', to use a Gladstonian expression, from Butler's Analogy of Religion, a seminal work of abiding relevance to the politician and Christian theologian.

The Metaphysical Society of which Gladstone was the first president was founded, under the instigation of James Knowles, in 1869 during Gladstone's first term as Prime Minister. Other founder members who gathered

¹ Correspondence on Church and Religion of W.E. Gladstone, ed. by D.C. Lathbury, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1910), ii, p.92 (W.E. Gladstone to the Earl of Pembroke, 29th September 1873), hereafter cited as 'Lathbury'.

together on the second Tuesday of the month included Richard Hutton, Thomas Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, Mark Pattison, James Martineau, Archbishop Manning, James Knowles, W.G. Ward and Alfred Tennyson. Huxley became President of this debating society of such eclectic membership in 1876. Every one of these men including Huxley would have been familiar with Butler's eighteenth-century work The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature, either through study at Oxford or Cambridge, or simply because its reputation in the early half of the nineteenth century made it required reading for every well-educated person. Most of the members have central, or at least marked relevance, to this thesis.²

On April 27th 1830, William Ewart Gladstone, an undergraduate at Oxford, began to read The Analogy of Religion. 'I had been educated in an extremely narrow churchmanship of that evangelical party', he wrote,³ attributing his liberation to the influence of Oxford and Bishop Butler. In May of that year he kept a notebook for notes and ideas on his reading. It was the beginning of a deep and lifelong interest in Butler. Thirty years later when his son was about to go up to Oxford, Gladstone urged him to read Butler:

I cannot say what value I attach to Bishop

² Alan Willard Brown traces the model and spirit of the Metaphysical Society to the Cambridge 'Apostles'. Alan Willard Brown, The Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869-1880 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), Ch.1, pp.1-9. I am indebted to this work for information on membership.

³ Peter J. Jagger, Gladstone: The Making of a Christian Politician (Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1991), p.94, hereafter cited as 'Jagger'

Butler's works. Viewing him as a guide of life, especially for the intellectual difficulties and temptations of these times, I place him before almost any other author. The spirit of wisdom is in every line.
'Lathbury', p.164.

The respect which Gladstone had for Butler culminated in Gladstone's own annotated edition of The Works of Joseph Butler published in 1896, two years before his own death and one hundred and sixty years after the first publication of The Analogy of Religion.⁴ D.W.Bebbington notes that 'some critics' of Gladstone thought that Gladstone's interest and constant championship of Butler extended 'to the point of stubbornness',⁵ but this very partisanship makes him a solid and unbending marker against the fluctuating opinion of an era intrigued by agnosticism and evolutionary theory. I shall refer to Gladstone at all times during this chapter.

1896 also saw the publication of Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler in which Gladstone rather wistfully records that until the middle of the nineteenth century Butler had no censors.⁶ But having at last found the time in his retirement to devote to the defence of his mentor, Gladstone was forty years too late. The chapter on 'Bishop Butler and his Censors' which first appeared in 1895 in The Nineteenth Century was simply the

⁴ A copy of the Halifax edition of the Analogy was presented to W.E. Gladstone by Lady Sarah Spencer in 1894, which was the year in which Gladstone began work on his own edition. This book, now in St Deiniol's Library, is marked with Gladstone's own working annotations.

⁵ D.W. Bebbington, W.E. Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain (Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), p.236.

⁶ This observation is confirmed by Leslie Stephen (Gladstone's adversary in matters Butlerian) in his highly critical review of Butler's Analogy: [the Sermons and the Analogy] 'are remarkable amongst other things for the fact that they produced no contemporary controversy' Leslie Stephen, A History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd edn., 2 vols (1876; London: Smith, Elder, 1902), i, p.279, hereafter cited as English Thought.

recapitulation of an argument that had been conducted in the 1850s. As Jane Garnett points out, his comments at the close of the century were 'rather removed from the concerns of those several intellectual generations younger'.⁷ The Analogy of Religion had been removed from the exam statutes at Oxford in 1864,⁸ and was gradually being forgotten.⁹ Part of the accepted reason for the modern lack of interest was that as The Analogy was written as a defense against Deistic charges, it bore no further apparent relevance at a time when Deism was a spent force. In his book Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason, E.C. Mossner charts the course of Butler's work against the background of the development of reason from the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century. Writing in 1936 Mossner concluded, 'The Analogy is dead now chiefly because it was a Tract for the Times'.¹⁰ Yet if this is the chief reason for its decline, why did interest not only continue after the end of Deism, but widen and increase to reach its zenith in the 1830s? In order to attempt to answer this question, it will be necessary to consider significant individual readings

⁷ Jane Garnett, 'Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist', in Tercentenary Essays, p.74. Jane Garnett's essay addresses the pattern of Butler's reputation in the second half of the nineteenth century.

⁸ Mark Pattison, Memoirs (London: Macmillan, 1885), p.324, hereafter cited as 'Pattison'. Mark Pattison was a member of the Metaphysical Society.

⁹ Gladstone's collection of reviews of Studies is in St Deiniol's Library. Most of the reviews are at pains to praise Gladstone's achievement in old age (he was 87), but many queried its contemporary relevance. The New Age is typical: 'One of the most noticeable features of Mr Gladstone's recent work is its old-fashioned orthodoxy. It is doubtless a very able defence of a conservative position that we presume not many churchmen today would care to advocate, but it will not do much to convince those minds that have felt the influence of modern thought on the great problems of religion.' New Age, July 23rd 1896 (St Deiniol's Collection).

¹⁰ E.C. Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason (London: Macmillan, 1936), p.231, hereafter cited as 'Mossner'.

during the history of the reception of the Analogy, from its publication in 1736 to the end of the nineteenth century. My purpose is to establish not only who was reading it, but how it was being received.¹¹

2.i. The Analogy in the Eighteenth Century and its Legacy as a Middle Way

The Analogy of Religion was mainly written during the years 1725-32, when Joseph Butler held the living in Stanhope, Durham. By the time it was published he had been appointed by Queen Caroline as Clerk of the Closet, thus ensuring an influential readership. The Analogy went through four editions in Butler's lifetime. It was written as a defence of religion against the Deists who challenged all belief in a religious creed that included elements which could not be explained by the use of pure reason and the light of nature. Deists believed in the sufficiency of natural religion: while they accepted Nature as plain and reasonable evidence of a Divine Creator, they denied revelation for being supernatural and therefore beyond reason. Amongst the most influential of the Deists to whom the Analogy was addressed were Matthew Tindal and Thomas Chubb:

As divine revelation is preter-natural, or above and out of the ordinary course of nature: so we can have no previous ground to presume or

¹¹ Where Mossner's comprehensive work is chiefly historical, my purpose is to concentrate upon singular creative readings as pertinent to the concept of agnosticism, and always with a closer reference to the text of the Analogy than Mossner finds necessary for his purpose. There are many readers of the Analogy whose observations or comments on the work I have omitted, either because they merely repeat ideas and opinions, or because they have no particular relevance to the subject of my thesis, in particular to analogy as a tool of thought.

expect that there will be any such thing, until it has appeared and proved itself to be so. The system of nature, surely, like its author, is most complete and perfect, as being altogether sufficient to answer the intention of its founder, without anything being superadded, because otherwise the author of nature would not have done justice to his design.¹²

Such Deists declared each man's God-given reason to be his natural means of knowing God; there was therefore no need for God's further intervention through revelation. To believe otherwise would seem to admit some kind of imperfection in God. Yet in so far as Deism challenged prophecy and miracle, the very foundation of the Christian Church, it was vital for the Church to contest the sufficiency of a wholly natural or reasonable religion in opposition to such all-sufficient rationalism. The task of the orthodox apologist became the demonstration of the belief that 'though natural Religion is the foundation and principal part of Christianity, it is not in any sense the whole of it' (Analogy, p.121). For Matthew Tindal had argued that clear reason was indeed the whole of Christianity:

Men, if they sincerely endeavour to discover the Will of God, will perceive, that there's a *Law of Nature or Reason*, which is so call'd as being a Law which is common, or natural, to all rational creatures; and that this Law, like its Author, is absolutely perfect, eternal, and unchangeable.¹³

Butler agreed with Tindal that we can know God's purpose to be moral, but in meeting the challenge of Deism,

¹² Thomas Chubb, 'Concerning Divine Revelation', Posthumous Works of Mr Thomas Chubb, 2 vols (London, 1748), ii, p.9

¹³ Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation, (London, 1730), p.7.

Butler argues for the mysteriousness of God and the acknowledgement of the limits of the fallen human mind. The perfection, clarity and wisdom belong to the Divine original, but are received and understood with the confusion and perplexity of human imperfection. Butler's chosen method of arguing against Deism was not itself original: indeed Butler takes as his guide the early Christian philosopher Origen:

He who believes the Scripture to have preceded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of Nature.
Analogy, p.xxvii.

It is a common mistake to suppose that Butler's argument was originally directed against religious doubters and sceptics. On the contrary, as we have seen, it is an argument in support of doubt and difficulty, against those who claimed the simple rational clarity of nature's laws. To those who deny Revelation on the grounds of the inherent difficulties, Butler does not set about the removal of such difficulties but shows that they are equally likely to be found in the system of nature. The analogy or likeness between the natural and the revealed dispensations of providence leads Butler to 'a presumption that both systems have the same author and cause' (Analogy, p.xxvii):

My design is to apply it [analogy] to that subject in general, both natural and revealed: taking for proved, that there is an intelligent Author of Nature, and *natural* Governor of the world. For as there is no presumption against this prior to the proof of it, so it has been often proved with accumulated evidence.
Analogy, p.xxviii.

Since the Deists did not dispute the contention, Butler, like Gladstone after him, could afford to simply 'take for proved' the existence of a Creator, there being 'no presumption against this'. As long as Butler was addressing opponents who shared his assumption of God as 'natural Governor', he was not concerned with the possibility of a challenge to this assumption. In a later age, the argument which sets out not to justify revelation, but to refute arguments against it by showing analogous difficulties in natural religion, risks the respondent's finding that these difficulties in nature are equally insurmountable. But the beauty of what I have earlier described as Butler's double negative argument is that he is able thereby to reverse the conflict of religious doubt:

If any of these persons are, upon the whole, in doubt concerning the truth of Christianity; their behaviour seems owing to their taking it for granted, through strange inattention, that such doubting is, in a manner, the same thing as being certain against it.

Analogy, Conclusion, p.247.

As Mark Corner points out, 'it is an old but still neglected adage that doubt is not the opposite of faith but of certainty' ('Corner', p.28). If those who doubt or disregard the credibility of Christianity pay 'religious and sacred attention' to the real truth of the case,¹⁴ they may come to the realisation that doubt is not evidence of unbelief, but savingly consistent with faith.

¹⁴ Joseph Butler, Preface to Sermons, 1729, The Works of Joseph Butler, ed. by Samuel Halifax, 2 vols (1788; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), i. p.v, hereafter cited as Sermons. In the Preface, Butler fears 'that people habituate themselves to let things pass through their minds...rather than to think of them', p.vi.

Religious belief must be a commitment without certainty, for a degree of doubt is a necessary component of faith. 'Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities' (Analogy, p.xxv). Mysteries and difficulties are not evidence against religion, but show the extent of our limited knowledge and are a measure of our probation, or test on earth.

In the whole scheme of analogical argument Butler was influenced by John Locke: 'in things which sense cannot discern, analogy is the great rule of probability'.¹⁵ But Locke's stress on the power of reason came very close to denying the mysteriousness of God:

Revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God.

Locke, Essay, iv. xix. 4. p.360.

As enlarged and enlarging reason, Revelation is still marshalled to fundamental rationality for its justification. It is plain to see why the Deists were keen to profess a distorted or exaggerated influence of Locke in their argument for the self-sufficiency of the natural system. Butler, however, argues from experience of life within the limitations of that life, knowing that such experience from inside the system depends upon the mysteriousness of that which lies outside it on the other

¹⁵ John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 1690, abr. and ed. by A.S. Pringle-Pattison (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924; repr. 1934), iv. xvi, 12, p.340, hereafter cited as Locke, Essay.

side of the limit, and beyond the limited creaturely capacity of comprehension. Where Locke maintains simply and directly that 'reason vouches the truth', Butler pays 'sacred attention' to the truth of experience, with indirect inference serving as a guide towards a greater religious truth directly comprehended only by God: 'for nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an Infinite Intelligence' (Analogy, p.xxv).

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Deism eventually met its nemesis in the shape of David Hume but Hume, instead of thus proving to be a champion of Butler, threatens everything that Butler's Analogy stands for. Hume accepts Chubb's Deistic assertion that 'we can have no previous ground to presume or expect that there will be any such thing [as divine revelation] until it has appeared and proved itself to be so' and then extends it into an argument for questioning the very existence of God as Author of Nature. His insistence on the impossibility of going beyond the evidences of experience rendered religious analogy an unsound method of argument for belief. All Hume would concede of man's knowledge of God was 'that the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence'.¹⁶ But the weakness of an only probable and remote analogy must be too indistinct, too vague for sceptics to trouble to contest.

¹⁶ David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. by N. Kemp Smith (1779; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p.381.

Yet despite everything, Hume respected Butler enormously, and was anxious to have the Doctor's opinion before the printing of The Treatise of Human Nature ¹⁷ :

I would be glad to be introduced to him. I am at present castrating my work, that is, endeavouring it shall give as little offence as possible, before which, I could not pretend to put it into the Doctor's hands. This is a piece of cowardice for which I blame myself, though I believe none of my friends will blame me. But I was resolved not to be an enthusiast in philosophy while I was blaming other enthusiasms.¹⁸

The 'castrated' parts of his work were eventually put together and published ten years later as 'Of Miracles'. It may well have been nervous 'cowardice' that made Hume exclude this essay from the Treatise, for given the respect Hume had for Butler, 'Of Miracles' appears disrespectful in its use of 'probability'. In that essay Hume understands miracles as 'violations of nature', and argues that a miracle can never be proved so as to become the foundation for a system of religion, for nothing could be said to be a miracle which could occur in the natural world. In his chapter of the Analogy 'Of the Supposed Presumption Against a Revelation, Considered as Miraculous', however, Butler was not suggesting that miracles could be proved:

Miracles must not be compared to common natural events which, though uncommon, are similar to what we daily experience, but to the

¹⁷ Mossner notes all references to Butler in Hume's letters ('Mossner', pp.156-159). Since they never met, and Butler never made written comment on Hume, Mossner only draws conjectures as to their respective thoughts.

¹⁸ David Hume, Letters of David Hume, ed. by J.Y.T. Greig, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), to Henry Home, Dec. 1737, i, p.25.

extraordinary phenomena of nature; and then the comparison will be between the presumption against miracles, and the presumption against such uncommon appearances, suppose, as comets, and against there being any such powers in nature such as magnetism and electricity, so contrary to the properties of other bodies not endued with these powers.

Analogy, pp. 140-1.

Butler, who views the world as God's purposeful creation, separates the ordinary from the extraordinary within the entire law of nature, so as to bring incredible violations of nature into the realm of the not improbable. The whole purpose of Butler's argument, which draws an analogy between the weight of evidence against miracles and the weight of evidence against extraordinary phenomena, is not that miracles should prove the truth of Christianity, but that the unlikelihood of miracles should not be taken as evidence against Christianity. Hume too is at pains to assess the likelihood of miracles, for he does not deny their philosophical possibility:

A wise man, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event.

In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greatest number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation: and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability. All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where one side is found to over-balance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance. In all

cases, we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence.¹⁹

Both Hume and Butler will weigh evidence and estimate likelihoods, but it is as if each man is pulling against the other. Where Butler's double negative argument in defence of belief reasons that there is 'no presumption from analogy against some operations which we should now call miraculous' (*Analogy*, p.138), Hume simply argues that the weight of evidence nonetheless still points to the presumption against miracles. By stating that probable evidence 'admits of degrees' (*Analogy*, p.xxiv), Butler shows that he is ultimately concerned, not with the greater weight of evidence, but how probable evidence of a lesser rather than of a higher degree might still be cumulatively sufficient to warrant the 'obligation of belief', as we have previously seen Gladstone point out.

As a sceptic, starting from the position of non-belief, Hume could not avoid being recognised as Butler's very opposite, as Thomas Huxley, Hume's heir, had come to see:

The object of the speech of the imaginary Epicurean in the eleventh section of the *Inquiry* entitled *Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State*, is to invert the argument of Bishop Butler's *Analogy*.²⁰

Huxley notes, with some relish, that Hume is perhaps the first to discover that the 'solid sense' of Butler's

¹⁹ David Hume, 'Of Miracles', *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge (1748; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp.110-111, hereafter cited as *Enquiry*

²⁰ T.H. Huxley, *Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1878; repr. 1902), p.154, hereafter cited as *Hume*.

method of argument can be inverted and employed, not as Christian apologetic, but in defence of scepticism.

'Unfortunately' for Butler, Huxley somewhat ironically comments (Hume, p.154), Hume underlines the sceptical tendency in the Analogy. Where the argument from analogy admits only probability, Hume would consider this as merely sceptical, in that it admits of no answer and produces no conviction.

Huxley thought that Butler's Analogy had brilliantly succeeded in ending the Deistical controversy, but that Butler had not foreseen the possibility 'that another cometh after and judgeth him' (Hume p.154). In speaking of the Dialogues Huxley concludes, 'Hume's Epicurean philosopher adopts the main arguments of the Analogy, but unfortunately drives them home to a conclusion of which the good Bishop would hardly have approved' (Hume, p.154). Butler's achievement of probability is for Hume only low probability to the point of mere possibility. In a like manner, Hume's essay of 1748, 'Of a Particular Providence', runs counter to the direction of Butler's inference of the whole from experience of part:

If you come backward, and arguing from your inferred causes, conclude, that any other fact has existed, or will exist in the course of nature, which may serve as a fuller display of particular attributes; I must admonish you, that you have departed from the method of reasoning, attached to the present subject, and have certainly added something to the attributes of the cause, beyond what appears in the effect. ²¹

²¹ David Hume, 'Of a Particular Providence and Of a Future State', Enquiry, p.139.

If the cause is known only by its effects, we cannot infer any new effects from that cause. Hume's particular form of double negative argument, so different from Butler's, uses reason to defeat a trust in reason. Where Butler says that Christianity is likely to be true, that religious analogy shows that there is no case for saying 'that there is nothing in it', Hume would simply stop at 'nothing'. There is nothing that points beyond itself to God.

As a sceptic, Hume's experimental method of reasoning was essentially conservative in outcome, since nothing could be irrevocably proved. E.C. Mossner writes that 'Hume was almost alone in seeing clearly and fearlessly the implied contradiction in The Age of Reason which alternately created and destroyed its religion by the same rational means' ('Mossner', p.xiii). As a reaction against a perceived threat of over-intellectualised religion, John Wesley's evangelistic appeal to emotion, sought to fill the space created by Hume's rational scepticism towards reason itself. Wesley's 'gift' of faith appeals directly to the heart by the direct intervention of grace.

On the occasion of Wesley's difficult meeting with Butler in August 1739 Butler said to him, 'Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing - a very horrid thing'.²² Wesley's evangelical fervour was anathema to the Anglican Butler, who forbade Wesley to preach in his diocese - an order which Wesley straightway refused to obey. The

²² John Wesley, Journal of the Rev John Wesley, ed. by N. Curnock, 8 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1911-16; repr. 1938), ii, p.257, n.1.

clash of these two great religious figures helps to disclose Butler's precise position as a holding ground between enthusiasm and rationalism, consequently open to criticism on both sides. To Wesley, one of the enthusiasts Hume would have despised, Butler would seem over-rational, even too Deistic; to Butler, Wesley in his enthusiasm would appear to deny the divine gifts of natural reason, even as would Butler to a Deist. As Martin Schmidt observes, 'the spirit of the eighteenth century spoke through Butler and primitive Christianity through Wesley'²³.

Historically Butler holds a position mid-way between Hume and Wesley. It remains to be shown more fully how the occupation of the middle ground, not in the spirit of compromise but by force of intention, can be understood as being Butler's true philosophical position. To an age whose confidence, though shaken, still lay in reason, Butler confirms the reasonableness of faith. His position is an impressive one. He stays loyal to reason despite knowing that it leaves him vulnerable to sceptical argument on the one hand and to the danger on the other hand of being seen on the other to take reason too far into religion.

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Butler holds the middle line with a precision that will not simply forsake certain positions that have to be held with increasing accuracy. A clue to this grounded, balanced method lies in his idea of sacred attention. Butler is perfectly aware that too great an emphasis on

²³ Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, 2 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1966), ii, p.36.

human intellectual powers may lead to doubt, but his urging of a deep reflection and attention to thought is no contradiction. There must be, Butler says in the preface of his Sermons, 'movements of mind and heart which correspond to His perfections, or of which those perfections are the natural object' (Sermons, p.xxviii). In giving the albeit imperfect attention of the whole self, we act at a lower level which even so corresponds to a higher perfection. It is this stretch of thought across different levels of being that make the Analogy so important to a whole understanding of religious truth, for included in the reach of such a thought is the belief that our natural world is just a part of a stupendous whole:

All particular instances of divine justice and goodness, and every circumstance of them, may have such respects to each other as to make up altogether a whole, connected and related in all its parts; a scheme or system, which is as properly one as the natural world is, and of the like kind. And supposing this to be the case, it is most evident that we are not competent judges of this scheme from the small parts of it which come within our view in the present life, and therefore no objections against any of these parts can be insisted upon by reasonable men.

Analogy, p.102.

Two parts, divine and natural, but one whole. Butler's almost paradoxical sense of separate connectedness never tempts him to trespass beyond the limits of the small part of the one world which comes 'within' his 'view'. Butler does not offer an overview, but an underview: that is to say, in terms of a vertical axis he speaks from the fallen man's view of being beneath something that is above, knowing all the while that some part of that

thinking is given from up above. Not only are we 'not competent judges' of the whole scheme, but the role of incompetent judges is our human lot: a degree of ignorance, difficulties, incomprehension is what we must expect.

Samuel Halifax, Bishop of Gloucester, was one of the first readers and commentators on Butler's 'view' of the scheme of things. In the preface to his edition of the Analogy published in 1788, Halifax first points to the historical, theological and philosophical implications of this crucial matter of direction in religious argument:

This way of arguing from what is acknowledged to what is disputed, from things known to other things that resemble them, from that part of the Divine establishment which is exposed to our view to that more important one which lies beyond it, is on all hands confessed to be just. By this method Sir Isaac Newton has unfolded the system of Nature; by the same method Bishop Butler has explained the system of grace; and thus, to use the words of a writer, whom I quote with pleasure, 'has formed and concluded a happy alliance between faith and philosophy'.

And although the argument from analogy be allowed to be imperfect, and by no means sufficient to solve all difficulties respecting the government of God, and the designs of his providence with regard to mankind; (a degree of knowledge, which we are not furnished with faculties for attaining, at least in the present state:) yet surely it is of importance to learn from it, that the natural and moral world are intimately connected, and parts of one stupendous whole or system.²⁴

Halifax sees a connection between Butler and the great scientist and devout Christian, Isaac Newton. For the relationship between science and religion could, at this

²⁴ Samuel Halifax, Preface to Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion, ed. by Samuel Halifax (1788; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), p.xxiii. The writer whom Halifax quotes 'with pleasure' is Mr Mainwaring, from the Dissertation, prefixed to Mainwaring's volume of Sermons.

time, be a congenial one, if only through the means of argument, 'from what is acknowledged to what is disputed' (Analogy, p.234), rather than in the establishment of proofs. In terms of the philosophy of science, this means of evaluating evidence is the inductive method. But Butler explains his method more simply:

It must be allowed just, to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from such facts as are known to others that are like them; from that part of the divine government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it; and from what is present to collect what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.

Analogy, p.xxviii.

The joining of 'abstract reasonings' to 'observation of facts', results in 'not incredible' (Analogy, p.xxviii), or probable conclusions.²⁵ It is as if in the middle of the eighteenth century Butler sees induction as the fallen creatures' only reasonable way of speaking of God. But the conjunction to which Halifax testifies between Newton and Butler only serves to increase the distance between Butler and Wesley. For Wesley could never sanction a philosophical religion: 'religion is the most plain simple thing in the world. It is only, We love him because he first loved us. So far as you add philosophy to religion, just so far you spoil it.'²⁶ Where Wesley

²⁵ 'The first feature of Butler's method which we have to note is, that it was an inductive method. Butler was a collector of facts, and a reasoner upon them. Herein he departed from the more common practice of his age which had been given to argumentation in the abstract and to speculative castle building' (Studies, p.13).

²⁶ John Wesley, The Letters of the Rev John Wesley, ed. by J. Telford, 8 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1931), iii, p332.

and Newton pressed forward, albeit in opposite directions, towards certainty on the one hand and the hope of proof on the other, Butler between the two stays with imperfect knowledge. He argues by analogy, as a product of that very imperfection, insisting that for human creatures even higher religious thought still has to go on within the lower, fallen realm:

In the daily commerce of life, men are obliged to act upon great uncertainties, with regard to success in their temporal pursuits; and the case with regard to religion is parallel.

Halifax, Analogy, p.xxxiii.

Halifax sees that analogy makes connections between 'parallel' levels in one stupendous whole or system:

"All things are double one against another, and God hath made nothing imperfect" (Ecclus.xlii.24). On this single observation of the Son of Sirach, the whole fabric of our Prelate's defence of religion, in his Analogy, is raised.

Halifax, Analogy, p. xxii.

Difficulties and uncertainties in 'daily' life are analogous to difficulties and uncertainties involved in higher speculations. Thus uncertainty is an intrinsic part of a real life in which religious life itself is not a separate entity. Thus it is when one such as Dr Blacklock loses the sense of the whole and imagines the supernatural world as something separate from the natural world that he loses religious confidence. Dr Johnson's reading of the Analogy enabled him to advise his uneasy friend:

Dr Blacklock spoke of scepticism in morals and religion, with apparent uneasiness, as if he wished for more certainty. Dr Johnson, who had thought it all over, and whose vigorous understanding was fortified by much experience, thus encouraged the blind bard to apply to higher speculations what we all willingly submit to in common life: in short, he gave him more familiarly the able and fair reasoning of Butler's Analogy: 'Why, sir, the greatest concern we have in this world, the choice of our profession, must be determined without demonstrative reasoning. Human life is not yet so well known, as that we can have it. And take the case of a man who is ill. I call two physicians: they differ in opinion. I am not to lie down, and die between them: I must do something'. The conversation then turned to Atheism.²⁷

Boswell confirms how well Johnson understood the perfect backward turn of Butler's Analogy, in which the way forward to 'higher speculations' necessitates the look back to the 'common life' which we know. For it is not only the truths but the difficulties of the different levels of being which are 'parallel'. The 'fair reasoning' which Johnson gives to Dr Blacklock is endorsed by Gladstone a century later:

He [Butler] was engaged in an endeavour to show to those, who demanded an absolute certainty in the proofs of religion, that this demand was unreasonable; and the method he pursued in this demonstration was to point out to them, how much of their own daily conduct was palpably and rightly founded upon evidence less than certain.²⁸

The reassurance which Johnson is able to pass on to Dr Blacklock and which Gladstone is able to confirm is Butler's assurance that it is reasonable to conclude that

²⁷ James Boswell, 'The Tour to the Hebrides' 1786, James Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. by G. Burbeck Hill, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-1950), v, p.47.

²⁸ W.E Gladstone, 'The Law of Probable Evidence and its Guide to Conduct', Gleanings of Past Years, 1843-79, 7 vols (London: John Murray, 1879), vii, p.165, first published in The Nineteenth Century, March, 1879.

'absolute certainty' in matters of religion is not only unreasonable but even unnatural. Moreover, rather than preventing action, uncertainties and difficulties might be put to purposeful use. If 'I must do something', the natural course is to begin with what I know here:

The notion, then, of a moral scheme of government, much more perfect than what is seen, is not a fictitious, but a natural notion; for it is suggested to our thoughts by the essential tendencies of virtue and vice; and these tendencies are to be considered as intimations, as implicit promises and threatenings from the Author of Nature of much greater rewards and punishments to follow virtue and vice than do at present.

Analogy, p.54.

Analogies are like back-to-front versions of 'implicit promises'. We could not know what divine morality was unless we had experienced human morality. What we do on earth, in a lesser way, is an image of what heaven will be. Experientially our 'essential' human 'tendencies of virtue and vice' would naturally suggest a movement towards the direction of the 'greater' good, but the 'greater' is ontologically prior to the lesser, which comes first only in our experience. 'We are placed, as one may speak, in the middle of a scheme, not a fixed but a progressive one, every way incomprehensible'. (Analogy, p.110) What we can have however, are 'intimations' of something greater, beyond us and beyond our reason. The creature understands that there is an overall scheme; he infers backwards by analogy the whole plan which he himself cannot see because he is in it. The achievement of the Analogy is the realization that analogy is reasoning at the limits or bounds of sense, neither going

beyond the limits nor staying wholly within them. For it would seem that even in order to realise the limits, some part of us must be inferring beyond them, and it is this fine, balanced, middle course between two parts of one whole, separate and yet connected, which Butler so accurately steers.

As Gladstone's notes at the beginning of the Analogy point out, it was 'an idea rooted in Butler's philosophical speculations that the operations of this world are of an eventual scope exceeding in an unknown degree the breadth of the stage on which they are visibly carried on'.²⁹ Butler's work implicitly begins from the assumption of there being God's overview, but publicly it is an argument from the restricted limitations of the stage down on earth. It would be wrong to assume that Butler was uncertain of such an assumption only that he is certain that it can never be wholly demonstrated. The strongest, bravest course of action in Butler is then to argue very rationally for what finally has to be assumed. Thus the silence at the limits will suggest what is beyond, or what has been omitted, or what is implicit - namely the things which have to be assumed and believed and can never be proved.

There was, I suggest, in the eighteenth century a sense that public language created a private sphere which nonetheless remained separate from it. In the language of Johnson, the sheer generalizing force of a very public speech exists simultaneously to remind the reader of analogous personal difficulties and yet leaves them

²⁹ W.E. Gladstone, The Works of Joseph Butler, ed. by W.E. Gladstone, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), i, p.14, note 1.

resonantly silent. The Analogy itself presents a social form of rational discourse, but finds within that very form an invisible, private resonance of inner meaning. It offers the idea of man attending to his deepest thoughts, knowing that some part of such thought comes from beyond himself. The rigorous, eighteenth-century decorum of Butler's explicit language nevertheless allows the private resonance, that is the other side of the public, to be heard or suggested, if not seen or spoken. Since a public discourse and language consist chiefly of reason, Butler uses reason to show the limits of reason, and that which cannot finally be explained must be left implicit. A lesser man would attempt a fuller explanation, but Butler argues only as far as he is reasonably able, where the rest is not only silence but the space for utterly personal religious intimation. Public discourse stops where uncertainty begins and allows it its continuing place. The uncertainty translates itself privately into something not certain, but believed. It is this silence (which Wesley breaks) that lets into Butler's discourse, it might be said, the enthusiasm of a Wesley, but tacitly so.

2.ii. **The Analogy and The Scottish School in the Eighteenth Century**

The Analogy of Religion provided a meeting ground, though not necessarily a common ground, for the profusion

of schools of philosophical thought in the eighteenth century. In Scotland, Thomas Reid, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen 1751-64, and Glasgow, 1764-96, was a significant reader and admirer of Butler. Reid was also an exact contemporary of Hume and Hume's principal but respectful critic. Reid saw the logical conclusion of empiricism as abject scepticism and therefore 'the refutation of Mr Hume's sceptical theory was the great and professed object of Dr Reid's Inquiry'³⁰ Against Hume's theory of ideas, which suggests that whatever is perceived exists only as object of perception, Reid asserted the independent reality of that which is perceived and the necessity of that belief in every act of perception. 'Every operation of the senses' argued Reid 'implies judgement or belief: and this judgement or belief is not got by comparing ideas, it is included in the very nature of perception' (Reid, Works, i p.209). Such natural judgements make up what Reid calls 'common sense' - the realisation of intuitive truth.

In A History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Leslie Stephen ponders on the question 'what was Hume's real belief? Did his theoretical scepticism follow him into actual life?' (English Thought i, p.341). It is as if Reid saw that Hume's system of philosophy opened up a potential gap between perceptions and experience. Thus Reid sought to close the gap between sceptical philosophic theory and the existence of actual life which Hume had left open. But in doing so, I shall

³⁰ Dugald Stewart, 'An Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid', 1803, prefixed to The Works of Thomas Reid, ed. by Sir William Hamilton, 8th edn, 2 vols (1837; London: Longman, 1880), i, p.7, hereafter cited as Reid, Works.

argue that he downgraded the role of analogy even as he proclaimed the essential unity of thought and experience.

Of the two ways that man forms his notions and opinions concerning the mind, Reid felt that only one way, 'the way of reflection', led to the truth. The accuracy of this direct way of 'attention and reflection' made it, he warned, the 'narrow' and 'difficult' way (Reid, Works, p.201). The 'broad' and easier second way is 'the way of analogy':

Analogical reasoning is not in all cases to be rejected. It may afford a greater or a less degree of probability, according as the things compared are more or less similar in their nature. But it ought to be observed, that, as this kind of reasoning can afford only probable evidence at best; so, unless great caution be used, we are apt to be led into error by it. For men are naturally disposed to conceive a greater similitude in things than there really is.

Reid, Works, i, 'Of Analogy', p.237.

Reid urges control over analogical thinking. Butler, Hume, and now Reid talk in terms of 'degrees' of evidence, but Reid, who is responding to Hume, clearly understands the potential threat of the inconclusiveness of probability. He cautions therefore, that the 'best' analogical reasoning can realise is 'only' probable evidence, as if he were anticipating Huxley's nineteenth-century criticism of weaker convictions. Indeed Reid puts it thus: 'all arguments drawn from analogy, are still the weaker, the greater disparity there is between the things compared' (Reid, Works, p.237). Butler, responding to the Deists, rather than to Humean sceptics, hardly thought it necessary to assess accurately the degrees of probability or determine

exactly how probability and analogous reasoning operate in the mind:

It is not my design to inquire further into the nature, the foundation, and the measure of probability; or whence it proceeds that likeness should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the errors to which reasoning from analogy is liable. This belongs to the subject of Logic, and is a part of that subject which has not yet thoroughly been considered.
Analogy, p.xxvi.

As far as Butler is concerned, the justification of analogy lies in the 'subject of logic'; it is simply sufficient for him to advocate analogy as a 'natural' (p.xvxvi) way of thinking. It was not that Butler did not recognise 'the errors to which reasoning from analogy is liable', but that it was not his 'design' to go into them. But in Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason, Mossner thinks that the failure to 'appreciate that the theory of probability as he applied it to analogy might be capable of unwelcome further extension', represents a 'logical' deficiency in the Analogy as a whole ('Mossner', p.101). Once Hume has demonstrated just such an unwelcome further extension, Reid clearly sees it as his business to stress the potential errors and weaknesses of analogical reasoning. However Reid, whom Mossner largely ignores,³¹ draws an important distinction between the theory of analogy in general and Butler's Analogy of Religion:

³¹ Mossner, p. 192, Mossner's account of Reid's involvement with the Analogy, is limited to autobiographical details.

I know of no author who has made a more happy use of this mode of reasoning than Bishop Butler in his 'Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature.' In that excellent work the author does not ground any of the truths of religion upon analogy, as their proper evidence. He only makes use of analogy to answer objections against them.

Reid, Works, i p.237.

Reid upheld the excellence of the Analogy because he recognised Butler's supreme power of 'attention and reflection' (Reid, Works, i, p.201) in following the way of analogy which, in effect, turns it from being an easy way into a difficult way. Yet despite his admiration of the Analogy, Reid effectively downgrades the scope, range and power of religious analogy beyond the sphere of negative argument

Yet Butler's Analogy of Religion, despite coming historically before Hume, still has philosophic value after Hume. What happened to ensure its continuance was work such as that of Thomas Chalmers, who was Professor of Moral Philosophy at St Andrew's in 1823, and in 1828 became, Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh.³² Chalmers' reading of Butler will be crucial to our understanding of the dynamic of the Analogy in two main areas.

First, as the Analogy was to have a direct effect upon the course of Chalmers' life we shall see the transition from theoretical argument to living experience. Second, Reid's slightly pejorative observation that analogical reasoning can 'afford only probable evidence at best' or that 'Butler only makes use of analogy to answer objections against [religious truths]' is counter-balanced, as I shall show, by

³² Thomas Chalmers is only very briefly mentioned by Mossner.

Chalmers' demonstration of the crucial weight of 'only'. His conclusions are confirmation of the continuing relevance of the Analogy after Hume.

In her biography of Chalmers, Mrs Oliphant records that at the age of nineteen, Chalmers went through a spiritual crisis. 'He changed his intense conception of God for an unwilling and horror-stricken adoption of the system of natural law which seemed to make God unnecessary'.³³ There are few details of the rational disbelief of this period of his life,³⁴ or what Chalmers himself later called 'infidelity',³⁵ but Mrs Oliphant notes one of two books which played a part in his recovery of faith. Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism, by James Beattie, another member of the Scottish school in Aberdeen, was also an attack on David Hume. It includes sections on 'Probable and Experimental Reasoning' and 'Analogical Reasoning', in which Beattie recommends and quotes from the second book to play a part in Chalmers spiritual recovery - The Analogy of Religion. Chalmers' son-in-law and biographer William Hanna records a conversation with Rev. Mr Smith who knew Chalmers well in 1808-9 at a time when Chalmers was a young minister:

³³ Mrs Oliphant, Thomas Chalmers: Preacher, Philosopher and Statesman (London: Methuen, 1893), p.16.

³⁴ Two recent books on Chalmers do not mention this crisis of faith at all. Stewart Brown in Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth does not refer to Butler. In a volume of essays on Thomas Chalmers, only John Roxburgh in 'Chalmers' Theology of Mission' speaks of Butler: 'In his [Chalmers] lecture room the set of books were Hill, Paley and Butler and these were undoubtedly the theological and apologetic writers, who meant most to him', in The Practical and the Pious: Essays on Thomas Chalmers, ed. by A.C.Cheyne (Edinburgh: St Andrew's, 1985), p.175.

³⁵ W.Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, 4 vols (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1849-1852), i, p.146, hereafter cited as 'Hanna'. Significantly, Gladstone has marked this passage in his copy of the biography.

'He [Chalmers] unhesitatingly believed that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and that the Christian system is divine. In this conviction he had been firmly established at an early period of his life, by reading Bishop Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion &c. He told me that it was Butler's Analogy that made him a Christian'. He did not need to be made a Christian by being converted from Deism, or what is generally spoken of as Infidelity. The scepticism of his student years was one which affected the foundation of all religion whether natural or revealed. And when that scepticism had been cleared away, Butler's work came to do the signal service of satisfying him that there was nothing either in the contents or the credentials of Christianity to weaken the force much less to warrant the setting aside of its own proper and peculiar proofs.
'Hanna', p.146.

There is no flash of light; no saving voice. The Analogy simply satisfies Chalmers 'that there was nothing' against believing in the Christian system. Butler, of course, had said as much in answer to those who had declared Christianity to be fictitious:

Any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not, however, so clear a case, that there is nothing in it.
Analogy, Advertisement.

As Reid saw, the beauty of Butler's negative argument is that he does not argue that Christianity is probably true, so much as speculate that it is probable that it is not untrue. Chalmers retrieves something positive out of the formerly negative 'nothing' and still manages to guard against the charge of logical mistake. Before reading Butler, there was nothing for Chalmers to believe: afterwards there is 'nothing' to warrant the setting aside. It is as if the Analogy had freed Chalmers to be able to shift his viewpoint and simply

look the other way, putting the circle of probability into reverse.

How was this achieved? Butler's inestimable influence upon Chalmers was lifelong; indeed some of his last efforts were given to a short course of lectures on the Analogy which were awaiting publication when Chalmers died and which fully clarify the effect of Butler upon Chalmers' earliest religious thinking:

The work of Butler on The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature, is one of the best cures for infidelity I know, and one of the best preservatives against it. Or rather, instead of a remedy for unbelief, it may be termed a most effectual remedy against disbelief; for there is a weighty and important difference between those two things. One might have no positive reason for affirming the truth of a given doctrine, in which case it is the proper object of unbelief; but he might have as little positive reason for affirming its falsehood, in which case it cannot be the object of disbelief. There is many an unimaginable object in Nature of which we cannot say that it positively is, but as which we can as little say that it positively is not. Were we to assign for such objects a place in the mind, we should say that they lie neither in the region of belief nor in the region of disbelief, but along an intermediate line betwixt the two, as being the objects of neither the one nor the other, but simply of unbelief.³⁶

With the benefit of mature reflection Chalmers demonstrates the practical application of religious, analogical argument to a real life. In the important semantic distinguishing of 'unbelief' and 'disbelief' the crucial, liberating factor is the discovery that it is not necessary to have to begin with believing.

³⁶ Thomas Chalmers, 'Prelections on Butler's Analogy', Posthumous Works of The Rev T. Chalmers, ed. by W. Hanna, 9 vols (Edinburgh: Sutherland and Knox, 1849), ix, pp.1-2, hereafter cited as 'Prelections'.

'Unbelief' does not have to be seen as a negative state, but rather as a willing and reasoned suspension of disbelief, or even a positive if defensive holding-place. If the lack of positive reason for affirming the truth of a given proposition can be made to show its reverse side - that is, the equivalent lack of positive reason for affirming the falsehood of the said proposition, then the inclination towards disbelief that is negative scepticism is corrected. The 'intermediate line betwixt the two' - belief and disbelief - is no longer a boundary, but becomes a spiritual life-line. But in order to be understood as such, Chalmers is forced to expose the dangerous edge of Butler's argument. For the holding of this 'intermediate line' of 'unbelief' might also be understood as the very 'midway' position that constitutes Huxley's form of agnosticism. Huxley's agnostic, that is to say, held that the idea of God is a proposition in which there is no proper reason to believe or disbelieve. In Chapter 1 we have seen Huxley lay claim to the middle ground, now we might understand how Chalmers' Butler offers a more hard won space for thought:

We can allege it as a conceivable thing, that there rolls a planet in our system between Mercury and Venus, but still invisible to us, because too small for the observation of our most powerful telescopes. Who can affirm this in the absence of all substantive proof? yet who, it may still more emphatically be said, who can deny it. We cannot say that such a planet is; and still less can we say that it is not; at the very least we can say for all we know it may be ...Its true place or category is in the region of the possibles - its right logical position being the midway, or ambiguous state of pure scepticism.

'Prelections', p.2.

In the light of Reid's warning that analogical reasoning 'can afford only probable reasoning at best', Chalmers counter-declaration that 'at the very least we can say for all we know it may be' can be seen as a wonderful achievement. This is not positive affirmation, but equally it is not negative denial: it is a robust position worked out between those two that holds just short of knowing. The very 'ambiguous nature of Butler's argument has struck many thinkers'- including James Martineau who in 1896 went so far as to declare that it affords 'a terrible persuasive to atheism'.³⁷ But in Chalmers' open-minded reading of the Analogy it is the practical realization of scepticism's ambiguous nature that is so important. For the ambiguity itself holds onto the space for life's area of action. It makes room for thought to turn round, thus revealing the positive thought that is on the other side of the negative: 'One might have no positive reason for affirming the truth of a given doctrine, in which case it is the proper object of unbelief; but he might have as little positive reason for affirming its falsehood, in which case it cannot be the object of disbelief' ('Prelections' p.1).

It is necessary to inquire into Chalmers' rather surprising use here of the word 'scepticism' where he speaks of 'the ambiguous state of pure scepticism' as his specialist area. In the first half of the nineteenth century the term sceptic had to cover the whole spectrum of agnostic, sceptic and even atheistic attitudes. At any time scepticism is most commonly understood as the

³⁷ Leslie Stephen, 'Bishop Butler's Apologist', The Nineteenth Century, No 227 (Jan 1896), pp.106-123 (p.106).

inclination towards disbelief, or the assertion of nothing positive, as indeed James Beattie thought:

The aim of some of our celebrated moral systems is, to divest the mind of every principle, and of all conviction; and, consequently, to disqualify man for action, and to render him useless and wretched. In a word, SCEPTICISM is now the profession of fashionable enquiries into human nature; a scepticism that is not confined to points of mere speculation, but has been extended to practical truths of the highest importance, even to those of morality and religion. ³⁸

Beattie describes scepticism's expansion from the confines of logic into the very territory of belief and its effect in practical life. We have previously seen how Dr Johnson understood that the sickness of scepticism could 'disqualify a man for action': 'I am not to lie down, and die between them: I must do something' ('Boswell', v, 47). But what Chalmers does is to take on the very word (sceptic) that is threatening to disable him, with the result that he finds himself, not sceptical in the sense that inclines towards disbelief, but agnostic in the sense that he finds himself poised 'betwixt' opposing reasons to believe or to disbelieve: in the area he calls 'unbelief'. If the term agnosticism better describes Chalmers 'ambiguous state of pure scepticism', it is not agnosticism as Huxley came to define it, but a truly open 'region of the possible'. Thus Chalmers makes a major linguistic discovery of an area of being otherwise so vulnerable to denial or ridicule.

³⁸ James Beattie, An Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism (1770; London: J. Mawman, 1807), p. 5.

Chalmers is significant because in his interpretive reading of the Analogy we find an expansion of meaning which, a hundred years after the book was written, is like a renewal of purpose:

It was from this book that I learned this principle of interpretation, and have been confirmed in many truths of which it does not speak a word, and which probably never entered the mind of the author.

'Prelections', p.xiv.

His close reading interprets Butler's public form of discourse in the light of his own religious difficulty. He opens up the meaning of specific words in which thought may become trapped - vital words such as 'unbelief' and 'disbelief' and 'presumption':

In the things of religion, belief must have its own proper and precise ground to rest upon, else it is presumption. In the absence of any such ground there is no presumption, but the contrary, in unbelief. There is a disbelief, again, the presumption of which is tremendous - a usurpation of Omniscience.

Yet there is a warrantable disbelief even in the matters of religion. If I have valid evidence for a certain proposition, and believe it accordingly, then am I not only an unbeliever, but a disbeliever in its opposite. If I have direct observation that the wind is blowing from the north, I must be a disbeliever in the proposition that it is blowing from the south, and also a disbeliever in the truth of him who tells me so.

'Prelections', p.3.

Chalmers' linguistic innovation works hard to retrieve and justify the idea that unbelief has a positive force and is more than mere negation. The positive force of unbelief lies in the absence of 'presumption'. Like an explorer, he locates, maps and opens up a new territory for religious thought. Thus having established a region

of unbelief, Chalmers comes to 'disbelief' in order to locate and specify its particular place as a component part of belief. Chalmers claims that disbelief in God is in fact a presumption, for it involves something of a god-like certainty which is itself a 'usurpation of Omniscience'. Nevertheless disbelief does have a legitimate place in religion for Chalmers discovers disbelief on the other side of belief: the negative thought which is on the other side of its own positive. This is its right and proper place, but all too often, as in atheism, negative thoughts are held without any recognition or desire of their positive side. In Chalmers' ground-plan, orientation involves proper and precise placing so that there is a real sense of where negative thoughts ought to come from. The importance of this, of course, is that in dissenting from a proposition, the assent which is its other side is retained. A dissent should act as a reminder of what belief is assented to.

The particular role of analogy, as Chalmers outlines it, is the removal of objections and difficulties that prevent the achievement of a state of unbelief at the least:

A given proposition might be regarded as liable to one or other of three verdicts - proven, not proven, or disproven. Though analogy should furnish no materials on which to construct a plea for the highest of these verdicts, it may nevertheless be of perfect avail for raising up the proposition in question from the lowest of these three verdicts to the middle one - for raising it from the state of not proven, and so placing it in what may be termed the midway or neutral state of indifference or pure skepticism. This is the distinct and definite and withal most valuable service to which

analogy, we think is fully competent, and which service, we further think, Butler hath overtaken and finished. He hath raised our question from the depth and the discredit to which infidels would have sunk it - far beneath zero, in the scale of evidence. He has at least brought it up to zero; and this is doing an immense deal, even though analogy should utterly fail to place it by ever so little above this, and all further elevations can only be looked for from other quarters of reasoning and contemplation. After that analogy has done its proper work, that is cleared away a whole host of objections, or in other words left nothing to be neutralised or counteracted, then every new item of evidence tells affirmatively, and is a clear make weight on the side of the Christian argument.

'Prelections', p.8.

As Chalmers maps out the Scottish judicial shape of his thought, analogy's task is to turn the idea of a 'midway' state from its historical, human, horizontal context, between say Deism and Enthusiasm, to its religious, vertical axis. This is not done by establishing evidence in favour of, or adding to a proposition, but by the 'clearing away' of objections and difficulties that prevent the proposition from 'raising up' to the middle position. The function of analogy is not so much to act as to counteract or to neutralise. It is defensive, but defends by counter-attacking, that is to say it answers or attacks in reply to an attack of 'objections'. When analogy has done its human work, the mind is left in a state of 'indifference'. However, this indifference is not unconcerned or apathetic, but must be understood as a real and immense achievement. It is the deliverance and orientation of the mind towards the gain of a free, neutral state which is the starting point for the reception of evidence for the Christian argument.

Chalmers in spiritual crisis was a man off-balance. Mrs Oliphant notes that a popular contemporary prayer

'Oh, give us some steady object for our minds to rest upon' was 'uttered earnestly and emphatically' by Chalmers in his mental struggle (Mrs Oliphant p.16). As Chalmers embraced Butler's difficult analogical way, so he steadied himself and in so doing reclaimed for himself Butler's occupation of the middle ground. Reid had urged caution - 'unless great caution be used, we are apt to be led into error by it'(Reid, Works p.237), and Chalmers is ever cautious about the precise power of analogy: 'I wish not to overstate its power, as, I think, has been occasionally done by Butler in some incidental expressions that occur here and there' ('Prelections', p.73). But he is able, through his own spiritual experience, to do more than Reid in telling of the 'affirmative' consequences of analogous argument. Analogy wards off objections to Christianity so that new evidence 'makes weight' on the positive side for Christianity. Chalmers careful linguistic mapping of fine logical distinctions allows the middle state of 'not proven' to be precisely that: 'zero' - no less if no more. If Huxley's claim to the middle ground is compared to that of Chalmers it is possible to see that by the late nineteenth century the 'scale of evidence' has fallen from zero into the negative or minus side. Huxley never occupies the absolute centre: indeed by slightly narrowing the room for thought between proven and not proven he tilts unbelief back towards disbelief.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Chalmers' important reading of Butler opened up a way of understanding the 'intermediate line' of unbelief as a starting point, before Huxley's formal definition of

'agnosticism' turned it into an uncrossable line or, in effect, the clear finishing line of what we can know.

2. iii. The Meaning of Analogy: Copleston and Buchanan

Joseph Butler attended Oriel College, Oxford from 1714-1717. One hundred years later the Provost of Oriel, Edward Copleston, criticised Paley's utilitarian system, favouring instead a greater emphasis on the Ethics of Aristotle whose inductive philosophy, he believed, fostered a 'happy complementary relationship' with Christianity'.³⁹ At the start of the nineteenth century the way was being prepared, at Oxford, for Paley's utilitarian morality to be replaced by Butler's natural theology, behind which was the profound influence of Aristotelian ethical thought. Gladstone, who had of course studied Aristotle at Oxford, draws attention to the parallels between Aristotle and Butler in the notes of his own edition of the Analogy and in Studies:

At every step we feel how truly he [Butler] has told us both that probable evidence is the guide of life, and that probability has this for its essential note, that it is a matter of

³⁹ Frank M. Turner, The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p.338, hereafter cited as Greek Heritage.

Frank Turner explains that in critical response to Plato's system of ideal forms Aristotle, as an ethical philosopher, 'had employed his reason to ponder human experience and to formulate a theory of conduct in the light of experience. The result was a moral philosophy that could commend itself to Christians' (p.329).

degree. In truth, the general rule for inquiry in this department cannot be better put than as it has been stated by Aristotle, who takes it for the distinctive note of a cultivated mind to estimate with accuracy, in each kind of mental exercise, the degree in which its propositions can be made determinate.

Studies, p.4

Thus in Aristotle:

We must be content if we can indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and if, in dealing with matters that are not amenable to immutable laws, and reasoning from premises that are but probable, we can arrive at probable conclusions.

The reader, on his part, should take each of my statements in the same spirit; for it is the mark of an educated man to require, in each kind of inquiry, just so much exactness as the subject admits of: it is equally absurd to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician, and to demand scientific proof from an orator.⁴⁰

Outside subjects such as mathematics, the rational mind will expect only to reach a degree of truth and a degree of certainty that is appropriate and indeed adequate for the situation in which it finds itself. The Aristotelian formulation of staying within the realm of experience and not going beyond the limits of reason is continued in Butler's reasonable way of speaking of God from within the ordinary course of experience and was representative of the Anglican tradition of moral philosophy at Oxford and Cambridge in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, transl. by F.H. Peters, 4th edn (London: Kegan Paul, 1881; repr. 1891), Book 1, 3,4, p.4, hereafter cited as Aristotle, Ethics.

⁴¹ Gladstone's biographer, John Morley (another member of the Metaphysical Society) records Gladstone as saying to Manning, 'Aristotle, Augustine, Dante, Butler, my four Doctors are Doctors to the speculative man; would they were such to the practical too!'. John Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1903), i, p.207, n.2, hereafter cited as 'Morley'.

Copleston's ideas on analogy are included in An Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination, a book which the recent critic Hamish Swanston regards as 'the first theological work to take account of Butler in the renewal of English apologetic'.⁴² As the very nature of analogical reasoning at this time was becoming ever more controversial, I shall explore Copleston's ideas on the subject in so far as he inherits the tradition from Aristotle and Butler, and in relation to the conclusions of Chalmers and Reid:

The use of [analogies and similitudes] is to give us some notion of things whereof we have no direct knowledge, and by that means lead us to perception of the nature, or at least of some of the properties and effects of what our understandings cannot directly reach; and in this case teach us how we are to behave ourselves towards God, and what we are to do, in order to obtain a more perfect knowledge of his attributes.⁴³

If Copleston's 'use' of religious analogy has a positive force, nonetheless he was aware, like Reid, of the dangers of over-simplification. He does not suggest that analogy can lead beyond the limited reach of human understanding; rather, indirect notions involve a stretch of mind towards a comparatively 'more perfect' knowledge of cause which at its most perfect must always be out of reach. Copleston states his admiration of Butler in An

⁴² Hamish F.G. Swanston, Ideas of Order: The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Renewal of Anglican Theological Method (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1973; repr. 1974), p.6, hereafter cited as Ideas of Order.

⁴³ Edward Copleston, An Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination, in Four Discourses, Preached before the University of Oxford (London: John Murray, 1821), pp.120-1, hereafter cited as An Enquiry.

Enquiry, but he is not, at this point, specifically speaking of analogy in relation to Butler, but generally rehearsing clarifications. Nevertheless, Butler's natural notion of a moral scheme 'much more perfect than what is seen' and 'suggested to our thoughts' by tendencies considered as 'intimations' (Analogy, p.54), would seem to be tacitly behind Copleston's words:

What we call knowledge and fore-knowledge in God, have infinitely *more reality* in them, and are of greater moment than our understanding or prescience, from whence they are transferred to him; and in truth these, as in man, are but faint communications of the divine perfections, which are the true originals, and which our powers and faculties more imperfectly imitate, than a picture does a man: and yet if we reason from them by analogy and proportion, they are sufficient to give us such a notion of God's attributes, as will oblige us to fear, love, obey, and adore him.

An Enquiry, pp.121-2

What is being offered here is what will be recognized as a Butlerian orthodoxy. Copleston is saying that when we refer to knowledge in God we can have no conception of the reality of what that is except by way of our understanding of what human knowledge is. If we think of humanity as a finite, imperfect version of infinite, divine perfection, we can reason analogously from imperfection to Perfection, which as a blueprint of the highest good, we are obliged to imitate, albeit imperfectly. This is our religious and moral understanding and is 'sufficient' for comprehending our connection to 'a much larger plan of things' (Analogy, p.110):

Whatever is valuable or excellent in ourselves, exists in an infinite degree of excellence in God: and it is only in so far as we have anything good in us, that we venture to transfer and appropriate to his nature the language proper to our own.

An Enquiry, p.133

Man must look to the least damaged, God-like part of himself in order to come to an idea of God's goodness. It is not that man's goodness is the same as the goodness of God but that he has only human terms with which to speak of it. The transference of goodness to a higher level maintains our human connection even though it has passed beyond human understanding. It is as Butler explains:

By reason is revealed the relation which God the Father stands in to us. Hence arises the obligation of duty which we are under to him.

Analogy, p.127.

Butler teaches that as soon as we comprehend the connection as relation, we are then under an obligation to participate in a relationship. There is thus a two-way religious relationship. It is conducted from above to below by means of what Copleston refers to as 'faint communications of the divine perfections' and he quotes Archbishop King who said that 'any qualities that are estimable and praiseworthy in man' were 'dim shadows and faint communications of those attributes which exist in God in superior excellence and complete perfection' (An Enquiry, p.132). But it also operates from down on earth to heaven above in the form of what we dutifully can give back to God of our fallen and faint but finest qualities, as Butler suggests:

Does not, then, the duty of religious regards to both these divine persons [The Son and Spirit] as immediately arise, to the view of reason, out of the very nature of these offices and relations, as the inward good will and kind intention which we owe to our fellow creatures arises out of the common relations between us and them?

Analogy, p.128.

However, if both common and religious relations can be traced to the same general laws and resolved into the same principles of conduct, Copleston felt that there was even thus a danger of confusing the meaning of analogy with the idea of sameness. He believed that with the dawn of a new century the whole question of the terms in which we speak of God needed clarification. The words 'analogy' and 'resemblance' were being used 'loosely and indiscriminately, not only in popular discourse but by philosophical and scientific writers of modern time' (An Enquiry, p.122):

Analogy does not mean the similarity of two *things*, but the similarity or sameness of two *relations*. There must be more than two things to give rise to two relations. There must be at least three; and in most cases four. Thus A may be *like* B, but there is no analogy between A and B: it is an abuse of the word to speak so, and it leads to much confusion of thought. If A has the same relation to B which C has to D then there is analogy. If the first relation be well known, it may serve to explain the second which is less well known.

An Enquiry, pp.122-3.

Copleston's austere analogy is, I am suggesting, clarifying a development of Butler's own sense of analogy. Under Copleston's major amendment, it is not that there can be one thing on earth standing directly for one in heaven, but there must be four things to give rise to two analogous relations. We cannot for example

say Divine Love is simply like human love, but we can speak of God's love for man by analogy with a parent's love for a child. Butler himself offers the following example:

Now the beginning of life, considered as an education for mature age in the present world, appears plainly, at first sight, analogous to this our trial for a future one, the former being in the temporal capacity what the latter is in our religious capacity. But some observations common to both of them, and a more distinct consideration of each, will more distinctly show the extent and force of the analogy between them.

Analogy, p.63.

This is to say that there is a resemblance in the relation of the religious and the temporal state of trial. But he who makes an accurate perception of the resemblance of relations makes simultaneously a connection and a distinction. The connections are immediately apparent as resemblance, but the distinction is that they operate at different levels - the higher religious level and the lower fallen imitation. To lose the perception of either the connection or the distinction is, as Copleston believes, to lose analogy's essential tension and to fall into the danger of using the term too loosely:

Substitute now the word *future* for *temporal*, and *virtue* for *prudence*; and it will be just as proper a description of our state of trial in our religious capacity, so analogous are they to each other.

Analogy, p.58.

If the balance of the analogous whole is to be maintained, we have simultaneously to see the likeness

and the difference. It would be folly to understand virtue to be the *same* as prudence, or to allow temporal concerns to remain in place of future duties; the substitution of terms cannot change the levels in which we have to live. But just as the similarity of things is not true analogy, so there is potential danger in making the level of difference so distinct as to be utterly other on God's part. True analogy does not sever the connections even though it does not trespass across the limits of the natural scheme of things.

Copleston of all people would have recognised that the analogy in the title of Butler's book, The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed To The Constitution And Course of Nature, is not a straightforward analogy between two things - the natural and the revealed, but that natural and revealed religion are both analogous to the constitution and course of nature. For Copleston is alert to the degeneration of analogy into mere similitude:

When the points in which the similarity of relation holds are of secondary importance - when instead of being essential and characteristic, they are slight and superficial - the analogy is often called a metaphor, and often a similitude, as being addressed rather to the fancy than to the judgement, and intended rather to adorn and illustrate than to explain.

An Enquiry, p.125.

Metaphorically speaking we might say that there is a similarity of effect in the rage of a lion and the rage of the sea, but 'the relation is fanciful rather than real' for without the same essential nature there is no ground of reasoning. However, when we speak of the rage

of God, the analogy is not altogether fanciful as long as the analogy is founded upon the relation of cause and effect: 'God is still regarded as the agent; but having no word to denote the active cause in him, we borrow the word which belongs to the cause of these effects in men' (An Enquiry, p.131).

Precisely because we must speak of the infinite in finite terms we are likely to confuse metaphor or simile with analogy. Copleston teaches the importance of remembering that when we speak of the eye of God, the anger of God or the love of God, syntactically speaking they are not similes but analogical expressions. It cannot be that the things of man are like the attributes of God, but 'there are effects continually coming under our notice which indicate these qualities [i.e. justice, mercy, love] in men, and from a view of effects similar to these in the system of the universe we suppose corresponding *qualities* in the Author of that system, and accordingly bestow upon them the same name' (An Enquiry, p.132). Copleston's understanding of the use of analogy as the resemblance of relations is crucial to our understanding of Butler's Analogy. But his absolute insistence on analogy's simultaneous difference and resemblance was controversial. For in the application of his strict analogy to the good qualities such as love, wisdom and knowledge, the consequent austere denial of a one-to-one resemblance or likeness of corresponding qualities in God and man was seen by some to undermine Theology itself.

In 1868 James Buchanan Professor of Systematic Theology at Edinburgh presented Gladstone with a copy of his book Analogy Considered as a Guide to Truth. The significance of this work is that it raises a theological point of central importance to this present thesis. For Buchanan challenges the Coplestonian concept of analogy as no more than the resemblance of relations and seeks, in effect, to distance Butler from Copleston. His central question in the investigation of what analogy is, pursues a revision of the fundamental principles and legitimate applications of religious analogy:

Whether Analogy can be justly said to consist *exclusively* in a resemblance of relations or of effects? or whether it may not also involve, in some cases though not in all, a resemblance in the essential nature and characteristic properties of the "objects" whose relations are compared, and of the "causes" whose effects are found to correspond. ⁴⁴

Buchanan's thesis argues that with the exception of Butler, the writers on religious analogy fall into two distinct and rival groups. The first group, who take analogy to mean the resemblance of relations or effects, includes Archbishop King, Bishop Copleston and Archbishop Whately. The second group believed that analogy meant a resemblance not simply in the relations of properties or effects but in the essential nature of things, and this group includes Bishop Browne, Bishop Hampden, Bishop Shuttleworth and Dr Chalmers.⁴⁵ For the sake of convenience I shall refer to the first group as the

⁴⁴ James Buchanan, Analogy Considered As A Guide To Truth and Applied As An Aid To Faith, 2nd ed (Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter, 1865), p.48, hereafter cited as 'Buchanan'.

⁴⁵ I can find nothing in Chalmer's Prelections to justify his inclusion in this group.

analogy of relations and the second group as the analogy of things. Buchanan quotes from Bishop Browne's Divine Analogy, published in 1773, three years before Butler's Analogy:

[Analogy] is the substituting the idea or conception of one thing to stand for and represent another, on account of a true resemblance, and correspondent reality, in the very nature of the things compared.

'Buchanan', p.623.

Where Copleston says there must be more than two things to give rise to two relations, the second group, as represented here by Browne, understand an essential likeness, without disabling distinction between the things compared. Buchanan thinks that of the two groups Browne's group is nearer the spirit of Butler. His criticism of the analogy of relations is demonstrated in his *précis* of Archbishop King's teaching:

'The descriptions which we frame to ourselves of God, or of the Divine Attributes, are not taken from any direct or immediate perceptions which we have of Him, or them; but from some observations we have made of his works, and from the consideration of those qualifications that we conceive would enable us to perform the like:' that 'it doth truly follow hence that God must either have *these*, or other faculties equivalent to them,' but that 'we do not know what His faculties are in themselves' - that 'we cannot but be sensible that they are of a nature *altogether different* from ours, and that we have no direct proper notion or conception of them.' It is no longer the *perfect adequacy*, but the *very Truth* of our conceptions which is called in question.

'Buchanan', p.11.

Buchanan believes that the essential difference upon which King insists ultimately becomes the unbridgeable gulf that leaves humanity altogether different and God

unknowable. The scale of the difference means that we are in danger of losing, not only the hope of direct conception of God's attributes, but any true conception whatsoever. Another member of the analogy of relations group, understood why King's teaching should attract such objections:

If the moral and intellectual attributes ascribed to God in scriptures are not to be understood as the same in Him that they are in us, but merely as analogical representations, the precepts which direct us to imitate the divine perfections will be nullified; for how, is it urged, can we copy them, if we know not what they are? ⁴⁶

Dr Whately explains that when the very Truth of our conceptions of the nature of God is called into question it will no longer be possible to believe that human nature can mirror the veiled image of God. Moreover, once we lose the fundamental principle of essential imitation, we have effectively broken our relationship with God. In response to such objections, Whately suggests that no moral or intellectual attribute has any form or existence on its own but only in relation to something else. When we attribute 'courage, or temperance to two men, we are in fact only asserting an analogy, since those qualities are perceived only in their effects, and have no relative existence'. Therefore to speak of Divine attributes as analogous to ours is to assert 'the only kind of resemblance which can exist in

⁴⁶ Richard Whately, Introduction to 'Discourse on Predestination' in The Use and Abuse of Party feeling in Matters of Religion; being the course of The Bampton Lectures for the Year 1822 to which are added Five Sermons Before the University of Oxford, and A Discourse by Archbishop King, 4th ed (1822; London: John Parker and Son, 1859), p.268, hereafter cited as 'Whately'.

This book is dedicated to Edward Copleston.

such attributes' (Whately, p.268). This resemblance of relations is analogy.

Buchanan takes the analogy of relations to be denying any true resemblance of things. Edward Copleston agreed with Archbishop King that God's nature must be altogether different, but he saw the analogy of relations as being not weak in the Truth, but strong in human truth. His analogy acknowledged difference but still allowed us a reasonable way of conceiving and speaking of God:

If the first relation be well known, it may serve to explain the second which is less well known: and the transfer of name from one of the terms in the relation best known to its corresponding term in the other, causes no confusion, but on the contrary tends to remind us of the similarity that exists in their relations, and so assist the mind instead of misleading it. In this manner things most *unlike* and discordant in their nature may be strictly *analogous* to one another. Thus a certain proposition may be called the basis of a system. The proposition is to the system what the basis is to the building, it serves a similar office and purpose: and this last relation being well known is of use to illustrate the other which was less well known. E.g. The system rests upon it: it is useless to proceed with the argument till this is well established: if this were removed, the system must fall.

An Enquiry, p.123.

As if in answer to Reid's fear that 'we are apt to be led into error by [analogical reasoning]' (Reid, Works, p.237), Copleston shows how analogy can in fact 'assist the mind instead of misleading it'. The importance of Copleston's understanding of analogy is that he sees it as not a static knowledge but as something that may be 'reminded' in the sense of being constantly rediscovered. The reminding may be from man to God upwards, or sideways

as from the pain of a sharp note upon the ear to the sharp point that hurts to the touch. The system is always structured - the analogy reminds us that there is a structure, a building, within the universe and it is the structure rather than direct resemblance within it that is important.

I am arguing that Buchanan seriously underestimates the value and strength of the analogy of relations and by his condemnation he is effectively tipping the balance of the Analogy towards the analogy of true resemblance of things, which is profoundly to misrepresent Butler. Butler, Buchanan states, 'nowhere defines the Analogy as a resemblance of relations'. This is strictly true,⁴⁷ but as Buchanan had earlier pointed out, Butler 'has nowhere offered a precise definition of it' ('Buchanan', p.59), so that Buchanan is actually right in concluding that Butler's 'description of it is much too general and comprehensive' ('Buchanan', p.61). It was Butler's premise 'that we were in a progress of being towards somewhat further: and that his scheme of government was too vast for our capacities to comprehend' (Sermons, p.179). The Analogy is not rendered static or restricted under fundamental principles and legitimate applications, for it is rich in what, as we shall see, Newman would call developments.

Buchanan however, feared that the analogy of relations could not admit of development:

⁴⁷ Butler does, however, often talk in terms of 'relations', i.e. 'And, as there is not any action or natural event which we are acquainted with so single and unconnected as not to have a respect to some other actions and events, so possibly each of them, when it has not an immediate, may yet have a remote, natural relation to other actions and events much beyond the compass of this present world' (Analogy, p.101).

We think it a defective and incorrect definition of Analogy, to say that it amounts to nothing more, in any case than 'a resemblance of ratios or relations, '- since it excludes a resemblance between different objects in their characteristic properties and essential nature, and speaks only of 'similar relations', as if, because Analogy amounts to nothing more in some cases, it must necessarily be limited to that in all.

'Buchanan', p.54.

Copleston would never suggest that analogy amounts to 'nothing more'. Indeed, as we have seen, the idea of something *more* is the underlying consciousness of both Copleston and Butler. Reasoning from analogy is sufficient to give us an idea of God's much more perfect attributes, and this intimation of the wider and higher system is analogy's real purpose. But Buchanan's fear of limiting analogy to similar relations reflects the contemporary climate of religious argument in the 1860s when the new position of agnosticism was asserting the limits to the sphere of human intelligence. This effectively brings all that we can know within those limits and denies the possibility of knowing more. Against this threat Buchanan finds it necessary to condemn what he thinks of as the weak version of knowledge by analogy which, in its denial of essential resemblance and insistence upon difference, may come to be judged as evidence that God is unknowable, if not non-existent.

In his annotations to Butler's Introduction of the Analogy, Gladstone correctively observed:

Analogy then (1) is not demonstrative, but probable; (2) is not to be predicated of mere quantity. It would mislead were we to say there was an analogy between the relation of one foot to two feet, and that of one pound to

two pounds. For the relation is absolutely identical. We may perhaps adopt Fitzgerald's definition thus modified: the analogy is the resemblance of qualitative relations.

Works, i, p.8. ⁴⁸

In making the above definition Gladstone noted that Fitzgerald referred to Copleston's Four Discourses, and to Whately's Rhetoric. Gladstone effectively overrides Buchanan's conclusion because he understands Butler's pursuit of 'the relation of the lower and higher world, between all shapes of human character and experience on the one side, and a great governing agency on the other' (Studies, p.3). Gladstone was one who realised, as finally Buchanan did not, that the Coplestonian resemblance of relation allows a more positive understanding of the Analogy than is at first suggested by Butler's negative argument. When the same difficulties are found to be in the Scripture as in the constitution of nature we are not simply left with double the difficulty, but with a sense of mysterious fitness and implicit order. Of course we cannot be certain of the corresponding resemblance of one thing in this system to another in the next, but the accumulation of numberless instances of the resemblance of the relation of one system to another increases the probability that we are in the middle of one whole scheme.

'Analogy is of weight', Butler says, 'in various degrees towards determining our judgement and our practice' (Analogy, p.xxvi). The purpose of the Analogy 'is not to vindicate the character of God, but to show the obligations of Men: it is not to justify his

⁴⁸ Buchanan worked from William Fitzgerald's 1849 edition of the Analogy

providence, but to show what belongs to us to do' (Analogy, p.237). As Butler says 'the question is not whether the evidence of religion be satisfactory; but whether it be, in reason, sufficient to prove and discipline that virtue, which it presupposes' (Analogy, p.240). H.C.G. Matthew points out in his biography of Gladstone, 'following Bishop Butler, Gladstone saw man as an agent, with the need to act. Man was not an observer but a participant, and a participant participates. Taking decisions involves risk, even the expectation of being wrong'.⁴⁹ This is the Aristotelian formulation of using limitations as a licence to act - because we cannot know, we must simply obey our biological function to do, be it even so risky. Probable knowledge may fall short of certainty but faith in God obliges us to act upon it knowing it to be a risk:

With regard to Christianity, it will be observed; that there is a middle between a full satisfaction of the truth of it, and a satisfaction of the contrary. The middle state of mind between these two, consists in a serious apprehension, that it may be true, joined with a doubt whether it be so.
Analogy, p.252.

Butler is not trapped in, or even rendered inactive by, this middle state of mind. His free mind steers a finely balanced middle course with probability as the very guide of life, while deeply trusting that analogous relations are God-given. The finest of Butler's commentators, Chalmers, Copleston and Buchanan, can never quite match the precision with which Butler maintains the balance of

⁴⁹ H.C.G. Matthew, Gladstone 1809-1874 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.43.

two systems - one scheme, separate and yet connected. Nor can they match the distinctness with which he holds faith and uncertainty and knowing and unknowing in simultaneous apprehension. Even at best they fall short in some respect, though it is with Buchanan alone that the idea of analogy as mere similarity becomes vulnerable to the charge of pathetic fallacy via Ruskin or projection via Feuerbach. We shall see more of that history later in Chapters Four and Five. Not until Newman is it possible to discover a true successor to Butler. During the first years of Newman's residency at Oxford, the provost was Edward Copleston, and Dr Whately, as Newman relates in the *Apologia*, 'played the part to me of gentle and encouraging instructor' (*Apologia*, p.37). This was before Newman's quarrel with Whately after which, as the *Apologia* also relates, he came to a deeper and more lasting rediscovery of Bishop Butler.

2.iv. Newman and Butler

In his new edition of the Analogy of Religion published in 1825, Bishop Daniel Wilson noted the vital sense of potential in Butler's work: 'no book in the compass of theology is so full of the seeds of things'.⁵⁰ As I have

⁵⁰ Thomas Bartlett, Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Writings of Joseph Butler (London: J.W. Parker, 1839), p.54. (Gladstone's annotations are rarely more than marked passages, however this book notes on the fly-leaf, 'Mr Bartlett has plainly a sincere reverence for the great Bishop Butler; but he is plainly unequal to his subject, and his work bears the marks of bookmaking. W.E.G. 20.63').

shown, the Analogy in a new century was not a spent force: it contained a potency of life and as such it was, in terms that J.H. Newman would have used, capable of development.

What was true of the book was true of the vision of the man within the book. Human creatures, Butler concludes, are 'capable of naturally becoming qualified for states of life for which they were once wholly unqualified' (Analogy, p.64). The faculties for development are bestowed upon us in potential form. If they are not to be used, argued Butler, we should not have been given them, for 'from our original constitution and that of the world which we inhabit, we are naturally trusted with ourselves' (Analogy, p.113). 'Trusted' means not merely a trusting of ourselves, but a sense that we hold our lives in trust. And so to the question 'what is our business here?', Butler answers that our business in life is 'the improvement in virtue and piety' in preparation for a future life (Analogy, p.63):

Now the beginning of life, considered as an education for mature age in the present world, appears plainly, at first sight, analogous to this our trial for a future one, the former being in our temporal capacity what the latter is in our religious capacity.

Analogy, p.63

Butler saw that temporal and religious concerns may be not simply similar but analogous in, as Gladstone said, 'the entire weaving of the web whereof our whole life is made up'.⁵¹ Just as we are not aware of the fact that

⁵¹ Richard Shannon, Gladstone (London: Hamilton, 1982), p.179, hereafter cited as 'Shannon'.

we are physically growing, so we are not aware of the development of character. Through repetition itself, inner qualities are gradually yet eventually developed:

Practical principles appear to grow stronger, absolutely in themselves, by exercise, as well as relatively, with regard to contrary principles; which, by being accustomed to submit, do so habitually and of course.

Analogy, p.68.

By habitually resisting temptations to unkindness we become gentle, and by striving to become responsible we become less thoughtless or careless. Practical habits are sharpened by direct opposition and strengthened by repeated use and exercise. Although evolution was not a term that Butler would have known, Gladstone thought that 'the idea of evolution is without doubt deeply ingrained in Butler' ('Morley', iii, p.521). But the scientific term evolution is by no means the same as Newman's 'development' or Butler's 'becoming' in their essentially religious orientation (Analogy, p.64):⁵²

Active habits are to be formed by exercise. Their progress may be so gradual as to be imperceptible in its steps; it may be hard to explain the faculty by which we are capable of habits, throughout its several parts, and to trace it up to its original, so as to distinguish it from all others in our mind; and it seems as if contrary effects were to be ascribed to it. But the thing in general that our nature is formed to yield, in some such manner as this to use and exercise, is matter of certain experience.

Analogy, pp. 67-8.

⁵² Though cf David Knight: 'Butler's illustration of the cumulative nature of argument by probability is pertinent to Darwin's method, where the weight of numerous individual cases carries conviction even though no single one would. This was an analogy of method which scientists and philosophers were to draw on in 1880s and 90s'. David Knight, The Age of Science: The Scientific World View in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.38.

Darwinian evolution is a formal selection in the struggle for life within nature. For Butler the forming of habit is mysterious both in its workings and origin: there is something behind it as if originally from God. Likewise Newman understood that to a mind 'habituated to the thought of God' (US,p.329), the evolution of an idea is the development from the original idea to which that development points back. Butler wondered but did 'not inquire' into 'how far the powers of memory and habits may be powers of the same nature'. 'But that perceptions come into our minds readily and of course, by means of their having been there before, seems a thing of the same sort as readiness in any particular kind of action, proceeding from being accustomed to it' (Analogy, p.65). Newman inquired into and understood the connection: 'What is memory itself, but a vast magazine of such dormant, but present and excitable ideas' (US,p.321). Perceptions are the recalling to mind of what is already implicitly there before: 'the birth of an idea, the development, in explicit form, of what was already latent within it' (US,p.321). Thus Newman takes Butler's sense of the latent nature of habit-formation and turns it further into his own idea of development. He releases the sense of religious mystery in Butler that distinguishes development from Darwinian evolution. For it became vital to Newman to try to distinguish the almost imperceptible progress of thought towards the formation of habits of being, not now in general as in Butler but in personal development, in personal journeying in that shift from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. In order to trace religious or philosophical development a

man begins with remembering who and what he is and how he is fitted for his sphere of action in the world. This is his real starting point:

If I do not use myself, I have no other self to use. My only business is to ascertain what I am, in order to put it to use. It is enough for the proof of the value and authority of any function which I do possess, to be able to pronounce that it is natural.

Grammar, p.273.

For Newman and for Butler the business of life is to put ourselves to use and this is both in our own interest and our obligation. The obligation is both to ourselves and, in Butler's sense of being trusted with ourselves, to God the originator; for the original faculties are the God-given gift to human nature. But the original faculties are capable of development if not change:

It is that, though man cannot change what he is born with, he is a being of progress with relation to his perfection and characteristic good. Other beings are complete from their first existence, in that line of excellence which is allotted to them; but man begins with nothing realized (to use the word), and he has to make capital for himself by the exercise of those faculties which are his natural inheritance. Thus he advances to the fulness of his original destiny. Nor is this progress mechanical, nor is it of necessity; it is committed to the personal efforts of each individual of the species; each of us has the prerogative of completing his inchoate and rudimental nature, and of developing his own perfection out of the living elements with which his mind began to be.

Grammar, pp.274.

Mankind is left by nature unformed and deficient but as Butler had earlier taught, 'nature has endued us with the power of supplying those deficiencies, by acquired knowledge experience and habits' (Analogy, p.69). This is

why deficiencies and incompleteness are never simply failure in Newman but living evidence of the need for an effort, under probation, towards perfection and completeness:

And thus a new character, in several respects, may be formed, and many habitudes of life not given by nature, but which nature directs us to acquire.

Analogy, p.68.

Since we have the capacity to complete our unfinished nature and to develop our own human perfection, Newman pays attention to the anterior sources of and in ourselves. Thus one of the great and constant features of his style is the choice of word or simple phrase that turns the movement of thought back into its anterior realm as when he turns man's advance around and back to his 'original destiny':

You can never anticipate with Newman what he is leading up to... He turns his argument with simple freedom, regardless of the moral direction it seems to be taking.⁵³

The end is latent in the beginning just as the adult is inherently present in the new born baby. Beginning and end are parts of the same whole thought, albeit spelt out explicitly and historically. Development is both a self-educating, self-adjusting movement chronologically or linearly through life from birth to death and also ontologically a coming of latency into being.

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⁵³ Muriel Spark, Foreword to Realizations: Newman's Selection of his Parochial and Plain Sermons, ed. by V.F. Blehl (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), p.v.

Dr Newman first read the Analogy in 1825 when he, like Butler before him, was a fellow of Oriel, Oxford.⁵⁴ Its effect upon him was profound:

It was at about this date, I suppose, that I read Bishop Butler's Analogy; the study of which has been to so many, as it was to me, the era in their religious opinions...for myself, if I may attempt to determine what I most gained from it, it lay in two points...they are the underlying principles of a great portion of my teaching. First, the very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system, and of this conclusion the theory, to which I was inclined as a boy, viz. the unreality of material phenomena, is an ultimate resolution. At this time I did not make the distinction between matter itself and its phenomena, which is so necessary and so obvious in discussing the subject. Secondly, Butler's doctrine that probability is the guide of life, led me, at least under the teaching to which a few years later I was introduced, to the question of the logical cogency of faith, on which I have written so much. Thus to Butler I trace those two principles of my teaching, which have led to a charge against me both of fancifulness and of scepticism.

Apologia, p.36.

I shall discuss analogy and probability separately in relation to Newman, but it is crucial to understand that the principles which Newman inherited from Butler would be treated not as fixed ideas, but as living principles.⁵⁵ It seems that the truly creative reader of Butler is one

⁵⁴ Newman's debt to Butler is a well documented. In particular Edward Sillem, The Philosophical Notebook of John Henry Newman, ed. at The Birmingham Oratory, 2 vols (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1969), vol i.

⁵⁵ Newman uses this phrase to describe the life of thought within a life: a thought 'not only passively admitted in this or that form into the minds of men, but it becomes a living principle within them, leading them to an ever-new contemplation of itself, an acting upon it and a propagation of it'. J.H. Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (London: James Toovey, 1845), p.35, hereafter cited as On Development.

who sees the Analogy not as a conclusion but a way forward.

The Principle of Analogy

Newman's mature thinking on the 'unreality of material phenomena' brought him, not to Berkeleyism, but to his own conclusion on the nature of realism. This was close to that of Copleston: 'What we call knowledge and fore-knowledge in God, have infinitely more reality in them, and are of greater moment than our understanding or prescience from whence they are transferred to him' (An Enquiry, p.121). Newman's 'more momentous system' has indeed infinitely more reality than anything which can be perceived in the sensible world. Its complete reality is primary, but cannot be grasped as such: 'material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen' (Apologia, p.42). Analogy might well be understood as formal translation between the 'separate' but 'connected' works of God (Apologia, p.36). Interestingly both Butler and Newman speak of the connection of the two levels or systems using the preposition 'with' rather than to: 'It is evident that the course of things which comes within our view is connected *with* somewhat past present and future beyond it. So that we are placed, as one may speak, in the middle of a scheme' (Analogy, p.110). The effect of this is to denote not simply a subordinated nearness or mechanical fit but a subtler sense of close-relatedness.

R.H Hutton notes how Newman's sense that the world was not what it seemed had been confirmed by his reading

of Keble's The Christian Year. Keble too had been influenced by Butler:

The doctrine 'that material phenomena are both the types and instruments of real things unseen' was suggested by Butler's principle that there is a real analogy between the system of nature and the system of revelation, and that the latter should teach us to interpret the former rather than the former to interpret the latter.

Cardinal Newman, p.19.

The direction of religious analogy is not quite as it would seem to be, for as Hutton explains ' a certain disguise of higher influence under a material mask might be involved in the structural principles of the universe' (Cardinal Newman, p.19). Interpretation or translation is not straightforwardly from the material system to the higher or more momentous system because the fallen system of nature is not the primary reality. If it were, analogies could be at best only unsubstantiated presumptions. As Christians we might see that the system of nature is but a mask which partially conceals yet partly reveals the living truth which itself is necessary to see more of our mundane nature in the first place. What is offered here is a necessary to and fro movement of the human mind. Only when the sacramental system of revealed religion is understood as the key to interpreting natural religion can there be what Hutton calls 'real analogy' between the two economically and sacramentally connected systems.

Newman not only inherits Butler's argument but manifestly takes it over by turning the space which the Analogy's dispassionate argument creates into a reception

area for new and productive intimations. Accordingly the value of Butler's use of analogy as an initial defensive argument must be reassessed in its new context:

It seems, insistence on this analogy between the mysteries of nature and those of grace is my sole argument for the truth of my creed. How can this be, from the very nature of the case? The argument from Analogy is mainly negative, but argument which tends to prove must be positive. Butler does not prove Christianity to be true by his famous argument, but he removes a great obstacle of a *prima facie* character to listening to the proofs of Christianity. It is like the trenches soldiers dig to shield them when they propose to storm a fort. No one would say that such trenches dispense with soldiers. So far, then, from 'confining' myself to the argument from Analogy in behalf of my creed, I absolutely imply the presence and the use of independent arguments, positive arguments, by the fact of using what is mainly a negative one.

Grammar of Assent, pp.384-5

It is so typical of Newman's style of thinking that he should refer to Butler's achievement as the freedom to *listen* to the proofs of Christianity, as if the difficulties are like a noisy confusion that is suddenly made silent. Chalmers has described the achievement of this point as reaching 'a state of indifference', whereas Newman seeks to quicken that alert indifference into further indwelling attentiveness. As a disciple of Butler, Newman is not confined by Butler's argument; rather the quiet which the removal of a great obstacle affords allows the subsequent construction of 'independent' creative thought. Newman came to Butler strong in the confidence of personal religious conviction but Chalmers, as we have seen, approached in the instability of spiritual sickness. Starting from such different positions, they seem to have arrived at a

similar austere receptive point, although it is doubtful that they would have recognised it as the same place.⁵⁶ For when the Analogy had done its work, both men come to affirm that the negative side of a proposition 'absolutely implies' the presence of the independently positive, and this reaching back is, so to speak, to be the way forward. If, as Newman states, the 'sole argument for the truth of my creed' is the analogy between the mysteries of nature and of grace, then mysteries 'as great in nature as in Christianity' (Analogy, p.161), are a starting point for the defence of a more positive meaning:

As a mystery implies in part what is incomprehensible or at least unknown, so does it in part imply what is not so: it implies a partial manifestation, or a representation by economy. Because then it is in a measure understood, it can so far be developed, though each result in the process will partake of the dimness and confusion of the original impression.

On Development, p.98.

Mystery is another form of analogy, for both perform the same function of implication. Mysteries, difficulties and irregularities are what we, as creatures of the lesser system, must expect. 'To expect a distinct comprehensive view of the whole subject, clear of difficulties and objections, says Butler, is to forget our nature and our condition' (Sermons, pp.204-5).

Against charges of scepticism, both Newman and Butler

⁵⁶ Although Newman had read Chalmers' Sermons and knew his work (Letters and Diaries, August 30th, 1824, August 1st, 1825, March 17th, 1834, May 31st, 1838), there is no record of his having read Prelections. Newman was mainly critical of Chalmers because of the Evangelical position which Chalmers had later taken up. J.H.Newman, The Letters and Diaries of J.H.Newman, ed. at The Birmingham Oratory, 31 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961-1977), hereafter cited as L&D.

insist that limited thought is the natural lot of man, but limitation implies more than itself, whilst still retaining as its very dynamic the original partialities and gaps. We might only know in part, or as Newman says 'by economy', but here is mystery not as the dead end of thought but as living thought capable of development - and not with a view to complete understanding but to clearer understanding. From implication to development, the measure of understanding expands further and higher but still retains something of the essential mystery of the 'original [flawed] impression' at every level of recognition as if this is truly to remember 'our nature and our condition'. The point Newman wishes to establish most strongly is that when mystery is built into the proposition of belief it is both a positive and a negative proposition; not either one or the other, but both together, or that which might be understood as the dark and light sides of the original revelation. This is more than Chalmers had found in Butler, for in Newman's whole way of thinking, the negative 'implies' a positive, even whilst in the eye of God, the positive itself does not depend upon the negative.

The use of analogy helps Newman reassemble the universe, not directly from (lost) first principles since we cannot get back to these, but through an intuition or what Newman calls the illative sense of the economy of the system.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The Illative sense 'is seated in the mind of the individual, who is thus his own law, his own teacher, and his own judge in those special cases of duty which are personal to him. It comes of an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself, and it is formed and matured by practice and experience'(Grammar, p.278).

The Principle of Probability

Unlike Butler's doctrine of analogy which had lasting influence upon Newman's thought, the doctrine of probability was to prove highly problematic for Newman in the context of the nineteenth century:

Hence it is that - the province of certitude being so contracted, and that of opinion so large - it is common to call probability the guide of life. This saying, when properly explained, is true; however, we must not suffer ourselves to carry a true maxim to an extreme; it is far from true, if we so hold it as to forget that without first principles there can be no conclusions at all, and that thus probability does in some sense presuppose and require the existence of truths which are certain.

Grammar, p.192.

As 'mystery implies a partial manifestation', so probability implies partial evidence. But only first principles are our true starting point; man can be guided by second order probabilities, but he should nevertheless remember that they are probabilities founded upon whole Truths. If we 'forget', we risk the obscuring of the 'master vision' (US, p.322), and the consequential sense of spiritual separation. But Newman is not the originator of such a presupposition: that probabilities are partial evidence of whole truths is without doubt the hidden agenda of certainty behind Butler's back-to-front guide-book:

Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot be

discerned absolutely as it is in itself - certainly true, or certainly false. But to us, probability is the very guide of life.

Analogy p.xxv.

Butler's argument from ignorance assumes that there is something to be known. This is the tacit assumption of the Analogy. But by the middle of the nineteenth century Newman feared that Butler's maxim was being adopted as a practical guide without the implicit assumption in the existence of God. Thus probability was intruding into and undermining the province of certitude. If in the Apologia, Newman could still write of probability as an 'underlying principle' it was because he had come to understand how it is we can be certain on the basis of probabilities:

My argument is in outline as follows: that absolute certitude which we were able to possess, whether as to the truths of natural theology, or as to the fact of a revelation, was the result of an *assemblage* of concurring and converging probabilities, and that, both according to the constitution of the human mind and the will of its Maker; that certitude was a habit of mind, that certainty was a quality of propositions; that probabilities which did not reach to logical certainty, might create a mental certitude; that the certitude thus created might equal in measure and strength the certitude which was created by the strictest scientific demonstration; and that to have such certitude might in given cases and to given individuals be a plain duty.

Apologia, p.44.

In a striking almost diagrammatic image, the inner unity of the mind is conveyed as a dynamic concentration of overlapping probabilities, constantly concurring and converging to and fro in the mysterious form of experience.

But Newman could not be content to start back-to-front with Butler, by arguments against doubt in the first place, by arguments for probability. If Butler started secretly or tacitly from certainty, his book started from probability. Newman now needed to start his very work from certainty in the light of attacks such as Huxley's. Thus it was necessary for Newman to draw a distinction between the reasons which could be given for belief and the certainty with which it could be held. Accordingly Newman comes in An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent to the distinction between real and notional assent and so to his distinction between certainty and certitude.⁵⁸ Certitude is a habit or state of mind which does not admit of degrees; certainty is but a quality of propositions -the only truth that science in the hands of men such as Huxley would recognize. How is certitude possible - not just probability, not just scientific truth?

Certitude belongs to the explicit level of reason; it is the 'perception of a truth with the perception that it is a truth' (Grammar, p.163). It is sanctioned by the Illative sense which is seated in the mind and comes, as I have earlier shown, 'of an acquired habit, though it has its first origin in nature itself' (Grammar, p.278).⁵⁹ But it is not achieved as the result of a blinding flash, nor does it follow upon one definitive proof. The act of

⁵⁸ The difference between certainty and certitude is discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁵⁹ Newman here explains how his Illative sense might be understood by 'referring to parallel faculties which we commonly recognize without difficulty'. As a parallel faculty, Newman cites Phronesis, Aristotle's term for the faculty which guides the mind in matter of conduct, and 'from which the science of morals forms its rules, receives its compliment' (Grammar, pp.276-8).

mind by which we come to believe depends upon the obscure and inward faculty of implicit reasoning and follows 'upon a number of very minute circumstances together which the mind is quite unable to count up and methodize in an argumentative form' (US, p.274), in which case a proof would be the limit of converging probabilities. This is in accord with Butler's earlier view that where one single instance is not enough, an observation of 'numberless daily instances' will multiply the evidence and might amount to 'presumption, opinion or full conviction' (Analogy, p.xxiv).

For all his belief in the implicit processes of thought and belief, Newman recognised that in the nineteenth century it had become necessary to be more explicit. It was not that the explicit should take the place of the implicit, but that it should be found to grow out of it.

R.H. Hutton observed that 'Newman accepted Butler's teaching only so far as it displayed the rational *preparation* for belief, but rejected it so far as it suggested that any doubt as to the highest truths might remain' (Cardinal Newman, p.19). Butler takes his eighteenth-century argument as far as he can reasonably go, and for him, what cannot be said can nevertheless be left silently implicit. By the nineteenth century Newman had explicitly to mark the difference between Butler's concern with probability, and his own concentration upon 'the truth of things and the mind's certitude of that truth' (Grammar, p.271). For in Keble's Christian Year, Newman had found Butler's doctrine of probability 'recast' (Apologia, p.43), yet had begun to experience

unease despite his love for the sheer beauty and religiousness of the poem:

Butler teaches us that probability is the guide of life. The danger of this doctrine in the case of many minds, is its tendency to destroy in them absolute certainty, leading them to consider every conclusion as doubtful, and resolving truth into an opinion, which it is safe to obey or to profess, but not possible to embrace with full internal assent. If this were to be allowed, then the celebrated saying, 'O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul;' would be the highest measure of devotion: - but who can really pray to a being, about whose existence he is seriously in doubt?
Apologia, pp.42-3.

It was all very well, Newman thought, for Keble to suggest that it is reasonable to take probability as sufficient for internal conviction, since the sheer strength of Keble's personal faith gives 'to probability a force which it has not in itself'. Thus the argument about probability 'became an argument from personality' (Apologia, p.43). But Newman does not understand faith as something which it requires an exceptional strength of mind to attain. On the contrary 'Faith is the simple lifting of the mind to the Unseen God, without conscious reasoning or formal argument' (US, p.253). This is the essential simplicity of faith which comes first at that implicit level of being as an involuntary assent of personality. It is only at a secondary level that doubt is possible. Implicit assent cannot be had with doubt. Consequently Newman could not approve the idea of a 'safe' faith. He was anxious lest the practical effect of Butler's teaching and Keble's example was to make belief into the safest bet. While some people might find in probability the panacea for insecurity, Newman saw the

situation from the other point of view. The only way faith could be properly be understood as safe was in individual certitude or the active recognition of the reality of God. Probability was dangerously close to becoming the problem and not the remedy, if settling for probability meant not simply its intrusion into the province of certitude, but the destruction of the experiential possibility of 'absolute certainty'.

Thus the surprising answer to Newman's question - who can pray to a being about whose existence he is in doubt - was, among others, John Keble. But Newman thought that Keble's reading of Butler was faulty or at least needed clarification:

Dear Keble, or at least others of his way of thinking have said; viz 'that the highest state is one of doubt; that it is impatient to wish for certainty' and the like. In saying this, they do not deny the possibility of attaining practical certainty, a certainty that is a duty hic et nunc to do this or that, - but speculative certainty, the certainty that this or that is true.

L&D, XIX, p.480

Newman feared that practical certainty prevented speculative certainty developing explicitly out of probability. He insisted that a practical certainty was finally not enough, and that if the standpoint of essential truth could not simply be taken up, then its loss is the spiritually dangerous loss of the ultimate certitude which is our 'true starting point' (Grammar, p.276).

The notion of faith as mere 'practical certainty' speaks of something ungrounded, as without the full

'embrace' of certitude, faith can have no essential resting place. Clearly then, doubt no longer has the creative function it had for Butler, thus in A Grammar of Assent Newman writes:

My aim is of a practical character, such as that of Butler in his *Analogy* with this difference, that he treats of probability, doubt, expedience, and duty, whereas in these pages, without excluding, far from it, the question of duty, I would confine myself to the truth of things, and to the mind's certitude of that truth.

Grammar, p.271.

Both in the Apologia and in his letters, Newman tried to meet and address the difficulty of Keble's faith if only to highlight the awful theological distance between their dear and loving personal closeness:

I allude to Keble's conversation more than to anything which he wrote. He considered that religious truth came to us from the mouth of Our Lord - and what would be called doubt was an imperfect hearing as if one heard from a distance. And, as we were at this time of the world at a distance from Him, of course we heard indistinctly - and faith was not a clear confident knowledge or certainty, but a sort of loving guess. This after all is little more than practical certainty - and Bishop Butler seems to encourage it. - then my own theory was intended to show how we could be certain on probabilities.

L&D, vol.xxi, p.129.

It would be wrong to think that Keble intended his analogy to alarm, yet this picture of the history of a world moving away from God, of a man straining to catch His increasingly faint Word, is so different from the sheer spiritual vitality of Newman's experience of closeness. Newman had originally understood how the Analogy does not prove the truth of Christianity but

removed obstacles to 'listening to the proofs' (Grammar, p.384). Now, forty years after that first reading, new obstacles have presented themselves which impair hearing itself, even though one might still be listening. Such an impairment threatens to become a permanent spiritual disability in history, movingly compensated for in feeble but loving guesses, rather than Newman's 'temporary obscuration' (US, p.322).

Against such account of history, and in particular the history of the nineteenth century, I am suggesting that Newman's sense of the danger of Butler's doctrine of probability became so acute that it forced him here to make their difference quite explicit:

I have said that Butler leads to the view I incline to, left to myself. He finding himself in a system where certainty was not, having no Divine Guide to have recourse to, was naturally led to go by what was safe - and thought it enough for religion to attain to a certainty of safeness, or what theologians call 'practical certainty'. He tends to say 'I do not say I have proved my point, but at least I have made it so probable that (without deciding absolutely that it is true) to believe is the safer side, or rather to act as if you believed is the safer side'. We cannot be wrong in professing the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the whole course of visible nature recommends to us the doctrine of the Atonement. Hence moral certainty with him is only the highest step of mounting probabilities not differing from probability in kind but only in degree. I do not think he would have said so, if asked. So profound a thinker would have corrected or explained himself. He would have recognised the absurdity of saying that his inward apprehension of the Being of a God was only a feeling of a greater probability. I am sure I never have meant at any time myself to say I was only probably convinced or had an opinion there was a God - the idea is shocking - What! the object of worship, faith and obedience all one's life long, for which one acted (with whatever imperfection) day by day

and through sorrow and joy, what mind, if ever so little religious would say he only opined its existence.

Newman, L&D, vol.xv, p.456.

Butler 'would have corrected or explained himself', Newman declared in 1853, but I am suggesting that in 1736 Butler did not need to explain himself. At the time of Newman's letter in 1843, the eighteenth-century background of general consent has given way in the nineteenth century to individual assent, so that Newman needed the whole of An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent defensively to explain a deep-rooted personal knowledge of God. But the eighteenth-century man of God could simply leave what cannot be explained in silence:

My work consists in two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were. I have managed in my book to put everything firmly in place by being silent about it.⁶⁰

These are not Butler's words but the words of a twentieth-century philosopher who shared the idea that the sense of the world must lie outside the world, yet who does not doubt that there is such a sense which must remain in silence. Butler's silence is the security upon which his book is written. It becomes Newman's task to develop Butler: to make explicit what is implicit but has become obscured in him, to turn backwards and turn Butler's back-to-front strategy towards first principles of belief again. As Newman's early allegiance to the

⁶⁰ Paul Englemann, Letters from Ludvig Wittgenstein, With a Memoir (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p.143.

second of Butler's principles had laid him open to charges of scepticism, Newman understood that what he calls 'the region of private judgement in religion' (Apologia, p.45), could no longer afford to be silent and meaning had now to be personally and explicitly defended. In the light of his increasingly firm stand against a probable faith Newman was seen to be after 1843, 'thoroughly unsound as a Butlerian'.⁶¹ This false accusation came from Gladstone who had long been critical of Newman's reasons for joining the Roman Catholic Church.⁶²

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In an explanation of Newman's sense of the danger of the doctrine of probability in the nineteenth century, Hutton refers to Newman's famous rhetorical question: 'Who can pray to a Being about whose existence he is seriously in doubt?' Who indeed, echoes Hutton:

Might not the word 'seriously' be omitted? Who could really pray to a highly probable God, to a God for the reality of whose existence he thinks there are even ninety nine chances against one?

Cardinal Newman, p.19.

Gladstone's whole-hearted belief in the function of probability as the guide of life, was precisely at the

⁶¹ This remark was made in a letter from Gladstone to R.H. Hutton, Oct 6th 1890 after reading Hutton's book on Newman ('Lathbury', p.407).

In 1890, Richard Hutton sent Gladstone a preview copy of his book Cardinal Newman. Referring to Butler's influence on Newman, Hutton writes: 'the second principle which Newman learned from Butler was, that probability is the guide of life'. Gladstone has underlined 'learned' and added in the margin: 'or rather did not learn'. A further comment at the back of the book is 'Butler caricatured'.

⁶² Some of these criticisms are set out in a letter to F.Rogers, February 25th,1866 ('Lathbury',ii,p.300).

heart of his quarrel with Newman and why he felt that 'Oh God, if there be a God, save my soul' was a caricature of Butler based on a faulty understanding. For Gladstone, it was simply untrue that imperfect evidence, which might be acceptable in the fallen realm of knowledge, could not be the foundation for the obligation of religious belief:

If we admit that man by free will and a depraved affection fell away from God, which is the representation addressed to us by the Gospel, nothing can be more consistent with it, than that he should be brought back to God by ways which give scope for the exercise of will and affection, and for their restoration, through exercise to health. But surely it is plain that this scope is far more largely given, where the proof of revelation involves moral elements, and grows in force along with spiritual discernment, than if it had the vigour of a demonstration in geometry, of which the issue is accepted without any appeal, either to affection or to volition, in the appreciation and acceptance of the steps of the process.

Gleanings, vol vii, pp, 188-9.

In Gladstone's way of thinking, the lack of universal certainty was an essential part of a programme of divine training contributing towards a personal moral strength. Imperfect evidence is seen as God's gift to a sick and fallen humanity by which to prove the will to make recovery. As the means of getting 'back to God' must always involve an idea of a separation and distance, it was the business of Gladstone's life to balance probable evidence with moral obligation for the maintenance of spiritual health. But the real force of the Analogy was that it applied to all of life:

Gladstone interrogated Butler more specifically for his purposes as a Christian politician. He turned to Butler seeking 'something resonant and revered' yet readily adaptable for his practical purposes.

'Shannon', p.179.

In all areas of living, from politics to religion, the method of practically dealing with probable evidence was the same; the provinces of man need never be separate for one resonates through the other. Seeing himself as simply a limited creature, Gladstone felt that it was his clear duty to act practically and sincerely upon probable evidence. Moreover, Gladstone goes further and insists upon the utter unreasonableness of demanding absolute certainty in anything:

The primordial element of uncertainty never could be eliminated, except by the gift of inerrability to the individual mind. But such a gift would amount to a fundamental change in the laws of our nature. Again, in our particular case of belief, such a change would obviously dislocate the entire conditions of the enquiry, which appears to turn upon the credibility of revealed religion as it is illustrated by its suitability to - what? not to an imaginable and unrealized, but to the actual, experienced condition of things.

Gleanings, vii, pp.165-6.

Uncertainty is what we know, to expect that it should be otherwise would be to demand a constitutional change in human nature and consequently a dislocation of the analogous hinge - the analogy of religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature. Gladstone knows analogy as the view from below; 'the actual, experienced condition of things' constitutes an idea of limitation inside which Gladstone actively strives, and within that limit can safely have an expectation of uncertainty.

In one sense Gladstone seems to be less certain than Newman in admitting no more than probability, but on the other hand, by thinking that he can cope with the incorporation of probability and uncertainty in the midst of belief, he is more certain. For Newman, who took the assent of faith as primary at that implicit level of being, the act of will that is involved in Gladstone's idea of probability is entirely secondary and a type of mistaken Anglican compromise.

From Newman's point of view, Gladstone's attraction to the doctrine of probability as applicable to the whole of life is at the expense of a more primary sense of holism. In a letter to Sir Frank Rogers in 1866 Gladstone wrote:

No man can grasp truth entire, Butler took it in fragments, but his wise instinct enabled him to lay each stone that it would fit in with every stone which might be laid in the double light of thought and experience. He is now in his second century and his works are at once younger and older than when he wrote them: older, because being confirmed by the testing operations of other minds, younger, because with not only fuller and broader, but with, so to speak, more flexible foundations adaptive to the present and coming needs of the human mind. Newman also laid his stones, but at every period of his life he seems driven by a fatal necessity to piece them all together to make a building of them.

'Lathbury', ii, p.300.

Analogy is indeed the view from below, but that is not Butler's starting point. The 'double light' suggests that secretly or implicitly he starts from an intuitively sensed approximation of a whole that may only be known in parts. For Butler knowledge was not the starting point for belief. After Butler, Gladstone is the heir of

practical certitude, Newman the representative of speculative certitude - the former immersed in contemporary history, the latter fighting against it. The irony - which only Newman would have appreciated and anticipated - was that it was Gladstone, the man of history, who was most vulnerable to history passing him by, and taking his version of Butler with him.

On the publication of Gladstone's edition of the Analogy in 1896 the New Church Review wrote:

The Analogy is not a marvellous work, it is simply, considering the circumstances, a remarkable and valuable work. It will not last forever. Its influence is plainly not what it was fifty years ago, and Mr Gladstone cannot revive its use. ⁶³

It is precisely because Gladstone was so tied to history that his attempt to revive the use of the Analogy seemed old fashioned to a subsequent generation with their eyes already turned to a new century. But this is not to say that the Analogy could only be of relevant value in its own historical context. As we have seen, Chalmers, Copleston, Gladstone and Newman were emphatically right in seeing the value of the Analogy to lie in its capacity for 'interpretation' and 'development'.

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As the nineteenth century wore on so the Analogy was being read by Victorians increasingly only in relation to doubt. As Newman foresaw, the readings and emphasis on probability had begun to lose probability within the

⁶³ Theodore F. Wright, 'The Value of Butler's Analogy', New Church Review (June 1896), pp.255-6. These pages have been extracted from the periodical and are in Gladstone's small pamphlet collection on Butler.

confusion of a larger area of doubt which, as Chapter 1 below describes, was indeed Tennyson's starting point for In Memoriam. If Butler's particular form of religious agnosticism was to be sustained, it was crucial that the emphasis was allowed to fall on what this present chapter has found to be the doubleness of Butler's method of analogy, which argues from a known series of facts to a like series that is less well known, which in its turn illuminates the known reciprocally.

CHAPTER 3

Poetry and Analogy

With the possible exception of Newman, to whom I shall return in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the previous chapter dealt with commentators on the argument of the Analogy within the world of ideas. I shall argue that the gradual nineteenth-century effacement of the Analogy which is to its historical disadvantage in the field of philosophy can be turned to advantage within the framework of living thought in the later nineteenth century, when analogy itself is realized not just consciously in the Butlerian philosophical tradition but as a dynamic form of rediscovery, a recalled tool of creative thinking in poetry.

As a recent critic has pointed out, the poetry of Christina Rossetti is 'based on the analogical method, the devotional poet's expression of her own profound intimations of God becomes "poetic" theology, that is: literary art's grasp and expression of the deepest meanings of Scripture and religious ideas, and Scripture's illumination of human life through art'.¹ Rossetti is the obvious first choice when looking for literary art's expression of analogy in the High Anglican analogical tradition. In the course of this chapter I shall move from Rossetti's conscious to Tennyson's less formally conscious use of analogical thinking, thus

¹ D.A. Kent, The Achievement of Christina Rossetti (London: Cornell University Press, 1987), p.280.

uniting my argument with the predicament I sketched in Chapter One.

3. i. Rossetti: Towards an Analogical Relation, from Theology to Poetry.

In 1838, Isaac Williams, who was one of Newman's curates at the University Church of St Mary Oxford, published Tract 80 on the doctrine of Reserve. The idea of 'Reserve' is that in imitation of God's mysterious holding back of truth, man too should practice an analogous holding back in his approach to all religious matters. Williams concluded that the works of God are 'serving for a covering to hide God from us, by this means to lead us on to a gradual knowledge of him'.² Similarly the works of man, even in art, will be indirect, taut and mediated.

The Tractarian assertion of the mutual relation of religion and art is well documented.³ George Tennyson suggests that Nature is the proper subject for the religious poet as 'the external world of Nature is God speaking by Analogy yet speaking with Reserve' (VDP, p.67). John Keble, Professor of Poetry at Oxford in the 1830s, believed that in poetry, analogy and reserve must always work together: both serve indirectly partially to reveal,

² Isaac Williams, Tract 80: 'On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge', Tracts for the Times, 6 vols (London: Rivington, 1834-41), iv, p.62.

³ In particular, G.B. Tennyson, Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), hereafter cited as VDP. Stephen Prickett, Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), hereafter cited as RR. W.D Shaw, The Lucid Veil: Poetic Truth in the Victorian Age (London: Athlone Press, 1987), p.197, hereafter cited as Lucid Veil.

even in partial concealment, the mysterious nature of God. Newman praised Keble's teaching of 'the sacramental system; that is the doctrine that material phenomena are both types and the instruments of real things unseen' (Apologia, p.42). This philosophy of religion was in turn a recasting of the doctrine of analogy as presented in the Analogy of Religion, with which Keble, Newman and Williams were all familiar.⁴

Both doctrines are closely connected to the doctrine of 'economy' which is characteristically Newman's word. His lengthy explanation of the 'doctrine of the Economica' in the Apologia is best demonstrated in the last of his University Sermons:

Fables, again, are economies or accommodations, being truths and principles cast into that form in which they will be most vividly recognised.
US, p.342.

An economy is the means by which difficult information is agreeably conveyed to meet and accommodate the appropriate level of understanding. In religious terms, an earthly idea is the nearest approach to its heavenly archetype that our present state allows. Yet any economy is but the explicit 'representation' or 'shape' created out of what is an implicit whole (US,p.339).

Each of the three related doctrines - reserve, analogy and economy - offer a certain sort of reasonableness in the face of difficulty whereby it is possible to speak of God, even at a distance. Keble perceptively realized that Butler's Analogy was a

⁴ George Tennyson notes both Keble and Newman's debt to Butler, as does Stephen Prickett in Romanticism and Religion, pp. 107-8.

rational text which took its reader beyond rationality. It was, he said, 'altogether a practical work which aimed not at satisfying the mind, but at forming the heart and guiding the conduct, though the mind should remain unsatisfied'.⁵ Indeed the idea of analogy is what takes the place of the dissatisfaction that results from the failure of an immediate and direct relation to the divine. If analogy, reserve and economy are God's indirect means of revealing himself, they are correspondingly available as man's indirect means of patiently knowing Him. The aim of this first section will be the investigation of a translation of religious analogy into the economy of poetic analogy with reserve.

In the Lucid Veil, W.D. Shaw makes no reference to Butler. Under the chapter heading 'The Recovery of Analogy' Shaw writes: 'closest in temper and inspiration to the conservative hermeneutics of Keble are the typological lyrics of Hopkins and Christina Rossetti' (Lucid Veil, p.197). But I suggest that these poets demonstrate a division in the Butlerian line of influence. In Chapter 5 of this thesis I shall argue that Hopkins' overall desire for singularity is impatient of indirection and of that which sustains the sense of separation or holding back which is implicit in the concepts of analogy and reserve. In Hopkins' Catholic poetry, analogy ceases to be analogy and becomes haecceitas or thisness.

It is in the poetry of Christina Rossetti that Keble's passing on of Butler into the hands of poetry and

⁵ John Keble, 'Occasional Papers and Reviews', quoted in Brian W. Martin, John Keble: Priest, Professor and Poet (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p.45.

aesthetics is discernible. Rossetti's analogical poetry has been well researched, but I argue that only a portion of her so-called analogical poetry can demonstrate Butler's strict analogical method. For Keble and for Rossetti, poetry is 'the expression of an overflowing mind, relieving itself, more or less indirectly and reservedly, of the thoughts and passions which most oppress it'.⁶ Only the best of Rossetti's poetry expresses an intense religious longing for union with Christ whilst observing a certain reserve. Such longing combined with reserve results in a poetry at once passionate and controlled. An equivalent austerity is what Copleston sought to distinguish true analogy from direct similitude. However in High Anglicanism too, there is a Hopkins-like desire for immediacy. In many of Rossetti's poems a passionate longing for total fulfilment sweeps away poetic analogy and reserve, as thus:

'Yea, I have sought thee, yea, I have found thee,
 Yea, I have thirsted for thee,
 Yea, long ago with love's bands I bound thee:
 Now the Everlasting Arms surround thee,-
 Thro' death's darkness I look and see
 And clasp thee to Me.'
'Love is as Strong as Death', 7-12.'⁷

The directness and immediacy of unreserved desire leaves Rossetti with no space across which to conduct analogy. Analogy repeats the division between heaven and earth, whereas this poem seeks to eliminate it. In this mood

⁶ John Keble, Tract 89: 'On the Mysticism attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church, 1840, in The Evangelical and Oxford Movements, ed. by Elisabeth Jay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.141.

⁷ The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti, ed. by R.W. Crump, 2 vols (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), all references to Rossetti's poetry are from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

she is very close to Hopkins, without the same electric fusion of words. But such joy is momentary and unsustainable: absolute connection is always fearful of the pain of subsequent separation. This is why critics have seen Christina Rossetti's love for God as too personal, too psychological and too erotic. There are, perhaps inevitably, poems which will find the poet stranded in self-enclosed isolation. 'Autumn' opens with 'I dwell alone - I dwell alone, alone', but leads only into another bleak dead end:

My trees are not in flower,
 I have no bower,
 And gusty creaks my tower,
 And lonesome, very lonesome, is my strand.
 'Autumn', 60-63.

The analogy of nature has fallen to Copleston's mere one-to-one identification of 'I' with natural object. Such close comparison leaves no room for distinction and 'I' becomes only the object without hope of extrication or redemption. This poem knows nothing beyond itself: the all-encompassing plight of 'I dwell alone, alone' can only finally know itself self-pityingly as lonely.

Rossetti's poems struggle for a place of emotional balance between the extremes of connection and separation. Accordingly, Rossetti's use of analogy is inconsistent, and any one effort towards the recovery of analogy cannot always be sustained throughout a whole poem. 'A Better Resurrection' seems at first to be attending to the concepts of Analogy and Reserve:

My life is like a broken bowl,
 A broken bowl that cannot hold
 One drop of water for my soul
 Or cordial in the searching cold;

Cast in the fire the perished thing,
 Melt and remould it, till it be
 A royal cup for Him My King:
 O Jesus, drink of me.

'A Better Resurrection', 17-24.

But 'my life is like a broken bowl' is not yet analogy in Butler's strict sense of the term. This is just simile: the explaining of 'a' by reference to 'b'. It is a resemblance between life and a broken bowl in one aspect alone. In such slackened form of analogy, the degree of reserve is less evident and more easily broken through. The overwhelming desire or 'craving' for closeness quickly abandons even the similitive expression 'like'. 'O Jesus drink of me' is certainly not the expression of 'hope deferred' but the direct call to Jesus fully imagined in the projected idea of proximity.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how Copleston's precise definition of analogy marked the difference between analogy and simile:

Analogy does not mean the similarity of two things, but the similarity or sameness of two relations. There must be more than two things to give rise to two relations. There must be at least three; and in most cases four. Thus A may be like B; but there is not analogy between A and B; it is an abuse of the word to speak so, and it leads to much confusion of thought. If A has the same relation to B which C has to D then there is analogy. If the first relation be well known, it may serve to explain the second which is less well known.

An Enquiry, pp.122-3

In Butler's austere analogy one thing on earth cannot stand directly for one in heaven; there must be four terms to give rise to two analogous relations. By means of analogy we may, while staying within the human realm, think just beyond the limit of this world. But there is

always the potential difficulty of the struggle to realize the analogical relation between two systems, while also maintaining the idea of their separation - as The Christian Year makes clear:

Two worlds are ours: 'tis only Sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within
Plain as the sea and sky.

The Christian Year.⁸

The fallen system of Nature offers hints, correspondences and analogies to a perfect system beyond and yet still echoed 'within'. This is an idea directly attributable to Butler, behind Keble; such is the meaning set in place by God.

If Keble could rigorously sustain the separation and avoid the confusion, it was not always so easy for Rossetti:

Lord, purge our eyes to see
Within the seed a tree,
 Within the glowing egg a bird,
 Within the shroud a butterfly:

Till taught by such, we see
Beyond all creatures Thee,
 And hearken for Thy tender word,
 And hear it, Fear not: it is I.

'Judge not According to Appearance' 1-8.

Analogy teaches by repetition, as Butler says, 'in numberless daily instances' (Analogy p.xxiv). By inference from the relation in the natural world of bird to egg, or butterfly to shroud, it discloses daringly the implicit truth of the idea of Almighty God 'within' the world. In turn the genuinely analogical relation, as

⁸ John Keble, 'Septuagesima Sunday', The Christian Year (London: Routledge, 1927), lines 41-44, p.74.

Copleston understands it, of 'within' to tree, bird, and butterfly implies the equivalent relation of 'Beyond' to 'Thee' even in terms of the positioning of the words along the lines. The tacit suggestion is that when we come to see with purged eyes we see 'beyond', not merely as somewhere vaguely ahead, but in relation to 'within'. As we have seen, Newman understood that analogy and in particular Butler's Analogy 'removes a great obstacle to listening to the proofs of Christianity' (Grammar, p.384). So, as if with purged eyes and ears, the poem pays what Butler calls 'sacred attention' to the analogical world (Sermons, p.vi). But I would suggest that the poem's final line fails to sustain the reserve which is implicit in the concept of analogy by its desire for momentary fusion. Analogy is inference rather than the fantasy of imaginative projection.

For a poet trying to hold onto the idea of two worlds analogically connected, the reappearance of obstacles is always a fearful possibility:

Care flieth,
 Hope and fear together:
 Love dieth
 In the Autumn weather.

For a friend
 Even Care is pleasant:
 When Fear doth end
 Hope is no more present:
 Autumn silences the turtle dove:-
 In blank Autumn who could speak of love?

'Autumn'

Human love may be merely a fallen version of divine love, but at the level of analogy it would not be possible to know divine love without first knowing human love. In this poem however, Autumn is too directly equated with

the Fall so that the fallen world fills Rossetti's vision, blocking the view beyond. The fallen experience of human love fails to provide an analogy with Divine Love when two sets of terms - Autumn and Fall, divine or holy love - are so conflated. There are dying echoes of a biblically sanctioned analogy, like something half-remembered: 'the voice of the turtle heard in our land' and of the dove - let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice',⁹ but these are silenced and forgotten in the blank presence of Autumn.

And yet the self-enclosed predicament of 'Autumn' was not a permanent one for Rossetti, as her brother explains:

Anyone who did not understand that Christina was an almost constant and often a sadly-smitten invalid, seeing at times the countenance of death very close to her own, would form an extremely incorrect notion of her spiritual condition. She was compelled, even if not naturally disposed to regard this world as a 'valley of the shadow of death', and to make a near acquaintance with promises, and also with threatenings, applicable to a different world.¹⁰

William Rossetti's words echo those of Butler speaking of our natural tendencies of virtue and vice:

And these tendencies are to be considered as intimations, as implicit promises and threatenings from the Author of Nature of much greater rewards and punishments to follow virtue and vice than do at present.

Analogy, p.54.

⁹ The Song of Solomon, 2. 12-13.

¹⁰ William M Rossetti, 'Memoir', in The Poetical Works of Christina Rossetti (London: Macmillan, 1906), pp.1-xxi (p.1).

Butler shows that experience on this earth is not merely for its own sake, but is implicitly a probative analogy for something after it. It is as if it must be in the midst of death that Rossetti can most acutely know the proximity of a different world. Yet Butler's same sense of 'near acquaintance' vitally comes from the midst of life.

Yet sometimes it is as though true analogy itself is a thing experientially only half-remembered by Rossetti; as if, by the late nineteenth century, Rossetti is almost too far from the clarity of Butler's eighteenth-century conception. And this makes for a more dynamic use of analogy itself, paradoxically. The long poem 'An Old World Thicket' which begins in the isolation and loneliness of despair, dramatises the sense of something half-forgotten - half remembered:

Awake or sleeping (for I know not which)
 I was or was not mazed within a wood
 Where every mother-bird brought up her brood
 Safe in some leafy niche
 Of oak or ash, of cypress or of beech.

'An Old World Thicket', pp.123-8.

In keeping with a Dantean dream-poem tradition, the speaker finds herself between waking and sleeping, knowing not which. Far from being able to draw consolation from the beauty and example of nature, 'I' is excluded from its apparent safety and can only observe, as if unconsciously searching for an orientating clue:

Such Birds they seemed as challenged each desire;
 Like spots of azure heaven upon the wing,
 Like downy emeralds that alight and sing,
 Like actual coals on fire,
 Like anything they seemed, and everything.

11-15

As between waking or sleeping, so Rossetti does not distinguish between a bird and its momentary likeness. The danger of direct correspondence by simile lies in the difficulty of sustaining the momentary vision. Here each new simile in a series of similes almost disconcertingly denies the one before. But it is line 15 that makes the saving difference: 'Like anything and everything' is not yet analogy but it is no longer just simile. For this line breaks free of seeing the similarity of only two terms and realizes a new and mystic vagueness in 'anything' and 'everything' that is liberatingly open to any and every number of possibilities.

This fine poem, in which language is always struggling for something beyond itself, is a gradual working away from the imprisoning thicket of despair and self-absorption towards the recovery of analogical reality in place of mere symbolic illusion:

Each twig was tipped with gold, each leaf was edged
 And veined with gold from the gold-flooded west;
 Each mother-bird, and mate-bird and unfledged
 Nestling, and curious nest,
 Displayed a gilded moss or beak or breast.

And filing peacefully between the trees,
 Having the moon behind them and the sun
 Full in their meek mild faces, walked at ease
 A homeward flock, at peace
 With one another and with everyone.

A patriarchal ram with tinkling bell
 Led all his kin; sometimes one browsing sheep
 Hung back a moment, or one lamb would leap
 And frolic in a dell;
 Yet still they kept together, journeying well,

And bleating, one or other, many or few,
 Journeying together toward the sunlit west;
 Mild face by face, and woolly breast by breast,
 Patient, sun-brightened too,
 Still journeying toward the sunset and their rest.

Like the sheep that was lost but was found again, the fable as economy presents a truth - 'cast into that form in which it will be most vividly recognized' (US, p.342). From the treacherous landscape in which things are not as they seem, the progress of the poem has brought Rossetti 'homeward' to the comparative stability of an analogical Old World. In Keble's words:

Poetry lends religion her wealth of symbols and similes: Religion restores these again to Poetry, clothed with so splendid a radiance that they may appear to be no longer merely symbols, but to partake (I might almost say) of the nature of sacraments.¹¹

So here the poetry itself is clothed with radiance in the faces of the sheep. In the final stanzas of this poem, the sun and moon could have been mere symbols of Keble's two worlds, but the importance of the poem's resolution is their relation to the flock:

Having the moon behind them, and the sun
Full in their meek mild faces

We are in the middle of a scheme facing forwards towards the light - like sheep, knowing little but acting on and being what we do know. In the dazzling 'sun-brightened' radiance the desire to know God brings the poet to the height of poetic expression, but the expression stops short of complete sacramental partaking. 'I might almost say' is Keble's expression of reserve, a reserve which brings Rossetti almost 'toward' Christ as Redeemer.¹²

¹¹ John Keble, *Keble's Lectures on Poetry*, 1832-41, transl. by Edward Kershaw Francis, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), ii, p.481.

¹² I shall be returning to the discussion of the analogical nature of Rossetti's spiritual relationship with God in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

This section will offer a further discussion of the principle of analogy as an underlying form of consciousness awaiting reactivation. For analogy, as I have stated in Chapter 2, is not a static knowledge but must be constantly rediscovered. I am arguing now that, at its finest, it cannot deliberately be remembered, but must be recalled as a vital, suddenly re-realized sense of related relationships.

In 'An Old World Thicket' Rossetti, following a Dantean tradition, entered an ancient mythological world. But in order to demonstrate the possibility of the recovery of analogy closer to the realm of realism I must now consider a more common, less mythic situation. If Rossetti had found in that poem an area of being in which she could sustain an analogical language, the death of Tennyson's beloved friend in 1833 found him, in the first shock of grief, suddenly excluded from such an area of being and seemingly without the language key.

Following the death of Hallam, the danger for Tennyson is the mounting fear, as Chapter 1 describes, that things on earth simply end in themselves or aimlessly go round in circles. Keble could know of 'two worlds' separate but connected, but the loss of Hallam is also, for Tennyson, the loss of assurance of anything beyond the bare realism of one finite world. He cannot even know the worlds as separate, for to know of separation would be by inference to know of two worlds. Thus it is that as he begins work on In Memoriam, Tennyson faces the prospect that the world-order and/or the language-order within which he lives and works is cut off from a more primary order of meaning in the universe;

or equally, that such a primary order of transcendental meaning might not even exist. His first venture in this given situation is to find an exploratory language. At the outset Tennyson could not know what it was he searched for, if this was to be a genuine search, but the venture will bring him eventually to analogy at the far end of his enquiry.

Prior to In Memoriam, beauty was arguably the primary constituent of the language of Tennyson's post-Romantic poetry: Hallam famously noted that Tennyson and Keats were 'poets of sensation rather than reflection'.¹³ The difficulty for Tennyson after Hallam's death is that the very beauty that he had thought to be primary is found to be a secondary medium in which he now finds himself trapped:

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
 Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
 Whose muffled motions blindly drown
 The bases of my life in tears.

In Memoriam, XLIX, 13-16.

This is the circular thinking of beauty in the very midst of sorrow, of sorrow felt through the veil of beauty. The rather beautiful tears of the lyric verse have begun to obscure the sight and recognition of that which they are crying over. As long as Tennyson is thus blindly caught up in the circle of beauty and sorrow, and of grieving at grieving, the aesthetically beautiful soundings can only lead to a veritable dead end of thought, matching the fate of Hallam himself:

¹³ Arthur Henry Hallam, on 'Poems Chiefly Lyrical' [1830], Unsigned Review, Englishman's Magazine (August 1831), i, pp.616-28, in Tennyson: The Critical Heritage, ed. by John D. Jump (London: Routledge, 1967), p.36, hereafter cited as 'A.Hallam'.

This round of green, this orb of flame,
 Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
 In some wild Poet, when he works
 Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
 'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
 Of things all mortal, or to use
 A little patience ere I die.
 XXXIV, 5-12.

To the religious mind, meaning here on earth is validated somewhere else; earthly beauty gives us from below an idea of a divine beauty beyond this world. To such a religious mind, alert to correspondences and to the relatedness of two separate systems, a poet, in the act of creation, bears analogous relation to the Creator 'Poet'. But the terrifying world of XXXIV is a world without analogy; a world in which beauty without correspondence to conscience or anything higher than itself is unreal - 'fantastic'. If it is that conscience is the feeling in the self of something more than the self, the poetry of a poet without conscience cannot point beyond itself and is finally meaningless. It is as if all that poetry can do in a godless world is reflect the fantastic confusion:

Or has the shock, so harshly given,
 Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
 And staggers blindly ere she sink?
 And stunned me from my power to think
 And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man
 Whose fancy fuses old and new,
 And flashes into false and true,
 And mingles all without a plan?
 XVI, 11-20.

The terrible thing for Tennyson is that poetry born of confusion appears to be so controlled; the poetic devices, the rhymes, the patterns, the alliterations, reflect an order that the lyric's content simultaneously denies. That the poetic synthesis of these verses describes some sort of fantastically beautiful chaos is very disturbing. The language here is separated from the subject matter - which state itself reflects the poet's very separation from Hallam himself. Every possible aesthetic, religious and epistemological problem in relation to language, style and subject-matter becomes dramatically enhanced because of Hallam's death.

Hallam wrote that like the Romantic poets Tennyson 'lived in a world of images' ('A.Hallam', p.37). In lyric IV it is as if Tennyson has completely retreated into that cocoon-like world. He not only lives but thinks in images referring to, yet cut off from, the world outside:

And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
 That thou should'st fail from thy desire,
 Who scarcely darest to inquire,
 'What is it makes me beat so low?'

Something it is that thou hast lost,
 Some pleasure from thine early years.
 Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
 That grief hath shaken into frost!

IV, 5-12.

For the poetic mind, images may well be the defensive way of approaching subjects ('Something it is') which are too tender or too difficult for a direct approach. But here it is as if images are losing touch with the reality they once represented: 'my heart' in musing, gradually becomes the dispassionate poetic tool for addressing the reality

from which the poet feels himself oddly distanced. Gradually the second-order world of beautiful images assumes the place of first-order reality but with only the vague sense of 'Something... lost'. Beauty as the pleasure of the past, and sorrow as grief of the present feed off each other, and together they invoke the beautiful image of the vase of tears. The image both contains the answer to the indirectly addressed question 'What is it makes me beat so low?' and protects 'me' from the stark reality of heart-break within its frozen image.

Sometimes the lyrics are not so much a writing out of grief, but more a writing into the shelter and security of the perfect image:

I sometimes hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel;
 For words, like Nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
 A use in measured language lies;
 The sad mechanic exercise,
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
 Like coarsest clothes against the cold:
 But that large grief which these enfold
 Is given in outline and no more.

V.

In this famous lyric the half-revealing and half-concealing can only be suffered as part of confused uncertainty rather than Keble's Reserve. Even as Tennyson sets down the problem, the original grief 'I' feel at Hallam's death is overtaken by an emphatically different second-order grief about the expression of grief itself. If this is post-Romantic poetry as relief, what makes it only half a relief is the artifice of poetry that is itself part comfort, part frustration:

Poetry is resolutely artificial, even when it tries to imitate the diction and cadences of ordinary speech. The poem is always different from the utterances it includes or imitates; if it were not different there would be no point in setting down these utterances or writing these sentences as a poem.¹⁴

But here the artifice is part of the real situation it describes. For shock and grief leave their victim bewildered by the simultaneous reality and unreality of the experience. The artificiality of poetry is therefore appropriate to this strange territory. It is ultimately the co-occurrence of two differences that is telling in In Memoriam: the difference that is poetic artifice dulling original pain, and the difference so disorientatingly felt now that the original Hallam is no more. In the last stanza of V, Tennyson totally retreats into the 'words like weeds' of poetic artifice both to swathe first-order grief and, half-guiltily, mournfully to protect himself from the full effects of its pain. The question is: can poetry after Hallam merely present second-order grief that grief has become primary, or can the artificiality itself be understood as a form of articulation that makes further exploration worthwhile? For Tennyson this question itself will be a life-or-death investigation.

All that the poet can do, whilst staying within the second-order aesthetic, is try to find or create some shadow or echo or intimation of the lost primary meaning, as lost as Hallam himself. The loss of first principles means that Tennyson, as representative of the Victorian age, will often start from the wrong place; but if

¹⁴ Veronica Forrest-Thomson, Poetic Artifice (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), p.ix.

starting-points are faulty, they at least serve to begin to free blocked thoughts. His early explorations, without relation to a primary order, cannot be truly analogical, but they are, I shall suggest, the way to the recovery of analogy.

I shall investigate how, throughout the assembled continuity of lyrics that is In Memoriam, Tennyson repeatedly falls back on deeply characteristic and habitual, stylistic tendencies, not out of choice but from having no other choice, yet as if somehow trusting in the increasingly habitual. In order to follow each attempt it has been necessary to make divisions (within this present section) which pursue one such habitual poetic tool or tendency at a time. Of course in the living comprehensive language of poetry no such divisions can be held onto, and one lyric, stanza, line or even word can tell of more than one tactic. My divisions are for the sake of clarity before bringing the varying strands and expressive figures together again in what eventually becomes analogy proper.

a) *Temporary bases*

Chapter 1 of this thesis referred to the struggle of In Memoriam for 'some new spiritual stand-point' ('Mallock', p.125). The constant shifts of position within the structure of the poem are symptomatic of Tennyson's instinctive search for a place or time from which to make a stand. In the absence of real starting-points Tennyson discovers that poetry allows him the time and space to put down markers, as it were, from a mid-air position. However temporary such markers may be, they

are nevertheless the poetic means of holding an elusive thought. Thus, in lyric LV Tennyson is confronted with the poem's greatest question: 'Are God and Nature then at strife?' The answer is crucial to this thesis, for an affirmative answer denies the possibility of analogy:

The wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
 That Nature lends such evil dreams?
 So careful of the type she seems,
 So careless of the single life;
 LV, 1-8.

From the midst of the confusion of what Sidgwick has called Tennyson's 'fight with death' (Memoir, i, p.302), the poet sets down 'The wish' as just such a temporary marker to act as a syntactic holding-point for the thought that threatens to overwhelm him. By this means, Tennyson gains the modicum of syntactic control that is the negative formulation of the question - 'the wish... derives it not' - rather than just finding the wish helplessly buried in the doubts about it. What this positively shows is that the question arises not merely from doubt itself but from the need to authenticate derivative origins in order to avoid doubt. The very real fear that love might not be the law of creation was all the time lying behind the wish although, in the mundane successiveness of the poem, it appears to come after. The problem is that while what I have called the marker allows thought to progress, the consequence of the first question is the intelligent but inconvenient disclosure of the next questions that must arise - 'Are

God and nature then at strife?' 'What then were God to such as I?'(XXXV,1.9). Instead of getting back to a firm, grounded basis of first principles, the very principles themselves, 'God' and 'Nature', are left in reciprocal doubt.

Thus 'the wish' as marker only initially seems to free the thought to run logically forward:

So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear

I falter where I firmly trod
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God.

LV, 7-16

In the terrible downward spiral that ensues, the poem moves from 'So' in line 7 to 'that I' of line 9 to 'I falter' in line 13, following a development of thought that makes 'so' go forward only to 'falling', when at first it had seemed to refer back to the question of line 5 and 6 - 'Are God and Nature then at strife...'

The next lyric begins as if a thought Tennyson had gone past suddenly catches him up:

'So careful of the type?' but no.
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

LVI, 1-4.

'So careful of the type?' must be the opposite of a marker since it signifies only the erosion of the wish. 'I care for nothing, all shall go' is a terrible parody

of care and unity, from the awful vision of a care-less, disconnected and godless world.

But markers are not always doomed to failure. Lyric LIV begins with a certain bravura that comes from marking a temporary base:

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill
 LIV, 1-2

The base here is only a weak general 'trust' in the 'final' end in time, and by the fourth stanza the effort of sustaining the feeling is telling. The Trinity Manuscript reads:

Behold! I know not anything;
 But that I would that good shall fall
 13-14.

'I know not anything' could have marked the collapse of the effort of the first stanza, but syntax makes temporary mid-air bases which allow the poet time, space and a world of being in which to develop thought. Thus Tennyson 'somehow' recovers line 14, 'But that I would that good shall fall', out of a sense of something half forgotten. The very thing that worked against him in LV here works for him when a thought he had gone past comes back to him like a linguistic version of redeeming memory. The instinctive reaching out to a vague 'good' tacitly remembers that longing had originally involved 'trust' in line 1. As if in confirmation, the final version of the lyric reads:

Behold, we know not anything;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last - far off - at last, to all,
 And every winter change to spring.

13-16

It is certain that mankind cannot know God absolutely as he is; 'we' are in this sense ignorant. Yet when confronted with the incomprehensible, the poet recalls, through the repetitions and associations which are the lyric's implicit framework, that there is something, however small and frail, that 'can' individually be done: 'I can but trust'. The deliberate change from we trust to I trust abandons the security of a vague collective hope, for definite and specific action in the face of uncertainty. If, after 'we know not anything', Tennyson had written *But I can trust*, it would have been a heroic defence rather than a real survival of line 13. 'I can but trust that good shall fall' is very frail and inadequate against the relentless force of difficulty and doubt. Yet in trusting that the very inadequacy is somehow validated 'at last - far off', the movement is fully dependent on the reality of faith rather than simply claiming it.

b) *Enabling words*

The idea of temporary mid-air bases is barely separate from Tennyson's discovery in In Memoriam that certain words such as 'somehow' in line 1 or 'but' in line 14 of LIV enable a movement of thought that is not just circular. In this case 'somehow' is found to have been the very trust-word itself. I shall refer to such words as enabling words.

In XXXIV Tennyson tries hard to create room to think in lines which themselves seem to be syntactically separate mid-air bases, as if each line is trying to function as a different point of view which yet works to make sense when all are together:

My own dim life should teach me this,
 That life shall live for evermore,
 Else earth is darkness at the core,
 And dust and ashes all that is.

XXXIV, 1-4

Tennyson's problem is, that while he understands that his life 'should' teach him, even negatively or by inference, it does not. 'Should' comes fractionally prior to the tone of emotionally having the thought; thus 'should' wants to be the enabling word but is finally too unstable or insufficiently synchronised with present frailty to bear the weight of responsibility. Poised on this unstable, threatening word, the poet uses the fraction of time it concedes to make space for 'life shall live for evermore', where 'shall' might go beyond 'should' rather than merely being set up by it. It is the word 'else', despite its apparent feebleness, that proves to be the enabling, pivotal word just about preventing the collapse into 'all that is'.

The cognitive strategy which enables this movement and reorientation of ideas and thus allows a release from blocked or fixed attitudes is what William James meant by pragmatism:

Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak;
 any idea that will carry us prosperously from
 any one part of our experience to any other
 part, linking things satisfactorily, working

securely, simplifying, saving labour - is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally.¹⁵

Tennyson can 'ride' upon certain words and phrases in the sense that the words themselves carry within them an expansion of tacit meaning that waits upon the poet's recollection:

And but for fancies, which aver
 That all thy motions gently pass
 Athwart a plane of molten glass,
 I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
 And but for fear it is not so,
 The wild unrest that lives in woe
 Would dote and pore on every cloud

That rises upward always higher
 XV, 9-17.

The anaphoric anticipatory sentences of line 9 and 14 ('And but for') are, like 'else', markers against the inner chaos manifested in the violence of the storm which threatens the very stability of the structured verse-form in which Tennyson tries to contain it. The enabling word turns out to be so light a thing as 'fancies'. The primary fear 'I scarce could brook the strain' can be afforded linear place only after the saving thought of fancies has already taken some of the strain. The courage afforded by the fancies, despite being half undermined for being fanciful, is further understood by the secondary 'fear' of doing without them. But the repetition of 'And but for' builds up a certain rhythm of resistance from which the words 'scarce could' and 'would' provisionally allow a look back on the anterior

¹⁵ William James, 'What Pragmatism Means', Pragmatism 1907, Selected Papers on Philosophy (London: Dent, 1917), p.206.

fears behind the whole formulation. And so it is that fancies are not simply the opposite of fear, but together they make up halves of one mutually checking and yet frustrating whole thought that has to be expressed sequentially. It is as if the back-to-front realization of anterior thoughts is the only way that In Memoriam can find its orientating courage.

But there are many dimensions in this poem. There are times in In Memoriam when Tennyson is turned helplessly from one side of an idea to another: from 'but for' to what that 'but for' only half prevents. So too there are occasions when this to-fro shift works positively to his advantage. Approaching the edge of Hallam's grave, the poet experiences the compulsive desire to fall and be buried with him:

Ah yet, even yet, if this might be,
 I, falling on his faithful heart,
 Would breathing through his lips impart
 The life that almost dies in me;

That dies not, but endures with pain.
 XVIII, 13-17.

In the very thought of giving up the life that remains in him, the poet finds in the pick-up between stanzas that life has not given up on him. As long as the word 'almost' in line 16 yet resists the verb 'dies', there is life. For behind the phrase 'that almost dies' lies its surviving other half, 'that dies not' which emerges on the next line to follow. Butler had reminded Thomas Chalmers of the positive thought that is the other side of the negative;¹⁶ Tennyson comes to the same saving view

¹⁶ See Chapter 2, Section ii, pp 68-73.

as if by accident.¹⁷ The word 'almost' acts like a trip-wire and in the break between verses, the saving thought 'that dies not' is reached as if by the intellectual equivalent of the sort of physical reflex action a body makes when it feels itself 'falling' and, reaching out, finds something to hold on to. This is such a small movement in verse; nothing much has changed, the pain continues and will continue, but the word 'endures' has been found. All the silent, painful endurance is recognised and its recognition itself becomes a new source of strength and courage, and a real basis for the will to go on enduring: 'And slowly forms the firmer mind'(XVIII, l.18). The literal ideas that emerge in In Memoriam (such as endurance) so easy to turn into cliché, are, in the end, not as important as the changes in attitude made manifest towards those ideas.

If the word 'almost' has the power to arrest and turn thought once, the very reiterative nature of this poem, as indeed Hutton had noted, suggests that it will do so again:

This year I slept and woke with pain,
 I almost wished no more to wake,
 And that my hold on life would break
 Before I heard those bells again.
 XXVIII, 13-16

Tennyson writes of the life-force of 'before' the bells, from the changed position which is afterwards. In XVIII 'almost' took him forward into the next line of verse, but here 'almost' rather gives way to 'Before' rather

¹⁷ 'The Analogy of Religion...is one of the best cures for infidelity I know, and one of the best preservatives against it. Or rather instead of a remedy for unbelief, it may be termed a most effectual remedy against disbelief'('Prelections', pp.1-2).

than leads to it. 'I almost wished no more to wake' can only be retrospectively acknowledged: only what defeated it ('Before') realized it. Tennyson is in a strange time-warp or even line-warp, for even though line 15 ends with the imagined 'break' the moment is already safely passed since, this time, whole thought comes prior to the writing of it in separate stages. Yet perhaps only in setting down these stages separately can they be seen as parts of a whole; not in bifurcation, but unification. In repetitions and reworkings, Tennyson can make defeat begin to be victory, as if 'almost' like his use of 'hardly' (XXXIV, 1.10) and 'scarcely' (IV, 1.7), are weak signs of strength which should never be resented or simply discarded and may be recalled in the slow formation of the 'firmer mind'. It is the comparative - firmer and firmer - that is the key.

c) *Repetition and resonance in Tennyson's semantics*

This sub-section will be longer than the previous two, for it must proceed from them to follow Tennyson's habit of repeating certain key words throughout In Memoriam - as if such words might eventually point to something more than they initially tell. Verbally Tennyson will use anything and everything he can, as James says, to initiate thought and to 'ride' upon it. The pragmatism is finally a version of trust - that trust on earth would be the subjective equivalent of validation above. As Butler knew, we are naturally trusted with ourselves: 'Practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated

acts' (Analogy, p.66).¹⁸ Likewise in In Memoriam, through repetition itself, ideas are gradually yet eventually brought to life and developed as new habits. The danger lies in just going on repeatedly, over and over again. But echoes, though not new ideas, may offer deeper meanings to the same earlier sounds.

In lyric LVIII, Tennyson employs simile temporarily to establish a mid-air base from which to undertake explorations in echoing:

In those sad words I took farewell:
 Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
 As drop by drop the water falls
 In vaults and catacombs, they fell.

And, falling, idly broke the peace
 Of hearts that beat from day to day,
 Half conscious of their dying clay,
 And those cold crypts where they shall cease.
 LVIII, 1-8.

Words are only like water-drops that themselves only remind us of tears, although the double distance is here a poignancy and not just an inadequacy. I have referred to this as simile but the distance created makes it something more than just simile although not yet strictly analogy. There are certain words in In Memoriam that 'fall' from the poet without their meaning being quite clear to him but tending (as he says) to half reveal and half conceal in a bewilderment of both. Yet such 'half' consciousness is perhaps a greater testimony to what cannot be wholly thought than a fuller consciousness would be. Tears fall silently but sounded words echo in the heart and mind. 'Like echoes', unstable words set up reverberations and in this poem of memory Tennyson keeps

¹⁸ See Chapter 2, Section iv below, p.93.

repeating them 'drop by drop' as if in an effort to catch the other half of meaning.

So it is with the word 'strange' in its echoes. In the first confusion of grief, the strangeness of the once familiar world holds the poet's attention:

Come Time, and teach me, many years,
 I do not suffer in a dream;
 For now so strange do these things seem,
 Mine eyes have leisure for their tears.
 XIII, 13-16.

The difficulty for the bereaved poet, which must be made productive, is that the word he needs to describe his new and confusing state is also the word that describes his incomprehension of it - 'strange'. Tennyson selects 'strange' to describe his confusion but the feeling defies description in words as if the distance between word and feelings is the strangeness itself.

The need to view strangeness objectively rather than be helplessly caught up in it is the reason for pragmatically positing the following hypothetical situation in XIV. Tennyson will frequently set up hypothetical bases within his second-order state of mourning in the hope that they might create some intimation of a lost primary order:

If one should bring me this report,
 That thou hadst touched the land today,
 And I went down unto the quay,
 And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
 Should see thy passengers in rank
 Come stepping lightly down the plank,
 And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
 The man I held as half-divine
 Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
 And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
 And how my life had drooped of late,
 And he should sorrow o'er my state
 And marvel what possessed my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
 No hint of death in all his frame,
 But found him all in all the same,
 I should not feel it to be strange.

XIV.

Even before the word 'strange' was selected by the poet he was controlled by its meaning so that, in effect, the word selected the poet. But in one long hypothetically narrative sentence Tennyson re-asserts poetic authority in the achievement of reaching the final line, and alters the perception of strangeness. By imagining what once he would have perceived as a strange situation - the return of Hallam from the dead - and then declaring the feeling to be not strange, the word that has had to stand for all his linguistic powerlessness is overcome. Rather than remaining a stranger to strangeness, Tennyson uses the elasticity of 'strange' to ride with it and inhabit it, and in so doing turns the implicit fear to wonder, discovering that strangeness itself has no limits.

However, it is a lesson he will have to learn outside the realm of the experimentally hypothetical for the hypothetical as an end in itself, as Bishop Butler had warned, is not a place to linger:

Forming our notions of the constitution and government of the world upon reasoning, without foundation for the principles which we assume, whether from the attributes of God, or anything else, is building a world upon hypothesis.

Analogy, p.xxvii.

The value of hypothesis is that it enables Tennyson to gain an altered perspective and a new train of thought.

The danger is the unreality of the foundations of its world. This is why In Memoriam is not a long poem in the same way as The Prelude is but an assembled procession of lyrics which stop and start. In that ordering the persistent word 'strange' is not done with him yet.

In XLI the reality of Hallam's death is once again strange where his return from the dead was not; nothing remains static in In Memoriam:

But thou art turned to something strange,
 And I have lost the links that bound
 Thy changes; here upon the ground,
 No more partaker of thy change.
 XLI, 5-8.

With what T.S Eliot referred to as 'Tennyson's unique and unerring feeling for the sound of words',¹⁹ it must have been at once satisfying and dismaying that through the accident of rhyme 'strange' should match 'change' and even turn into it. For as 'change' marks the difference between the poet and Hallam, 'strange' pushes the difference into rigidified estrangement ('something strange'). The vagueness of expression ('something') only emphasises the extent of separation.

The possibility of refinding lost links is realized one evening when the poet, left alone in the twilight of a summer garden, re-reads old letters from his dead friend:

And strangely on the silence broke
 The silent-speaking words, and strange
 Was love's dumb cry defying change
 To test his worth; and strangely spoke

¹⁹ T.S Eliot, Selected Essays (1932; London: Faber, 1951), p.337.

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
 On doubts that drive the coward back,
 And keen through wordy snares to track
 Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touched me from the past,
 And all at once it seemed at last
 The living soul was flashed on mine.

XCV, 25-36.

The word that waits for Tennyson at the very limit of human experience is 'strange': he has no choice but to employ it in line 26. As adjective and adverb, 'strange' and 'strangely' (line 28) have place before their noun and verb, as if wanting to translate their earthly terms into Tennyson's unearthly yet still-earthbound experience. The word is just the same; it is the poet's perception of it that has suddenly and dramatically changed, albeit through the very persistence of repetition. No longer estranged in a bad sense, he is in touch with something 'strangely' religious. It is as though the poet stops resisting the idea of strangeness and falls in with it, as he could only hypothetically manage in XIV. I would argue that the real importance of the experience is not only the momentary and ephemeral fusion of souls, but the corresponding rediscovery of those links between language and experience that had once seemed lost. For those links are analogous to links between earth and heaven.

In his book The Language of Tennyson's In Memoriam, Alan Sinfield writes:

We feel that every word is picked individually and polished before use.²⁰

In contrast, I am saying that in In Memoriam there are certain words which emerge suddenly in writing-time before the poet has a polished grasp of them. Such words are repeated in different contexts in an attempt to track their implicit suggestion into another dimension. It is possible for the reader retrospectively to follow the expansion of meaning through the movement of the poem as a whole, but it should not be forgotten that the actual writing forwards must often have been like venturing into darkness. Certain words will feel vague, inadequate or unstable, and yet the poet, in choosing them, is trusting to something in the very instability. Among such insecure and uncertain words in In Memoriam is the word 'dim':

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore.
XXXIV, 1-2.

A.C. Bradley sees the largeness of the little word falling as it does between 'my own' and 'life':

Dim probably answers to darkly in XXXVI, or 'dim life' may probably mean the very feebleness of my darkened life, or 'dim' may possibly mean dim but not utterly dark.²¹

The very nature of the word, its own intrinsic obscurity, masks and fragments the explanation of its full meaning. The Harvard loosepaper reads 'dark heart' for 'dim life',

²⁰ Alan Sinfield, The Language of Tennyson's In Memoriam (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), p.33.

²¹ A.C. Bradley, A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam (1901; London: Macmillan, 1910), p.115.

suggesting that 'dim life' was a second thought. It is a more unheroically doubtful, self-effacing thought than the more Romantic 'dark heart' which does not comprehend how much of true darkness comes from the feeling of mere dimness within. The reason that the poet keeps returning to this word is, as Bradley says, because it is 'still not utterly dark'. The effort of straining to see ahead eventually takes him to the comparatively greater light, just as the dimness of inadequate language still has its comparative uses in gesturing towards what it cannot quite live up to. The comparative becomes a version of the analogical.²²

Lyric LXI is the response to the question of LX:
'How should he love a thing so low?'(l.16):

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
 How dimly characterized and slight,
 How dwarfed a growth of cold and night,
How blanched with darkness must I grow!

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
 Where thy first form was made a man;
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

LXI, 4-12.

To try to answer the question, Tennyson resorts again to the hypothetical situation - if Hallam could see to earth, how should he see me? From the brilliant light of Hallam's sublime perspective, looking at the 'dimly characterized' earth is like looking at a photographic negative in which Tennyson's poetic presence grows ever dimmer and fainter, eventually fading into the 'blanched' and self-effaced spectre that will just disappear into

²² I shall have more to say on the use of the comparative in *In Memoriam* in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

the white space at the end of the stanza. It is this reversal of thought - not I losing sight of Hallam but the sudden fear of Hallam losing sight of me - that enables the poet to make the real stand of lines 11 and 12, 'I loved thee ... and love', admitting 'Spirit'. It is as R.H.Hutton explains:

Tennyson insists, from first to last, on the inadequacy of our vision of things divine. He finds no authoritative last word such as many Christians find in ecclesiastical authority. On the contrary, he dwells again and again on the dimness and faintness of the higher hope.
Aspects, p.406.

In the absence of an authoritative last word Tennyson has to 'turn thee', and rest, himself unturning, upon what he knows: 'I loved' and still 'love'. The power of love is asserted here in spite of the relationship of dim to 'charactered' or of 'my own life' to the 'doubtful shore' (XXIV,1.1). Yet Tennyson comes back repeatedly to the idea of dimness as if drawn by its very inadequacy:

'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.
XCV, 61-64.

In the midst of dying away the adjective 'dim' is returned to the noun 'lights' and its natural place. Standing in the dim light, his world being neither night nor day but part of both Tennyson, with the authority of one who has at last come upon that for which he has long searched, makes use of the mystery of dimness to extend it powerfully into the now analogous thought, 'like life and death'. As the dawn dies into day, the higher hope

of revelation is as breathtakingly real as the natural dimness of the scene he describes. What he gains here is access to the border-land where in relation to essential and underlying unity 'dim lights are 'mixt' and open out into a creaturely view that for once feels 'boundless'. Butler knew this sense of intimation more formally:

And doubtless that part of it [the scheme of nature] which is opened to our view is but as a point, in comparison of the whole plan of Providence, reaching throughout eternity past and future; in comparison of what is even now going on in the remote parts of the boundless universe; nay in comparison of the whole scheme of this world. And, therefore, that things lie beyond the natural reach of our faculties, is no sort of presumption against the truth and reality of them.

Analogy, p.137

It is at such moments that In Memoriam remembers the order behind the seeming chaos - that whole scheme in the universe and in itself of which we see but a part.

Such words as 'strange' and 'dim' echoing through the long poem are by no means the only repeated, unstable words. 'Silence', 'sorrow', 'calm', 'wisdom', 'vast', 'dream', all have place within the poet's memory as Newman's 'vast magazine of dormant, but present and excitable ideas' (US, p.321),²³ and constitute the poetic memory of In Memoriam. Tennyson concentrates attention on delineating the various phases and moods of human grief. Each stage changes the aspect of grief: consequently the same words behave differently, the very underlying sameness being the measure of the difference.

²³ See Chapter 2, Section iv below, p.94.

Not that the healing process is consistently a going forward; something remembered can be forgotten and lost again, and ground gained cannot always be held. After the achievement of XCV there seems to be a falling back into a lower strangeness:

Tonight ungathered let us leave
 This laurel, let the holly stand:
 We live within the stranger's land
 And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.
 CV, 1-4.

Or, after breaking through dimness in LXI to the clear perception 'I loved thee, Spirit', LXII appears more pessimistic:

We pass; the path that each man trod
 Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
 What frame is left for human deeds
 In endless age? It rests with God.
 LXXIII, lines 9-12.

Each of these two lyrics CV and LXXIII comes at a significant moment in the poem: the former being the third Christmas, the latter just after the anniversary of Hallam's death. Each, like a form of regressive saying of goodbye again, marks a stage in the turn from the old order to the new. In CV the relationship of externally perceived 'strangers' to internally felt 'strangely' is not straightforward: new strange faces outside mean a strange new Christmas within. Out of the complexity of tenses in LXXIII there is no promise that the future will be a passing into the light, but affords only the look back at the now dim path: the ultimate destination of the stanza, pushed from behind, 'rests with God'. The colons in both these examples are types of temporary mid-air bases. The poem stops for a second, then by guess or

risk or inference, jumps the gap. What seems as if it might be just a falling back into the old unstable ambiguity of strangeness and dimness is in fact the poet still struggling with the old terms of his continuing dilemma which he wishes not so much to change or escape as transform - or rather find transformed into a new stability.

Thus by looking at the final appearance of both 'dim' and 'strange' in In Memoriam, it should be possible to assess how far Tennyson has been successful in tracking 'suggestion to her inmost cell'(XCV, 32):

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
 Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
 Behold, I dream a dream of good,
 And mingle all the world with thee.
 CXXIX, 9-12.

Again, the word 'strange' seems to have undergone a change, and can now be spoken with love and not fear. The very ambiguous, if not oxymoronic, nature of words here opens up an area of being as a region of the possible. Not only does the poet now embrace the word but he uses it to embrace 'friend', for its meaning has gone beyond the merely acceptable and into the desirable, in the reaching out of a life-time. The echo of implicit meaning which the poet hears now is the realization that 'strange' can describe Hallam's exceptional uniqueness. Moreover, in the syntactic pause after 'Strange friend', the poetic memory recalls 'strange things', 'something strange', 'strange silence' and all the echoing repetitions - as if by working through all the definitions of strange, he has emerged to find the meaning that is on the other side of the distant and

unfamiliar - the close and the familiar of 'friend'.
 'Strange friend' maintains the closeness and the
 distance and in doing so re-establishes 'the links that
 bound thy changes' (XLI) not just here on earth but
 beyond, 'with thee'.

The elasticity of the word has allowed Tennyson into
 an extra comparative dimension of 'deplier' 'darklier'
 love. Thus it is that the word 'dim' progresses even in
 the midst of the language of death and burial:

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things dim
 And dimmer, and a glory done.
 CXXI, 1-4 .

In both XCV and CXXI, two poems set at dawn and dusk, the
 language moves not between an inner and outer landscape,
 but into a landscape behind another landscape. Language
 slips and slides from one to the other in exhilarating
 and awesome freedom of movement allowing 'dim' to be the
 progression into the increased verb 'dimmer' and on to
 the 'ever new revelations of beauty' in the light of
 glory, now 'done' but not forever over (Memoir i, p.313).
 Tennyson was right to trust the word dim, despite its
 painful cost. This verse is not so much an end in itself
 but the beginning of a lyric in which death is only the
 beginning of eternal life on the other side. I conclude
 that Gladstone himself recognized that Tennyson
 'translates [natural images] for us into that language of
 suggestion, emphasis, and refined analogy, which links

the manifold to the simple, and the infinite to the finite'.²⁴

d) *Secondary forms of thought*

When the poet as mourner feels stunned from his power to think, poetry's saving achievement for Tennyson is to offer a secondary form of thinking in which the aesthetic might bear intimations of the spiritual without ever having to go through the over-formally reflective. That is the impressionistic, liquid process we have here been re-tracing: it is a different kind of thinking, rather than not thinking at all. In LXX the mourner tries to summon up the fading image of Hallam on the blank canvas of darkness:

I cannot see the features right,
 When on the gloom I strive to paint
 The face I know; the hues are faint
 And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
 A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
 A hand that points, and palled shapes
 In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;
 LXX, 1-8.

Just as dreams recede into unconsciousness even whilst the waking mind tries to recall them, so there are lyrics in In Memoriam where the formal process of thought disappears into ghostly, 'shadowy thoroughfares'. At one level it seems the attention is held, while at another, thought seems strangely to slip, like the thought of the face, into the poet's shadowy subconscious:

²⁴ W.E. Gladstone, 'Tennyson', repr. from the Quarterly Review (Oct 1859), in Gleanings, ii, p.172.

Unfortunately, Gladstone's own copy of In Memoriam is missing from St Deiniol's Library.

Till all at once beyond the will
 I hear a wizard music roll,
 And through a lattice on the soul
 Looks thy fair face and makes it still.
 LXX, 13-16

'Till all at once' is both wonderful and mystifying. Wonderful because the poem has broken through to the thoroughfares of another dimension; mystifying because recovery seemed to involve something like luck or even 'wizard' magic. If this is a problem for the reader, it is more of a problem for the poet as a thinker who cannot know how to get past blocked or stunned thought on another occasion. If Tennyson cannot conjure up the face at will, he will simply have to learn to trust to the thoroughfares of thought 'beyond the will' to bring him indirectly to saving thoughts some time again. The problem will be that trusting to the aesthetic is just as likely to lead back into a dead end as to lead out of it. Thus lyric XI finds the poet gripped by the stunning effect of grief. Being unable to think clearly, the calm beauty of the morning absorbs his whole being into the energy of sense:

Calm is the morn without a sound,
 Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
 And only through the faded leaf
 The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
 And on these dews that drench the furze,
 And all the silvery gossamers
 That twinkle into green and gold:
 XI, 1-8.

Initially, and at one level, the interest in the calm of the morning is thought to be in its suitable analogy to 'a calmer grief'; but the two terms are not related. The stunned mind appears disconcertingly like calm, but is

manifestly not the same, and the poetry begins implicitly to realize the difference. Calm was not brought to the poet's attention as an emotion, but as a condition objectively perceived. When it is attached to grief it must make for the very opposite of Ruskin's pathetic fallacy, for this landscape seems to feel or be something the poet does or is not. The real analogy is surely the distance between the poet and the terrible surface-beauty that so closely surrounds him, as correspondent to the distance between internal and external being. Tennyson's mis-matching is thus symptomatic of the distance between levels of being and knowing, with all that baffling sense of connected separations.

All his immediate attention seems drawn to the beauty of detail; to 'the chestnut pattering', to 'silvery gossamers' and 'dews'. Yet even in this visual closeness there is still a sense of distance, as if the poet, half-consciously knowing the detail to be somehow related to his grief, has not yet understood what that relation is, as lines from 'Maud' understand it:

Strange that the mind, when fraught
 With a passion so intense
 One would think that it well
 Might drown all the life in the eye,-
 That it should, by being so overwrought
 Suddenly strike on a sharper sense,
 For a shell, or a flower, little things
 Which else would have been passed by!²⁵

'Strange', Tennyson thinks here, that intensely felt passion should almost distractingly stimulate rather than blind the eye. Perhaps the eye is forced to look outwards when the inner eye can no longer bear to look

²⁵ Alfred Tennyson, 'Maud', II.II.vii, lines 106-112.

Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish: - this is our high argument.²⁶

When 'World' and 'Mind' will not fit together, what hope for analogy? Wordsworth proclaims the perfect fitting and suiting of World to Mind, enabling the blending and interchange of within and without. Tennyson might want to be Wordsworth, struggling as Keats said through 'dark passages' of thought,²⁷ but the utter fusion of mind and external landscape is a potential danger to the freedom of thought in In Memoriam. On the surface of XI Tennyson appears to be making connections, but at another deeper level, in shadowy thoroughfares, he is in fact making distinctions registered by associations. This is the way this poem must feel its way forward. But in this lyric each verse seems to feel a way forward only to reach, not only the limit of a stanza but of endurance, so that the pattern has to begin all over again with 'Calm'.

John Bayley describes 'the stasis of Tennyson's poetry, pausing, circling, slowly eddying ever round on itself'.²⁸ In XI the deeply characteristic circling and repetitions 'all at once', as it were, expose the lost connection beneath the false ones. It is as if for Tennyson there are no connections without separations, but still no separations without connections too - 'calm' involves both in this lyric. At last the external calm that the poet had at first thought suited 'a calmer

²⁶ William Wordsworth, 'The Excursion', Preface to the edition of 1814, The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), pp.62-71.

²⁷ John Keats, The Letters of John Keats, ed. by Maurice Buxton Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p.144.

²⁸ John Bayley, The Uses of Division: Unity and Disharmony in Literature (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976), p.145.

yew and sorrow: 'Graspest', 'fixt', 'darkening', 'dark' bear echoes and intimations, but only of each other - 'gloom... into gloom'. In the end, the aesthetic passes only back into the aesthetic, 'again'.

It is as if grief and loss channel thought into certain fixed directions just as Sorrow was 'fixt upon the dead'. New directions cannot be forced: the pausing, circling and eddying is the necessary waiting for thoughts to come back to him.

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
 That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
 Of evening over brake and bloom
 And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
 Through all the dewy-tassled wood
 And shadowing down the horned flood
 In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
 The full new life that feeds thy breath
 Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
 Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
 On leagues of odour streaming far,
 To where in yonder orient star
 A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'
 LXXXVI.

It is not that powerful emotions are expressed in natural imagery; rather it is that natural imagery releases emotion powerfully restrained. Inner feeling and outer observation are by no means fused but it is as if, at least for a brief moment, the very changeability of the natural world becomes something that the poet can submit to, instead of always resisting as evidence only of mingled confusion and purposelessness. This is not simply a lyric about cohesion and correspondence. Nature and the poet are not made one, rather it is as if the

poem implicitly registers a sense of the relation of inner self to the outward visible world and that very idea of relation involves a sense of separating space. So it is that the poetic image of nature's slow intake of breath creates an analogous sense of newly created breathing-space first within the lines of verse and then within the old four line verse form itself. The fresher air that interrupts the showers, interrupts the rhythm of the very poetry that expresses it, releasing trapped and fixed thought into newly flexible forms. In the distance covered between the 'air', its 'sweet' adjective, its active verbs 'fan' and 'blow' and its destination 'in yonder orient star', the direction of thought in the poem has almost imperceptibly shifted from its horizontal earthly context to a vertical and religious context as if the verse form has made room for the change. The ends of verses, 'bare', 'blow', 'fly' and 'Peace', are suddenly not so much limits as points of departure. It is true that the poem turns from nature to self in the third verse, but it is part of one continuous natural movement of breathing in and out in which the relation of inner to outer is implicitly rehearsed. The blow and sigh of nature's exhalation is fancied as the clearer air that the poet and the poem breathes in to 'my frame' so that when this breath of fancy is itself released, it does not merely reflect the fanciful projection of lyric III: 'Nature stands / With all the music in her tone, / A hollow echo of my own'(III, 10-12). By going with the onward movement of rolling air the poet is carried half fancifully, but yet analogously 'from belt to belt',

across a limit to where the spirit's whisper is no longer a sigh or hollow echo but an implicit promise.

At the limit of what can be known or what can be articulated, Tennyson again and again tests this characteristic formulation: 'from deep to deep' (CIII, 39); 'from place to place' (CXXVI, 10); 'from state to state' (LXXXII, 6); 'from soul to soul' (CXXXI, 12), as if stretching out from something known to something like it which is less well known. So it is finally in the following lyric LXVII.

The return to the grave in XXXIX failed to release a larger meaning, but this will not prevent Tennyson from returning to it once more as if different imaginative approaches will eventually reveal some saving difference:

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
 I know that in thy place of rest
 By that broad water of the west,
 There comes a glory on the walls;

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
 As slowly steals a silver flame
 Along the letters of thy name,
 And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away;
 From off my bed the moonlight dies;
 And closing eaves of wearied eyes
 I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray:

And then I know the mist is drawn
 A lucid veil from coast to coast,
 And in the dark church like a ghost
 Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

LXVII.

Here is the poet of sensation trusting to the aesthetic to bear intimations of the spiritual. In his longing for some continuance of relationship, the poet pragmatically sets up the relation between 'my bed' and 'thy place of rest'. Yet all the correspondences in the poem: sleep

and rest, sleep and death, thy place and my bed are registered through oppositions as if the prompting image 'bright in dark' points towards all other contrasts: water and stone, life and death, waking and sleeping. The language which retains the fluidity of moonlight comprehends, as it slides ambiguously from one place and one meaning to the other, the sameness and the difference. The vision which 'comes' in verse 1 'dies' in verse 3, but because meaning swims between both life and death nothing is closed off but both are courageously held open. The meanings are not blended in confusion; the floating syntax of the poetry maintains the idea of two places, separate but connected.

The final verse recognises that the first verses have set up a ghostly model of which this imaginative leap of connection is some version, albeit through a veil, of a greater connection 'from coast to coast'. The glorious vision trusts that it stands for something more glorious beyond. 'And then I know' is the inadequate but pragmatic gesture towards a meaning that is more adequate than the figure that is intimating it. A sense of primary meaning and order is intuited ghost-like through a 'lucid veil' of analogy as the tablet 'glimmers' hopefully in response to the dawn.

This mystic lyric does not represent an end in itself, but the starting point of analogy. The coming and going of light in 'glimmers' remembers the coming and going, openings and closings of the whole poem, but the lasting legacy of this lyric is, of course, the promise that moonlight will come again and 'when on my bed the

moonlight falls', the analogous relation of two worlds might be a thing remembered:

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

'Tears, Idle Tears', 11-15.

This is where Tennyson could recover an analogical language: only finally at the very limits of his life, where the occupation of the linking space between two worlds was most imaginatively real.

CHAPTER 4

**The Limits of Religious, Philosophical and Poetic Thought
After 1850**

If Chapter Three showed the way that poetic thinking can begin to open up a Butlerian middle ground as a place of religious investigation, the first section of this chapter shows how within nineteenth-century formal thought a succeeding conceptual language had begun to change and virtually lose the perception of the middle ground. It will be necessary therefore briefly to turn back to the investigation of the reception of the Analogy which began in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For even while Tennyson was struggling to regain a sense of logic and order, the legacy of Butler was coming under increasing attack from believers and sceptics alike. These criticisms must now be confronted, as I move again from literature back to philosophy, before making another journey from philosophy to literature.

4.i. The Analogy of Religion Versus Modern Unbelief

At the end of the nineteenth century Gladstone reflected that in the second quarter of the century Butler 'may be thought to have attained the climax of his power'.^{1 2}

¹ W.E. Gladstone, Studies, p.130. Chapter 2, 'Bishop Butler and His Censors' first publ. in Nineteenth Century, 38 (1895), pp. 715-39, 1056-74.

² Butler's Analogy was reprinted four times between 1800 and 1830, but eleven times between 1830 and 1860, and then only seven times in the last forty years of the century (Ideas of Order, p.5).

If, as I indicated in Chapter Two, 1850 indeed marked the peak, the subsequent decline in influence was swift. By 1877 the Analogy had been off the Oxford Examination Statutes for thirteen years ('Pattison', p.135), and in two lectures under the title 'Bishop Butler and his Critics', John Eaton, then Oxford Professor of Moral Philosophy investigated 'the causes of Butler's present unpopularity or at least of the decline of his influence'.³ The causes and the consequences of the decline of influence of the Analogy are the subject of this section. What was lost was, as Eaton showed, a vital sense of the whole force of religious analogy displayed by Butler:

In the philosophy of Butler, things are double one against another; 'both together make up one uniform scheme, the two parts of which, the part which we see and that which is beyond our observation, are analogous to each other'.
'Eaton', p.41.

In Butler the implicit sense of doubleness lies in his capacity to hold two worlds in relation such that they are neither entirely two nor entirely one. As I have shown, analogy is part of that doubleness since its terms are at once 'the same as' and 'different from'. But as the nineteenth century moved on, the basis of the religious idea of intricate doubleness was collapsing as the whole single-minded push of the rational empiricism of science advanced the threat of unbelief.

By the end of the century Gladstone was historically

³ J.R.T. Eaton, 'Bishop Butler and His Critics', Two Lectures Delivered in Michaelmas Term 1877 in the University of Oxford (Oxford: James Parker, 1877), ii, p.33, hereafter cited as 'Eaton' (In Gladstone's pamphlet collection on Butler in St Deiniol's Library).

too late in his attempt to restate the contemporary relevance of the Analogy. His chapter on 'Bishop Butler and His Censors' first published in 1895, took issue with a pamphlet written by the Unitarian, Sarah Hennell in 1859, 'On the Sceptical Tendency of Butler's Analogy'. Hennell had most perceptively discerned the underlying fault-line in contemporary spiritual life, splitting the sense of doubleness which held two worlds still in one. The nature of Butler's argument, Hennell argued, 'ad homines of his own day, renders it, according to the usual course of things, inadequate to the needs of our own. The premisses accepted by them, are become (in great part owing to Butler himself), "the main disputanda" with us'.⁴ The existence of God was the main disputandum: it had become increasingly difficult for the mind to 'yield itself in blind submission to the demands of Religious faith'. By the 1850s there was, she vitally realized:

No possible way of setting the understanding and the religious conscience right with one another, so long as the old established notion of the rival claims of Reason and Faith continues to be held.

'Hennell', pp. 23-4.

The nature of the relation between reason and faith had become obscured and lost, and until such time as it might be rediscovered, people existed in a kind of religious stalemate, with faith as an evasion of reason and reason as a denial of faith. As long as reason and faith

⁴ Sarah S. Hennell, Essay on the Sceptical Tendency of Butler's Analogy (London: John Chapman, 1859), p.20, hereafter cited as 'Hennell' (This essay is also part of Gladstone's pamphlet collection).

continued to exert their rival but mutually impoverishing claims we would remain divided beings, Hennell felt, in seemingly futile search of a unifying synthesis.

Another of 'Butler's Censors' cited by Gladstone is less radical. But even Walter Bagehot argued that 'our experience itself is essentially small and finite', and as finite beings 'we can never prove from experience any being to be infinite': the relation between the two was severed. Thus for Bagehot we have 'only to rely on the principle of faith'.⁵ Butler had only faith, Bagehot wrote, as a 'great typical fact' ('Bagehot', p.258), which was private and personal to Butler, something that could be neither proved nor shared.

Although not included in Gladstone's list of Butler's censors, George Henry Lewes produced a culminating criticism published in The Leader from October to December 1852, when he put forward the case of 'Butler's Analogy v. Modern Unbelief'.⁶ Speaking as 'the organ of modern unbelief - as the opponent in the name of Religion against Christianity, considered as a theology, and the Church as an institution', Lewes was a champion of the Religion of Humanity, posing what he took to be a central sceptical question: what bearing had Butler's eighteenth-century work on 'the great struggle between the Old and New Theologies'? To Lewes, Butler's Christianity had become the old Theology whilst

⁵ Walter Bagehot, 'Bishop Butler', first published Prospective Review, October 1854; repr. Literary Studies, ed. by R.H. Hutton, 3 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1895; repr. 1898), iii, p.154, hereafter cited as 'Bagehot'.

⁶ G.H. Lewes, 'Butler's Analogy v. Modern Unbelief', Leader, 3 (1852), pp. 1044-6, 1072-4, 1117-8, 1142-3, 1165-8 (pp.1044-5), hereafter cited as Leader.

Feuerbach's and Comte's Religion of Humanity represented the New Theology of Unbelief:

'If there is an analogy between Natural and Revealed Religion, there is a strong presumption that they have the same author'. Take away from this, Butler's fundamental position, the assumption quietly intruded under the word 'revealed,' (and we have a right to insist on this removal) as begging the question altogether, then we say Butler's argument will be found to amount exactly to our own. Thus -
 Natural Religion is the interpretation of the various phenomena of Nature which has grown up in the minds of men: its author, therefore, is man.

Leader, p.1045.⁷

With alarming ease Lewes proposed a major divide between ancient and modern. In the spring of 1852 Marian Evans, friend of Sarah Hennell,⁸ was correcting Lewes's proofs for The Leader while also working on her own translation of Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity, in which the old idea of Christian religion is itself translated into modern humanist morality. Remove the illegitimate assumption that God is author of Revelation and the form of Butler's Analogy can likewise be, Lewes believed, 'exactly' translated into an argument for Modern Unbelief. Religious analogy in Butler's work is itself a form of translation, a sense of relation between one realm and another. But in Lewes's sense of Feuerbachian projection all forms of the divine are simply created or made up by man: Feuerbachian translation deconstructs

⁷ I have found no reference to Lewes's article in any modern critical work. The only nineteenth-century reference I have discovered is a footnote by Sarah Hennell: Sarah S. Hennell, Christianity and Infidelity: An exposition of the Arguments on Both Sides (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, 1857), p.101, n*.

⁸ Gladstone particularly noted, however, that Sarah Hennell was 'a member of a family of distinguished talents, which is known to have exercised a powerful influence on the mind and career of George Eliot' (Studies, p.22).

analogy as though the likenesses were made in the eye of the human beholder and were signs of a human not a divine ordering.

G.H. Lewes arrives at the sceptical destruction of analogy via Comte and Feuerbach. Likewise a modern critic Marx Wartofsky notes that though Feuerbach seems at first to parallel the Kantian conditions of human knowledge and belief, in fact he takes a radical step further:

[There is] no room for the agnostic 'something more' that lies beyond the predicates, or beyond the knowledge of these predicates. Although one may sometimes read such an interpretation into some of Kant's religious criticism (e.g., in the passages from Vorlesingen that Feuerbach cites: 'Fundamentally, we cannot conceive of God otherwise than by attributing to him every reality which we discover in ourselves, but attributing them to God without limitations.' God is, as it were, the moral law itself, but conceived in personified form'), one cannot push Kant further than 'as if' or 'as it were' to the full reduction of Godhead to man's conception of his own nature, his own predicates as divine. The agnostic principle remains the two-edged sword in Kant's philosophy of religion, as it does in Hume's.⁹

Despite resting on the knife edge between the limitations of the phenomenal world and the intimation of a noumenal world unavailably beyond it, Kant not only sustains the two-edged precarious position, but cannot be pushed from it. Where others might waver about the point of balance, leaning a little more to transcendentalism on one side or the empirical on the other, Kant is very austere in his commitment to both realms as independent and yet

⁹ Marx W. Wartofsky, Feuerbach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp.305-6.

reciprocal. Against such precise holding, Feuerbach's step further than Kant turns out to be a giant stride into phenomenalism, abolishing the 'something more' of doubleness and changing utterly the lines and boundaries of knowledge and existence on earth. The religious agnostic position - in knowing that you do not know - hardens and turns into sheer and human knowingness; that is to say a knowing that Christianity is not true. Butler's doubleness was taken over in the philosophic tradition by Kantian thinkers, and almost inevitably became vulnerable to Feuerbachians via Lewes and Hennell.

The diminishment of the agnostic position includes the diminution of analogy. If all knowledge of God is simply projected from man, analogy then becomes a fiction, albeit a psychologically necessary and involuntary one: 'God is a need of the intelligence - a necessary thought'.¹⁰ This is the full 'reduction of Godhead into man's conception of his own nature', a reduction from two realms to one.

By the middle of the nineteenth century Butler's critics create a climate in which private assumptions are publicly disallowed as anything other than either at best mystic or at worst fictional. As a result the fine balance of Butler's argument for probability is lost when each of the critics demands not probable evidence but proof for rational conviction. As Hennell argues, the relation of faith and reason had become crudely oppositional to the point that the matter of how to resolve the sense of internal conflict became the vitally

¹⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, translated from the second German edition by Marian Evans (London: Chapman, 1854), p.60.

significant issue of the age. So it was that Gladstone came to write of another of 'Butler's Censors' - Matthew Arnold - that he 'combined fervent zeal for the Christian religion with a not less boldly avowed determination to transform it beyond the possibility of recognition by friend or foe. He was thus placed under a sort of necessity to condemn the handiwork of Bishop Butler' (Studies, p.57). But in condemning Butler, Arnold found himself adrift in the territory of nineteenth-century unbelief:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.¹¹

For Arnold, like so many of his time, could live neither with nor without religion.

Lewes had intended his own article as 'a serious reproach' to Oxford and Cambridge for producing nothing 'on the side of orthodoxy to stem the advancing current of disbelief' (Leader, p.1044). In fact six years later, as if in response, Oxford called upon Henry Mansel to address 'the theological struggle of this age'.¹² In taking on the task Mansel declared his full allegiance to Bishop Butler, declaring:

He would be wanting in his duty to the University to which he owes so much, were he to hesitate to declare, at this time, his deep-rooted and increasing conviction, that 'sound

¹¹ Matthew Arnold, 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse', Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1890), lines 85-6.

¹² H.L. Mansel The Limits of Religious Thought Examined in Eight Lectures, 3rd edition (1858; London: John Murray, 1859), hereafter cited as Limits, p.16. W.G.Ward recorded that Mansel was to be asked to join the Metaphysical Society in 1869 (Met Soc, p.22), the reason why he did not is not known.

religious philosophy will flourish or fade within her walls, according as she perseveres or neglects to study the works and cultivate the spirit of her great son and teacher, Bishop Butler'.

Limits, p.xlv.

The Bampton Lectures delivered in 1858 by Mansel as Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy, were published that year as The Limits of Religious Thought. His aim was to answer the objections of reason with reason, and thereby put faith beyond the reach of criticism. Mansel enlisted the aid and authority of Butler's Analogy of Religion, to argue, as in a theological version of Kant, that man's limited capacity to receive divine revelation was no argument against the whole truth of revelation absolutely as it is in itself. Partial knowledge must not be falsely understood as complete, nor should it be thought of as total ignorance:

That things lie beyond the natural reach of our faculties, is no sort of presumption against the truth and reality of them; because it is certain there are innumerable things, in the constitution and government of the universe, which are thus beyond the natural reach of our faculties.

Analogy, p.137.

This remark, Eaton was to note, 'may be said to contain the germ, and indicate the scope of all that is valuable in Mansel's well-known argument' ('Eaton', pp.40-41).

Mansel began by insisting that no religious philosophy of God is possible without a prior investigation of the human capacity for philosophical understanding itself. Thus Mansel stressed '*the primary and proper object of criticism is not Religion, natural or revealed, but the human mind in its relation to*

Religion'(Limits, p.16). What is at stake in this distinction is the status of religious knowledge at the human level, and with it the status of the use of analogical knowledge when all knowledge of God is limited by the nature of the human mind. I shall argue that although Mansel looks to Butler to help delineate the limits of religious argument, Mansel's conclusions subtly alter the balance of Butler's original conception of the nature of limitation and thereby foreclose the capacity for doubleness. Above all it should not be forgotten that, as indeed John Eaton had so tellingly recalled, 'Butler nowhere explicitly commits himself to the theory that a knowledge of God is simply beyond man's limited scope' ('Eaton', p.41). The knowledge was analogical.

Mansel thought that Butler's Analogy offered 'the best theoretical exposition of the limits of human thought' combined with 'a just perception of the bounds within which all human philosophy must be confined' (Limits, p.xliv):

The difficulties which it [religious rationalism] professes to find in Revelation, are shown to be not peculiar to Revelation, but inherent in the constitution of the human mind, and such as no system of Rationalism can avoid or overcome. The analogy, which Bishop Butler has pointed out, between Religion and the Constitution and Course of Nature, may be in some degree extended to the constitution and processes of the Human Mind. The representations of God which Scripture presents to us may be shown to be adapted to the needs and accommodated to the limits of that mental constitution which He has given us.

Limits, p.19.

As we have seen, the Analogy had asked the Deist to accept that the difficulties in Revelation were analogous

to difficulties in the system of nature, making for a presumption that both systems had the same author. Mansel now argues that if it can be shown that the limits of religious and philosophical thought are the same, that corresponding difficulties occur for the human mind in both, an individual in doubt should be able to know the difficulties as inherent in the human condition rather than experience them as a personal failure.

Mansel may have looked to the past for philosophical support, but the Limits had significant contemporary relevance. According to Mark Pattison, it was Mansel who 'first introduced Kant into Oxford' (Memoirs, p.165). As the twentieth-century theologian Don Cupitt explains, 'the philosophy of religion of H.L. Mansel was an attempt to reconstruct the argument of Joseph Butler's Analogy in the new situation created by the work of Kant and his successors'.¹³ But I am further suggesting that, in effect, Mansel attempts not so much a reconstruction as a translation of the Analogy into the ideology of phrase and reference that were prevalent amongst Kantian thinkers less austere than Kant himself. As the Analogy had confronted Deism so Mansel, with Butler's help, would confront nineteenth-century sceptical rationalism which fed upon Kant's critique of the phenomenal world whilst discarding his belief in a noumenal realm. Thus Mansel sets out the objects of his inquiry as follows:

¹³ Don Cupitt, 'Mansel's Theory of Regulative Truth', Journal Of Theological Studies, 'n.s.' 18, ed. by D.H. Chadwick and H.F.D. Sparks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp.104-126 (p.104), hereafter cited as 'Cupitt'.

The present work may be considered as an attempt to pursue, in relation to Theology, the inquiry instituted by Kant in relation to Metaphysics; namely, *How are synthetical judgements a priori possible?* In other words: Does there exist in the human mind any direct faculty of religious knowledge, by which, in its speculative exercise, we are enabled to decide, independently of all external Revelation, what is the true nature of God, and the manner in which he must manifest Himself to the world.

Limits, p.xliii.

In answer Mansel declared 'the science of the absolute and the unconditioned and the real' to be 'unattainable by men'.¹⁴ The laws of our consciousness do not allow us to have direct knowledge of God as He is Absolutely in Himself, but only as he appears indirectly to the conditions of the human mind. To speak of God as Absolute and Infinite is simply to use language to which no form of relative and finite human thought can possibly attach itself. As soon as the mind attempts the construction of a religious metaphysic it is involved in just such contradiction, since our sense of the Absolute and Infinite only arises, paradoxically, out of our recognition of the limitations of the relative and the finite in our own experience. The very intimation of a separate Absolute is itself paradoxically indivisible from our sense of the limits of the human condition:

The existence of a limit to our powers of thought is manifested by the consciousness of a *contradiction*, which implies at the same time an attempt to think and an inability to accomplish that attempt. But a limit is necessarily conceived as a relation between something within and something without itself; and thus the consciousness of a limit of

¹⁴ H.L. Mansel, A Lecture on the Philosophy of Kant delivered in Magdalen College 1856 by H.L. Mansel (Oxford: J.H. and J. Parker, 1856), p.25.
Gladstone's copy of this pamphlet is in St Deiniol's Library.

thought implies, though it does not directly present to us, the existence of something of which we do not and cannot think.

Limits, p.62.

Yet when we try to think of the Absolute or Infinite we are at once caught up in cancelling contradiction, for even the infinite becomes finite the moment that it becomes the object of consciousness. The crucial point that Mansel needs to convey is that contradiction is not a quality of the thing itself, but simply an indication of the boundaries and limits of human thought cut off from the world beyond.

In Mansel's closely argued defence of orthodoxy, it is as if the idea of limitation fractionally precedes and outweighs the sense of transcendence implied in the concomitant attempt to think beyond the limits. Barely momentarily can we hope to get out of or above ourselves. With what Don Cupitt has called Mansel's 'severe honesty of mind' ('Cupitt', p.105), the limit as presented by Mansel is categorically something beyond which we 'do not and cannot think'. Thought, therefore, cannot be the measure of belief.

Thus Mansel felt compelled by the religious and philosophical climate in which he found himself to reinforce the line between reason and faith in a way that analogically related theology to philosophy in their equal sense of limitations, even while attempting to cast theology beyond the reach of sceptical philosophic reason. It is his rigid and assertive stance that 'the provinces of Reason and Faith are not co-extensive' which leads him to conclude that 'it is a duty, enjoined by Reason itself, to believe in that which we are unable to

comprehend' (Limits, p.63). But this is dangerous ground: as soon as faith is spoken of as a duty and not a principle, his case begins to slide away from him. By recruiting scepticism onto the side of religion, Mansel had hoped to weaken the objections of unbelief, but in so doing, he had inadvertently but effectively pleaded the case for modern unbelief. The opposition represented by the fourth and last of Gladstone's 'Censors', Leslie Stephen, were delighted:

The last English writer who professed to defend Christianity with weapons drawn from wide and genuine philosophical knowledge was Dean Mansel. The whole substance of his argument was simply and solely the assertion of the first principles of Agnosticism.

Agnostic's Apology, pp. 8-9.

The Analogy suffered by association with Mansel, and the real value of religious analogy as a form of knowledge by cumulative and related uncertainties was likewise called into question.

Where for Butler analogy allows representations of the infinite in terms of the finite, for Mansel the sense of contradiction involves a closing down of thought at the very point at which analogy strives to keep it open. Butler's sense of doubleness means that we function within a system which is both separated from and linked to a Divine existence outside it in an extraordinary and paradoxical simultaneity. But for Mansel, no sooner is that doubleness thought of than it cannot be realized: the very attempt to think of it realizes the very inability to accomplish the attempt and leaves him back again on this side of the line that Butler held. As

Richard Holt Hutton complained, apologists like Mansel were 'far firmer believers in the irremovable veil which covers the face of God, than in the faint gleams of light which manage to penetrate what they hold to be its almost opaque texture'.¹⁵ So Hutton spoke of Mansel's 'evident preference for analysing the notions of man rather than returning to the study of the realities from which those notions were first derived' (Revelation, p.99) - as though to say that phenomenal thoughts of the noumenon could only collapse into phenomenalism once again.

The reception of The Limits of Religious Thought is evidence enough to show that the Analogy could not survive its translation into the terms of Kantian philosophy.

The opposition of intimation of the infinite to consciousness of the finite irrevocably disturbed the natural relation between faith and reason. The philosopher Edward Caird likened the effect on nineteenth-century religious thought to the breaking up of 'the unity of our first instinctive faith'.¹⁶ As an Idealist philosopher, as much post-Kantian as post-Hegelian, Caird saw the need for philosophy arising 'out of the broken harmony of a spiritual life, in which the different elements or factors seem to be set in irreconcilable opposition to each other' ('Caird',

¹⁵ R.H. Hutton, 'What is Revelation', Essays Theological and Literary, 2 vols (London: Strahan and Co, 1871), p.96, hereafter cited as 'Revelation'.

¹⁶ Edward Caird, 'The Problem of Philosophy at the Present Time', An Introductory Address, Delivered to the Philosophical Society of the University of Edinburgh, 1881, Essays on Literature and Philosophy, 2 vols (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1892), i, p.194, hereafter cited as 'Caird'.

p.191).¹⁷ Belatedly Caird set about the task of philosophically correcting the earlier deconstructive misinterpretations of Kant's transcendentalism and restoring a lost balance in the disposition of the world view:

It was the great work of Kant to show that experience itself is possible only through the necessity and universality of thought. But in thus proving the relativity of the finite objects of experience to the intelligence (which is not itself such an object), he really showed, - though without himself being fully conscious of it, and almost, we might say, against his will, - that we cannot admit the validity of the empirical consciousness without admitting the validity of the consciousness of that which, in the narrower sense of the word, is beyond experience.

Hence, to one who follows out the Kantian principles to their legitimate result, it becomes impossible to treat the objective synthesis of religion as the illusion of the finite mind trying to stretch itself beyond its proper limits. The religious takes its place beside the secular consciousness, the consciousness of the infinite beside the consciousness of the finite world, as the consciousness of a real object, or rather the ultimate reality upon which everything else rests. And philosophy, in dealing with one as with the other, is discharged from the absurd and impossible feat of finding its way into a transcendent region beyond all consciousness and experience.

'Caird', pp.207-8.

The spiritual world is not to be thought of as simply 'beyond' but always simultaneously 'beside' the secular, adjacent to and simultaneous, in something very like Butler's sense of doubleness: two realms, separate and yet connected.¹⁸ Mansel had seemed inadvertently to rest faith upon an empty space of agnosticism, but in Caird's

¹⁷ Caird's publications include The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant and Hegel.

¹⁸ It is almost certain that Caird would have read Butler, however I have found no evidence to this effect.

Kantian philosophical redirection of theological thought, the basis of faith - 'the ultimate reality upon which everything else rests'- is reconstructed so that the other world might be understood to inform our perception of the world we inhabit, to offer its very forms of perception. Caird's corrective measure re-ensures that Kant's honourable holding to the borderline between the phenomenal and noumenal is a position of thought that again makes possible the healing force of idealism: such that the relation of inner to outer is a positive relationship of unity in difference, and not merely a negative division.

Caird quotes Bacon as saying that 'in the last period of ancient civilization, philosophy took the place of religion' ('Caird', p.195). The same, he reflected, was true of his own time:

In the face of the modern spirit of criticism, it is rarely possible for educated men, and for students of philosophy it is impossible, to rest for their entire support of their spiritual life upon the simple intuitions of faith. For them the age of unconsciousness is past, and they must call in the aid of reflection, if it were only to heal the wounds of reflection itself. As the builders of the second Temple had to work with arms by their side, so, in our day, those who seek either to maintain, or to replace, the old Christian synthesis of life, must provide themselves with the weapons of philosophy.

'Caird', p.195.

In other words Caird calls upon the weapons of philosophy to restore to spiritual life the very harmony which it was to some extent previously responsible for breaking. As a historical consequence of Kant it would be increasingly rare for educated man to remain simply

religious before he is philosophical, and this difference marks the loss of the essential Christian synthesis of faith to the new 'reflective' synthesis of philosophy.

What Caird's philosophical answer does not address is the religious experience itself at the level of personal existence rather than philosophical synthesis. After reading Mansel the religious, educated man was faced with the problem of how to live with the fact that belief is dependent upon the unthinkable. Mansel's was a language deployed from outside the realm of the personal as philosophy often is: as such it invites rationalistic doubts. It states how it is not possible to live within its contradictions. Caird's philosophical language cures the imbalance in Mansel, but it does not as a language inhabit the inward domain that it makes available. The thinkers seem to offer no model for being as a result of thinking. To live as persons and not to live cut off from what we cannot think (but must or do believe in), educated man needed a different form of thinking, a thinking they could inhabit at the very level of personal experience. As John Coulson has argued,¹⁹ outside the novelists and the poets it was only John Henry Newman who realized that necessity and strove to provide it.

¹⁹ John Coulson, Religion and Imagination (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), hereafter cited as 'Coulson'.

4. ii. Newman's Creative Language of Poetry

Mansel's work seemed to Newman to be taken from his own Protestant teaching,²⁰ and yet, Newman said in 1859, 'this does not hinder me from feeling a serious objection and fear of some of the things which he has said' (L&D, xix p.256). As Newman's admirer John Mozley remarked, Mansel's defence put forward the unintelligibility of the Divine Nature 'too nakedly':²¹ the rift between faith and reason was too absolute, and tried by the standard of the philosopher, religious certainty would be seen as unattainable. Blackwood's hostile review of the Limits concluded, 'we are nowhere in the presence of an intelligible absolute truth; or if we are we can never know it.'²²

Newman knew that another language was needed which could inhabit the domain of inner belief rather than philosophically cast the experience of religion into the realm of the unthinkable. F.D Maurice had learnt from Newman that a language of religious experience must be closer to a literary than philosophical language, a language more concerned with metaphor and spirit than the

²⁰ Newman saw the resemblance between Mansel's ideas and ideas in the University Sermons 'in which some of the views are contained which he [Mansel] has followed and which I still hold, as far as I am allowed to do so, *salva fide* except that in my own mind and reason I feel them to be in parts more sceptical than I now have any temptation to approve' (L&D, xix, p.257).

²¹ J.B. Mozley, Letters of the Rev. J.B. Mozley, ed. by Ann Mozley (London: Rivingtons, 1885), p.240.

²² 'Dr Mansel's Bampton Lectures', Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, lxxxvi (July 1859), pp.48-66, (p.61).

merely 'literal and material'.²³ It is in the Idea of a University that Newman explains how a language may be the personal incarnation of impersonal meaning, without the person in question ever merely intending to write 'personally', in the sense we might conceive of it as something deliberately self-revelatory:

To all does he give utterance, in a corresponding language, which is as multiform as this inward mental action itself and analogous to it, the faithful expression of his intense personality, attending on his own inward world of thought as its very shadow: so that we may as well say that one man's shadow is another's as that the style of a really gifted mind can belong to any but himself. It follows him about as a shadow. His thought and feeling are personal, and so his language is personal.²⁴

A man's language is deeply and involuntarily personal in as much as when faithfully expressed it must come from a distinct person and embody that person's own individual tone of thought, though it is not necessarily personal in content. As a shadow takes the shape of its object, so too will language reflect the shape of a man's thoughts, for a man's language is analogous to the activity of the mind which lies minutely prior to it.

Significantly Maurice had taken Butler as well as Newman for a model. To Maurice, Butler did not simply dwell in abstractions; his language had, in fact, a depth of real experience gradually and silently revealed behind it:

²³ F.D.Maurice, Subscription No Bondage or the Practical Advantages afforded by the Thirty Nine Articles as Guides in all Branches of Academical Education (1835), p.53, as cited by 'Coulson' p.38, footnote a.

²⁴ J.H. Newman, The Idea of a University Defined and Illustrated (1852; London: Longmans, 1925), II.ii.3, p.276. hereafter cited as Idea.

Butler is proving himself a constitutional writer, in the fullest sense of the word. He is helping us to understand what the sense of the word is by bringing us gradually into an experience of the fact which it denoted. How we become partakers of that experience is as hard to say as it is to trace the steps by which one is familiarised to a tree, or a face. By slow, repeated strokes, each of which in itself is scarcely perceptible, the conviction is wrought into you. The seriousness of the writer's own conviction has had more share in communicating it to you than any skill of which he is master.²⁵

Where Maurice could only point to the silent realm of experience behind Butler's language of gradually cumulative recognition, Newman, as Butler's successor, makes it his business to bring to light that silent, implicit or invisible spirit of reasoning which Maurice had recognized to be impossible to render literally with full explicitness. As I indicated at the end of Chapter Two, the explicit and the implicit are the vital terms of Newman's creative language. For Newman understood that language can never be wholly explicit in the sense of fully exhausting what is implicit within and behind it. He was committed to producing a language that was sufficiently explicit to enable a partaking reader to see the implicit as always indeed within its word and sentences. It was a language in which the personal shape and tone is latent but intrinsic and which pulsates with the resonance and the residue of implicit meaning:

The mind ranges to and fro, spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by

²⁵ F.D. Maurice, What is Revelation: A Series of Sermons on the Epiphany; to which are added Letters to a Student of Theology on the Bampton Lectures of Mr Mansel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1859), p.171.

some indication; another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on a testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus makes progress not unlike a clamberer on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowments and practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another.

US, p.257.

Newman invites his reader to think with him about thinking itself, as he imaginatively attempts to retrace the scarcely perceptible steps by which an idea comes to explicit light. Newman has to use metaphor and simile ('not unlike a clamberer'), for he is deeply committed to showing how ordinary problems of belief - even belief in the rising of the sun and the roundness of Earth - are analogous to problems of religious belief: the verbal similitudes are irresistible. In the same way that the ease with which a person simply walks does not depend upon his having to know how or being able to describe the muscular process of walking, so faith is complete without the reflective faculty. Often indeed Newman will liken thinking about what the mind sees and feels to executing a painting, or relate the growth of an idea to mind to the growth of the 'fruit of the earth', or memory itself to a vast magazine of latent 'but present and excitable ideas' (US, p.267, 321). That is to say, the very language of thinking has to be analogical; even as the language of the mind, it must borrow its terms from the realm of the physical world in order to suggest the reality and permanence of the invisibly implicit. Thus the mind (in the passage above) is said to 'range' and 'spread' to accommodate its subject, and the reader feels

the thought gather momentum, not just in linear hurry forward, but as if in response to thought's own quickness and versatility. This is no view of thinking from the outside; the powerful presence of the mind of Newman works moment by moment, live, within his very analysis and description so that his pen relates the experience of thinking to its very limits even as it happens. Thus implicitly massed within and behind the partial and broken explanations rounded into sentences is the vast contiguous complexity that is the mind itself.

Newman's writing testifies to the fact that the thinking that comes out of embedded existence informally and tacitly involves more than what is literally expressed, even when the rules of formal thought seem to disallow direct access to that which lies beyond or behind. Whatever Mansel and Caird sought to do at the level of formal thinking as to the overall disposition of things in which we have our being, Newman has to do as a person trying to live with and within that being, down here below. His language has to seek to do what the philosophers describe as impossible, but which a person must do in practice to keep his faith alive. Thus in a letter concerning Mansel's Limits, Newman wrote:

Transcendent truths may admit of but partial communication to us - and that under the images of earthly things, which are on the one hand the only means of conveying the truth to our minds, yet on the other *because* they are earthly are not the true representations in the *fulness* of their meaning.

L&D, xix, p.335.

It is not just that Newman must use analogies: language itself in Newman is an analogy, what he called an

approximation or economy in human terms. But Newman asserts that 'contradiction' refers to 'language, not to fact' (L&D, p.335). That it is not fact is crucial for Newman. Newman's whole life on earth is informed by a constant and implicit sense of a deeper or higher dimension beyond the limits, which makes it realistically possible for him to live with the idea of contradiction and even to explain it:

Such is what Theology teaches about God, a doctrine, as the very idea of its subject-matter pre-supposes, so mysterious as in its fulness to lie beyond any system, and to seem in parts even to be irreconcilable with itself, the imagination being unable to embrace what the reason determines. It teaches of a Being infinite, yet personal; all-blessed, yet ever operative; absolutely separate from the creature, yet in every part of the creation at every moment; above all things, yet under everything.

Idea, p.63.

As an Anglican, Newman already taught that a contradiction was 'what we call in religion, a mystery' (US, p.345). As a Catholic, although the Church denied any formal contradiction, Newman retained a near paradoxical expression of a sense of mystery.²⁶ For Newman, the mysteriousness of God is not just bafflingly beyond the limits and capacity of the finite mind, rather in his inspired prose the mind is full with the sense of God's mysterious presence. The mind cannot of course realize the full mystery to itself, but language can, as John Coulson describes, begin to say and unsay at once ('Coulson', p.64). Formal punctuation separates yet

²⁶ Newman's letter to Meynell in 1860 declares 'I was surprised and pleased you could so boldly assert 'contradictions' to our ignorance - it is what I have ever held, and left to myself, should ever hold - but I have lately been told I must not hold it' (L&D XIX, pp.334-5).

connects - 'Infinite, yet personal; all-blessed, yet ever operative'- and Newman tellingly employs 'yet' not as simple contradiction but as a hinge word, for its comprehension of simultaneity. These clauses fit together and are balanced as if they were continuous re-writings, re-balancings; they are not simply divisively contradictory in the sense of pulling against each other. Cumulatively, like Butler's 'constitutional' writing, they amount to a certain order or structure composing itself as parts of a whole analogous to creation itself.

Newman confided to Meynell that he could not 'understand what there can be wrong in saying this' [that contradictions refer to language and not fact]. His letter about Mansel powerfully concludes:

To assert, with the school of Sir Walter Hamilton and Mansell [sic], that nothing is known because nothing is known luminously and exactly, seems to me saying that we do not see the stars because we cannot tell their number, size, or distance from each other.
L&D, xix, P.335.

If full explicit meaning is impossible, partial meaning for Newman does not have to be merely suffered as a sense of human inadequacy and exclusion. Rather, it might be experienced as apprehension in part of the very 'fulness' of the whole of Infinite truth and Infinite meaning - in contrast to what R.H. Hutton had called Mansel's 'thin' paper logic (Revelation, p.99). It was Hutton who recognized Newman to be:

A realist in treating human faith, and human thought and language on religious subjects, as worthless, unless they mark out and point to

spiritual causes and tendencies infinitely deeper and more full of meaning than any mere acts and thoughts of ours.²⁷

The 'unless' is of course vital: explicit language in the hands of human beings can only be valuable when it acknowledges itself to be approximative, when what it implicitly tries to mean is what is most real about it. Thus Newman's language is a re-presentation or approximation of something more than itself, where a philosophic, explanatory language is too often to one such as Hutton 'unreal'. Human language as a whole is always analogous in Newman's hands, never literal, never fully and transparently explicit. Though only approximate to the real reasons latent in the mind, such a language always points back to the real which is felt to be behind it at originating source.

As I have argued in Chapter Two, for all his belief in the implicit, Newman nonetheless recognised the need to be explicit too. Not that the explicit should be allowed to take the place of the implicit, but that it should be seen to have come out of the implicit. Thus in his description of faith as contrasted to reason we may detect the presence of the latent and implicit within the explicit discursive prose:

[Faith] begins with its own previous knowledge and opinions, advances and decides upon antecedent probabilities, that is, on grounds which do not reach so far as to touch precisely the desired conclusion, though they tend towards it, and may come very near it. It acts, before actual certainty or knowledge, on grounds which, for the most part, near as they

²⁷ R.H. Hutton, 'Dr Newman's Oxford Sermons', A Victorian Spectator: Uncollected Writings of R.H. Hutton, ed. by Robert H. Tener and Malcom Woodfield (Bristol: Bristol Press, 1989), p.152.

may come, yet in themselves stand clear of the definite thing which is its object.

US.p.224.

In the attempt 'to master thoughts and feelings, so as to recognize what we believe and how we believe' (US,p.253), the words and thoughts which come to mind can only begin to approach their subject. They are but approximations of 'the definite thing' which Bagehot felt in Butler to be 'some great typical fact'. As I have said, the sentences do not so much run forward in linear progression as spread out, as if weaving a net to catch the idea which is prior to it. Newman is constantly making adjustments, checking and re-checking, turning one way then another, almost as if to avoid standing in the way of his own thought. Each clause, though grammatically precise, never 'precisely' reaches and touches, but merely suggests its object. But the parts of a sentence - 'for the most part'; 'near as they may come'; 'yet in themselves'- do not break up the idea leaving it hesitant and unstable, for the real idea still exists in Newman's mind as it goes along. On the contrary, in spite of, or rather because of linguistic and syntactic diversions, the language ultimately moves forwards towards the 'desired conclusion' of whole sentences, which is in their completion analogous to the fullest and most faithful representation of the whole 'definite thing' behind it. For Newman faith is not a series of philosophic statements but an almost physical area of being: 'it has a depth, a breadth, and a thickness; it has an inward life which is something over and above itself; it has a heart, and blood, and pulses,

and nerves, though not upon the surface'.²⁸ This faith is wonderfully muscular requiring an almost muscular 'lifting of the mind' (US, p.253), but in a way far more refined than Kingsley's Anglican muscular Christianity.

Sometimes in the search for the word that will represent the idea, Newman has to allow a place to the (retrospectively discovered) wrong word or phrase in order to show the living process of thought by which he has come to see how a subsequent substitute is actually closer to the sense of the real meaning. Unwilling to divide religion into faith versus reason, alert instead to the complex intertexture of religious experience, Newman will write how Faith in the first place is possible 'without conscious reasoning or formal argument' yet immediately follow in the second by saying 'still the mind may be allowably, nay religiously engaged, in reflecting upon its own Faith' (US, p.253). Thus he gives place to 'allowably', then, rewriting in the midst of writing, says 'nay' to it. 'Religiously' is then not merely added on, but newly realized as if by a process of uncovering meanings behind each other, rediscovering religion itself not as a separate thing but as vitally connected to all areas and levels of human being.

As an experiencing creature, denied a philosophical overview but learning to live within an apprehended system, Newman must trust analogous approximations. He trusts it as given to God's creatures by their Creator, appropriate to their level of understanding and their language. As such, his essentially analogical language

²⁸ J.H. Newman, Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification (1838; London: Rivingtons, 1874), p.263.

bears intimations of the silent anterior realm of the Creator which is prior to human language and behind it; it is an essentially creative language, closer to the sources of poetry within language rather than explicit philosophical or critical explanation:

Critical disquisitions are often written about the idea which this or that poet might have in his mind in certain of his compositions and characters; and we call such analysis the philosophy of poetry, not implying thereby of necessity that the author wrote upon a theory in his actual delineation, or knew what he was doing; but that, in matter of fact, he was possessed, ruled, guided by an unconscious idea.

US.p, 322.

W.C. Lake recognised that Newman's language was indeed possessed or ruled by the implicit prior to consciousness, out of which consciousness later explicitly arises, when he observed Newman's 'simple, refined' style to be 'penetrated by a suppressed vein of poetry'.²⁹ Newman's 'suppressed vein of poetry' is his perception of realities that are latent within and behind the mind, for poetry, says Newman, like mysticism, has the power 'to draw men away from the material to the invisible world' of being.³⁰

And yet the language of poetry, for Newman, as opposed to Arnold, had to give way to the language of dogma, even though it was dogma conceived as the making explicit of a development out of the latent sayings of Christ. In the last of his University Sermons, Newman

²⁹ W.C. Lake, Memorials of William Charles Lake, Dean of Durham, ed. by K.Lake (London: E.Arnold, 1901), p.41.

³⁰ J.H. Newman, 'Poetry with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics', Essays Critical and Historical, 2 vols (London: Pickering, 1871), i, p.291.

suggests that the religious mind will reason from dogmatic statements, but that to admit such statements as mere logical propositions is to be dogmatic in the worse sense of the word. Rather dogmas should be understood as being 'enlightened and (as if) inhabited by that sacred impression which is prior to them' (US, p.334). Dogma is not literalistic philosophy; it is the unfolding translation of religious poetry, making it explicit in the course of the establishment of the Church. Dogma was not to be misread as a series of rules; it had to be read as the putting into divided parts, for human believers, of what existed in itself in spirit as a whole. There is such difficulty in expressing 'heavenly things under earthly images' (US, p.269), that it may be 'the representation' of our sensations and ideas 'seems out of shape and strange'. This applies, Newman suggests, 'to such phrases as "good works are a condition of eternal life"'. But dogma held philosophy within the poetry; literal explication was to be understood as division and accommodation of an implicit spirit:

Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; and are necessary only because the human mind cannot reflect upon it, except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entirety.

US, pp.331-2.

Newman's is the great defence of an essentially literary use of language for more than literary - indeed for religious - purposes.

And yet for all his determination not to separate Dogma from the creative language of analogy, the extent

and subtlety of Newman's influence was doubtless historically curtailed by his conversion to the Catholic Church. In the historical situation in which he found himself, it was for Newman finally the Church which guaranteed theology against the philosophical problems posed by Kant and by Mansel. He took analogy back to Rome, and without Newman as a mainstream influence, the 'poetry' of religion became an aesthetic phrase in Arnold, whilst on the other hand analogy was lost to literalistic philosophy as a tool of thought, becoming dependent for its continuance instead almost entirely, as we shall see in my final two chapters, upon the poets.

CHAPTER 5

Refinding Analogy:

Poetic and Speculative Visionaries

i. After Butler's Newman: Hopkins' Halfway House and the Ruskinian Alternative Mean

On 21st October 1866, the Oxford undergraduate Gerard Manley Hopkins was received into the Catholic church by Cardinal Newman. It may be questioned as to why, as a follower of Newman, Hopkins is not after all the poetic heir to the spirit and tradition of Butlerian analogy through Newman. This investigation will resume the account I adumbrated in Chapter Three.

A poem written in the year before his conversion by Hopkins as a High Anglican, may have taken its title 'A Half-way House', from a phrase in Newman's Apologia¹:

The men who had driven me from Oxford were distinctly the Liberals; it was they who had opened the attack upon Tract 90, and it was they who would gain a second benefit, if I went on to retire from the Anglican Church. But this was not all. As I have already said, there are but two alternatives, the way to Rome, and the way to Atheism: Anglicanism is the halfway house on the one side, and Liberalism is the halfway house on the other.
Apologia, p.190.

The young student may indeed have borrowed the metaphor from Newman's sense of possible but inadequate theological positions, but Hopkins' poem more intimately

¹ See Commentary on Poems, The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. by Norman H. Mackenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990; repr.1992), p.282.

describes the personal experience of earthly distance between creature and the Creator he cannot quite reach:

Love I was shown upon the mountain-side
 And bid to catch Him ere the drop of day.
 See, Love, I creep and Thou on wings dost ride:
 Love, it is evening now and Thou away;
 Love, it grows darker here and Thou art above;
 Love, come down to me if Thy name be Love.

'The Half-way House' 1-6.

The loving poet feels himself to be powerlessly 'here' below Love which is always and unalterably 'above', while in response he can make only creeping earthbound linear progression. This is a dissatisfaction that will later urge Hopkins to turn poetry's lines into something more than linear, and to make poetry's metre try to rework earthly time in order that it might somehow catch up with God's time. In this poem however, the dissatisfaction, not from feeling unloved, but from being unable to love sufficiently, leads to impatience:

Hear yet my paradox: Love, when all is given,
 To see Thee I must [see] Thee, to love, love;
 I must o'ertake Thee at once and under heaven
 If I shall overtake Thee at last above.
 You have your wish; enter these walls, one said:
 He is with you in the breaking of the bread.
 13-18.

The paradox is that even when 'all is given', love under heaven is always human love - the half-way second best - and can never amount to Love itself. Although there is no direct evidence to suggest that Hopkins had read Mansel, Hopkins' actual experience of paradox is very similar in form, if not in feeling to Mansel's philosophical idea of contradiction in The Limits of Religious Thought:

The existence of a limit to our powers of thought is manifested by the consciousness of contradiction, which implies at the same time an attempt to think and an inability to accomplish the attempt.

Limits, p.62.

For Hopkins, the need for immediate experience of God 'at once' inspires the overtaking attempt to meet Love with love. Yet at the same time the very desire reminds him of his human inability to accomplish the attempt. Even when all is given, it is never enough:

Man is most low, God is most high.
As sure as heaven it is
There must be something to supply
All insufficiencies.

'Summa' 5-8.

In 'The Half-way House', the words 'love' and 'see' are sufficient to register a sameness with the Creator in terms of incarnation even more than analogy, but it is not sufficient finally to make up the unbearable difference and distance. Yet Hopkins has no choice but to re-employ his words, as if the very repetition ('see...see', 'love, love') 'must' somehow realize the contradictory desire for heavenly experience here and now under heaven. The infinite is sought within the finite, even as the words threaten to break under the strain:

Godhead, I adore thee fast in hiding; thou
God in these bare shapes, poor shadows, darkling
now.

'S Thomae Aquinatis Rhythmus ad SS. Sacramentum',
1-2.

The hidden God is analogously, but insufficiently, revealed through the veil of 'bare shapes' and 'poor shadows'. Analogy would always be a problem for Hopkins in its simultaneously 'fast' revealing and concealing; it

would take him only half-way to God, when what he wanted was the intensity and brilliance of full and immediate connection, 'face to face in light' ('S Thomae', 1.27).

A half-way house clearly delineates the position which Hopkins so frequently found himself occupying by default rather than acceptance of choice. It is the position he reached out from and always fell back into, following the experience of God 'with' him in the Eucharist. If Anglicanism was the Church of the Half-Way-House, the Catholic Church in contrast was to be the protection of primary belief: it was to be the literal and abiding reassurance of his need for immediate oneness when that oneness was not permanently available otherwise on earth.² Living for Hopkins is like waiting impatiently on the mountain-side, half-way to heaven, and half-way from earth.

But even with the support of a Church Hopkins cannot really bear the thought of halves:

No better serves me now, save best; no other,
Save Christ: to Christ I look, on Christ I call.

'Myself Unholy' 13-14.

Comparisons are of no further use to him 'now'; the best must be all, despite his knowing that even the superlative itself linguistically represents a finite limit. The comparative ease of the middle ground, even if he sometimes craved it, was an uninhabitable no-man's-land for Hopkins:

² 'I shall hold as a Catholic what I have long held as an Anglican, that literal truth of our Lord's words by which I learn that the least fragment of the consecrated elements in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is the whole Body of Christ'. Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. by Claude Colleer Abbott, 2nd edn (1938; London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p.92, hereafter cited as FL.

And I have asked to be
 Where no storms come,
 Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
 And out of the swing of the sea.

'Heaven-Haven' 5-8.

This is Hopkins' dream not his reality, for his life was not even a movement between extremes of calm and storm, but between extremes of joy and despair in the very storm of paradox. The impatient, demanding nature of Hopkins' verse, which is so often driven by the tantalising immanence of God's hidden presence, cannot be satisfied by the compromise of a 'Heaven-Haven' sited between most low and most high, but strains at the limit of the superlative towards fusion.

In short, Hopkins' early poetry speaks of the half-way house which he occupies, but cannot abide; to his mind as to Newman's it was increasingly a house called Anglicanism. These poems tell of the paradox of his life, but cannot finally house it. They reveal two halves that make up a contradictory whole: the man of peace who lives for battle; the impatient man who longs for patience which he cannot tolerate, and whose desire for poverty and chastity is expressed in rich sensuous language:

Be shelled, eyes, with double dark
 And find the uncreated light:
 This ruck and reel which you remark
 Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight

'The Habit of Perfection' 9-12.

The very nature of Hopkins verse, the rich sensuousness of alliterative language ('double dark', 'ruck and reel', 'simple sight') robustly and resistantly appeals directly to the senses it elects to silence. It is as if Hopkins

somehow instinctively uses the space left open by the ill-fitting quality of paradox or contradiction to try to force a way beyond empirical meaning. Yet in trying to inhabit contradiction he is always in danger of being thrown off spiritual balance: his other-worldliness felt as too much for this world.

I have said that as an Anglican, Newman had taught that contradiction was 'what we call in religion a mystery' (US, p.345). As a converted Catholic, the idea of contradiction was forbidden him and gave way even more austere to the doctrine of mystery - a doctrine which the Catholic Hopkins explained to the Anglican, Robert Bridges in a letter of 1883:

You do not mean by mystery what a Catholic does. You mean an interesting uncertainty: the uncertainty ceasing interest ceases also. This happens in some things; to you in religion. But a Catholic by mystery means an incomprehensible certainty: without certainty, without formulation there is no interest (of course a doctrine is valuable for other things than its interest, its interestingness, but I am speaking now of that); the clearer the formulation the greater the interest. At bottom the source of interest is the same in both cases, in your mind and in ours; it is the unknown, the reserve of truth beyond what the mind reaches and still feels to be behind.³

Hopkins goes beyond liberal Anglican 'uncertainty'. But where even Newman would accept the 'reserve of truth' behind all mystery, Hopkins, more demanding, must be able to 'feel' as well as know it there - as if, in his need for closeness, he might almost pull the reserve out of Keble's reservedness.

³ The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, ed. by Claude Collier Abbott, 2nd edn (1935; London: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 186-7, hereafter cited as LB.

As the means of coming to a language in which to think and speak of God, the Jesuit priest Hopkins took the concept of haecceitas from the philosophy of Duns Scotus rather than follow the idea of analogy from Aquinas through to Butler⁴. With the development of haecceitas, or the particular and individual essence of each thing, into his concept of inscape, Hopkins detected nature's organizing secret or underlying form. To find the inscape of a thing was to feel God's presence as creator in the natural world, an experience which might be endlessly renewed:

Glory be to God for dappled things-
 For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that
 swim;
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow, and
 plough;
 And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
 All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
 He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
 Praise Him .

'Pied Beauty.'

This poem is testimony to the unity of the whole which Hopkins cannot wholly think. It is a product of a lifetime's looking, naming and describing the complex, nature of the world around him, as if all past views were condensed into one single view in one single moment. But what the poem in fact offers is but an impression of the simultaneity of whole meaning made up from successive

⁴ Hopkins includes Joseph Butler's Analogy of Religion in a list headed 'Great Books' which has only seven other authors. The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. by Humphrey House and Grahame Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.49, hereafter cited as Journal.

separate parts. 'Pied Beauty' is in praise of a world which means several different things at the same time. In 'Swift, slow; sweet sour; adazzle, dim', the paradoxes are held on the page as if in their suspended animation, they span and link the extreme parts of the whole. In the spaces and dashes between words on the page - 'Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;' - Hopkins has found a time in which he is able to dispense with analogy, in which connections and distinctions can be immediately and eternally contained. His compressed syntax registers the fast action of the impatient mind in poetry which is almost without time for external reference. The adjectives 'swift', 'slow', 'spare', 'strange', do not need nouns, for under Hopkins' intense scrutiny they take on the solidity of things. Likewise verbs are barely necessary unless they apply to and confirm God's presence: 'is', 'knows', 'fathers-forth'. In the presence of God, only the present is vital - all other tenses are eclipsed; 'past' is not a tense but the only necessary preposition. 'Pied Beauty' is thus not analogous, it even abandons simile after the second line: 'skies ...as a brinded cow', and thereafter implicitly knows water (like) skies, skies (like) landscape, land (like) air, beasts of the field (like) birds of the air (like) fish of the sea. As all these things gather poetic momentum they blur into a wonder as all things at once are news of God. World and word are one in a poem which seeks to recreate the moment of heightened and intense consciousness when there is no future, but only the powerful present.

It is unmediated oneness which is Hopkins' object:

I kiss my hand
 To the stars, lovely-asunder
 Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
 Glow, glory in thunder;
 Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west:
 Since, though he is under the world's splendour
and wonder,
 His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
 For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when
I understand.

'The Wreck of the Deutschland', 33-40.

This poetry realizes the mysterious idea of God 'under' creation as if actively and semantically hidden in the very words 'thunder', 'asunder' and 'wonder' or brought to the level of conscious recognition when 'I understand'. It is poetry that thus appears to have 'overtaken' analogy in its insistent desire for stressed and assonated fusion. As if they are impelled out of the one anterior reality, words 'meet' and 'greet' each other in outward recognition and imitation of essential unity. And Hopkins would see this as something more than mere accidents of rhyme, for the rhymes are symptomatic of deeper, vitally intrinsic connections and currents which are implicit realities, whether we know them at the level of explicit thought or not.

Thus, Hopkins' single-minded desire for oneness leaves no time or space across which to conduct analogy. It is a single-mindedness by which he holds off any interference which might divert him from that original condition of experience which runs along like an undercurrent behind and beneath phenomena:

On this walk I came to a cross road I had been
 at in the morning carrying it in another
 'running instress'. I was surprised to
 recognise it and the moment I did it lost its
 present instress, breaking off from what had

immediately gone before, and fell into the morning's. It is so true what Ruskin says talking of the carriage in Turner's Pass of Faïdo that what he could not forget was that 'he had come by the road'. And what is this running instress, so independent of at least the immediate scape of the thing, which unmistakably distinguishes and individualises things? Not imposed outwards from the mind as for instance by melancholy or strong feeling: I easily distinguish that instress. I think it is this same running instress by which we identify or, better, test and refuse to identify with our various suggestions a thought which has just slipped from the mind at an interruption.

Journal, p.215.

The false instress 'imposed outwards from the mind' was characterized by Ruskin himself as 'pathetic fallacy'. The projection of personal feeling onto external objects was symptomatic of the weak of faith, who, feeling their spiritual grip slip, sought to fasten themselves by feelings to the reality of the natural world. Hopkins will not let anything get in the way of the universal running instress - not pathetic fallacy, not earlier associations or personal memories. He is so finely tuned to the current of stress in the universe that it is easy for him to distinguish between the true, deep running instress and his memory of the more temporary and arbitrary morning's instress. He does not simply note, but tests the difference, 'breaking off' and letting go the false or relatively unimportant trail of thought. The intervention of conscious thought has to be secondary to a following of the running instress, as Ruskin says of Turner painting the Pass of Faïdo: 'strictly speaking, he does not think at all. If he thought, he would instantly go wrong... all these changes come into his

head involuntarily'.⁵ (MP IV, Pt.V, Ch.II, para 15).

Hopkins, like Ruskin's Turner, is instinctively alive to the sheer run of an underlying harmony present in the universe.

'From first to last Hopkins was conscious of his debt to Ruskin.'⁶ Yet though Hopkins' habit of looking may indeed have been re-charged by Ruskin, Hopkins' desire to fuse what was 'two' into what is now one is all his own:

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding
 Majestic - as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-
shoulder
sweet!-

'Hurrahing in Harvest', 9-10.

In this poem all analogy and inferred likeness is rendered unnecessary. The vision sees with sudden and complete clarity that the 'hills are his world weilding shoulder' and the hidden God is majestically revealed in his creation. Alison Sulloway says of this very quotation, and in defence of Ruskin's influence on Hopkins, that 'Ruskin had claimed that mountains "are to the rest of the body of earth what violent muscular action is to the body of man" '. She concludes, 'Hopkins has carried out the function of mimetic art: the energy of tone and metaphors mirrors the energy of the divine plan in nature's self' ('Sulloway', p.83). In contrast I

⁵ John Ruskin, Works, ed. by E.T.Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1902-12), Modern Painters IV, Pt.V, Ch.II, para 15, hereafter cited as MP; Seven Lamps of Architecture cited as SL; Stones of Venice cited as SV; otherwise cited by Volume as Works. John Ruskin was a member of the Metaphysical Society.

⁶ 'From first to last Hopkins was conscious of his debt to Ruskin'. Alison G.Sulloway, Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper (London: Routledge, 1972), p.64, hereafter cited as 'Sulloway'. Chapter 2 offers a full discussion of Ruskin's influence on Hopkins.

am saying that Ruskin's statement does not encourage a 'mimetic art': his is a truly analogical statement which declares the sameness of two relations. The case of Hopkins shows the dangers of going beyond analogy, of collapsing a Butlerian sense of doubleness in the pursuit of oneness. Analogy respects the division between heaven and earth, whereas Hopkins' Catholic poetry works towards breaking down the division.

If, by following Scotus rather than Aquinas, Hopkins moves ultimately beyond analogy, it is left to the Anglican tradition to stay loyal to analogy's maintenance of a more indirect form of knowledge of things Divine.⁷ Crucially the difference between Hopkins and Ruskin, to which I shall turn in what follows, is Ruskin's continuing commitment to finding linguistic revelations not by haecceitas but still via analogy.⁸

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Ruskin had a fundamental respect for Catholicism and in the Stones of Venice, his description of the Church at Torcello drew an analogy between certain uses of proportion and the founding force of Catholicism as early Christianity. Rather than looking like a city cathedral, the whole building resembled:

⁷ James Ross advises 'The analogy theory of St Thomas is concerned with the similarity of meaning of instances of the same term - not directly with the similarity of things'. He concludes, 'in summary, having ruled out univocal language about God, Aquinas claims that his analogy rules offer a way of taking ordinary language literally in orthodox claims about God'. James F. Ross, 'Analogy as a Rule of Meaning for Religious Language', in *Modern Studies of Philosophy series, Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Anthony Kenny (1969; London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 93-138 (p.95, 138).

⁸ In the following section of this chapter I shall return to Hopkins further to address the problem of sustaining the momentary vision.

A refuge from Alpine storm ... and is expressive at once of the deep sorrow and the sacred courage of men who had no home left them upon earth, but who looked for one to come [Isaiah xli. 25], of men 'persecuted' but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed' [2 Corinthians iv.9]

I am not aware of any other early Church in Italy which has this peculiar expression in so marked a degree; and it is so consistent with all that Christian architecture ought to express in every age (for the actual condition of the exiles who built the cathedral of Torcello is exactly typical of the spiritual condition which every Christian ought to recognise in himself, a state of homelessness on earth).

SV II. Ch.II,para 4.

The architectural words are analogies, natural analogies for the foundation of shelter in the world, expressing in human terms a sense of the divine shape and form and harmony which can provide survival on earth. It is as though words from the field of architecture begin to come naturally to mind in the act of thinking, as if recalling an anterior connection, echoing divine foundations.

Ruskin's temperamental and theological proximity to the dynamic registered through Hopkins lies in the shared realization that unity can only be perceived suddenly and in flashes or echoes - as for example when Ruskin described Turner's exquisite drawing of shadows:

He will keep them clear and distinct, and make them felt as shadows, though they are so faint that, but for their decisive forms, we should not have observed them for darkness at all. He will throw them one after another like transparent veils along the earth and upon the air, till the whole picture palpitates with them, and yet the darkest of them will be a faint grey, imbued and penetrated with light.

MP I, Pt.II, Sec.II, Ch.III para.5.

Descriptive prose, word-painting, ornamental analogy; this passage has all these lesser things until the second

sentence reaches the phrase 'the whole picture palpitates', when it is as if suddenly and dynamically this word 'palpitates' is the undistorted expression of Turner's living impression upon Ruskin. To say that the picture 'palpitates' is not pathetic fallacy, but a form of immediate analogy, pulse for pulse, from the perception of something more than simply light at the heart of the picture. In the immediacy of this word Ruskin is very close to the immediacy of Hopkins, for it is as if in such moments a word itself palpitates and resonates in making a connection:

There is no branch of human work whose constant laws have not close analogy with those which govern every other mode of man's exertion. But, more than this, exactly as we reduce to greater simplicity and surety any one group of these practical laws, we shall find them passing the mere condition or connection of analogy, and becoming the actual expression of some ultimate nerve or fibre of the mighty laws which govern the modern world. However mean or inconsiderable the act, there is something in the well doing of it, which has fellowship with the noblest forms of manly virtue; and the truth, decision and temperance, which we reverently regard as honourable conditions of the spiritual being, have a representative or derivative influence over the works of the hand, the movements of the frame, and the action of the intellect.

SL, Introductory, para.4.

As Newman used analogy as a language of thinking, Ruskin used analogy as the language of the wider universe, calling together all branches of being, human and non-human in the created world. It may look here as if Ruskin too dismisses analogy as relatively superficial, as an artificial figure of speech establishing connections which may be merely rhetorical, rather than

natural and true. But what Ruskin is interested in is not so much a static distinction between analogy in that limited sense and the laws of actual connection in the world. That would be, like Hopkins himself, to downgrade the deeper meaning of analogy in favour of what, in Ruskin's case, is manifestly a Coleridgean sense of the unity of one world, beating as it were with one heart. No, in practice Ruskin's interest lies in the sudden process by which in an instant a word such as 'palpitates' passes from the state of analogy into a realization of law and suddenly finds and makes analogy itself the prelusive expression of kinship across different realms of being. Ruskin knows that from time to time in the thick of writing, there will be words which suddenly make connection explicit. He is content, however, that in the sum of things such words will be found, lost and rediscovered again. Hopkins, by contrast needs every word in every line to make that flash of communication, he tries to open each word to expose the synonymous whole which is prior to its linguistic distinction. Ruskin is content thus, to write in prose, to let the form emerge suddenly in an apparently semi-formless and ordinary medium of the world, faith lying in the allowance that meaning will come and go, palpitatingly, without total capture.

The sign that Ruskin belongs within the tradition of analogy, in its deeper meaning, rather than haecceitas, lies not merely in his most (unHopkins-like) tolerance of difference but in his active belief that difference itself is the very basis for seeing connection. The only sameness worth having is that which is not sought or

insisted upon but lost, found, tested and recalled, dynamically, in the very midst of a mass of distinctions:

The more we know and the more we feel, the more we separate; we separate to obtain a more perfect unity. Stones, in the thoughts of the peasant, lie as they do on his field; one is like another, and there is no connection between any of them. The geologist distinguishes, but in distinguishing connects them. Each becomes different from his fellow, but in differing from, assumes a relation to, his fellow; they are no more each the repetition of the other, they are parts of a system; and each implies and is connected with the existence of the rest.

Works III, pp.37-8

Ruskin's words are like stones: there will be many to go through before one distinguishing word makes the wider connection understood.

So it is when Ruskin immerses himself in the world, as Turner immersed himself in his paintings:

While the main energy of the mountain mass tosses itself against the central chain of Mont Blanc (which is on the right hand), it is met by a group of counter-crests, like the recoil of a broken wave cast against it from the other side; and yet, as the recoiling water has a sympathy with the under swell of the very wave against which it clashes, the whole mass writhes in strange unity of mountain passion...

MP IV, Pt.V, Ch.XV, para.11.

Out of that saturated mass of potential conflict, that linguistic melting-pot of submerged experience, what Ruskin finds irresistibly coming to mind not as pathetic fallacy but as an involuntary linguistic memory of a pre-established analogy, are those words 'sympathy' and 'passion' - words which re-form the very links between man and nature. 'And yet' there, in its own under swell, thus signals a relation between two things which is the

ground of their connection as well as the basis of their distinction, the connection formed in relation to the very distinction. It is as though Ruskin here experiences what elsewhere he merely describes as 'Unity of Origin':

There is Unity of Origin, which we may call Original Unity; which is of things arising from one spring and source, and speaking always of this their brotherhood; and this in matter is the unity of the branches of the trees, and of the petals and starry rays of flowers, and of the beams of light; and in spiritual creatures it is their filial relation to Him from which they have their being.

MP II, Pt.III, Sec,i, Ch.VI, para.3.

For Ruskin sees not only that these things have brotherhood *in themselves* but have a brotherhood too *between themselves*, and are analogies for each other. It is as if the language of 'light palpitates' or 'mountain passion' suddenly finds him travelling along the 'nerve or fibre of the mighty laws' which as in Wordsworth comprise the very mind of the universe itself.

The sudden discovery of these words of analogy between the human and the non-human worlds makes the finding of linguistic connections not merely descriptive but a deep memory re-creatively symptomatic of an anterior 'brotherhood' or 'fellowship'. Using what he called 'daring words' Ruskin claimed the 'soul of man is a still a mirror, wherein may be seen, darkly, the image of the mind of God'. 'A mirror, dark, distorted, broken', but nevertheless the only means by which 'we can know anything of God at all' (MP V, Pt.IX, Ch.I, para.11). It feels as though Ruskin is in again at the human equivalent of a moment of divine Creation, as are his

painters. In describing the mental chemistry of Turner, Dante, Scott and Tintoretto, Ruskin concludes that their imagination consists:

...not in a voluntary production of new images, but an involuntary remembrance, exactly at the right moment, of something they had actually seen.

Imagine all that any of these men had seen or heard in the whole course of their lives, laid up accurately in their memories as in vast storehouses, extending with the poets, even to the slightest intonations of syllables heard in the beginning of their lives, and with the painters, down to minute folds of drapery, and shapes of leaves and stones; and over all this unindexed and immeasurable mass of treasure, the imagination brooding and wandering, but dream-gifted, so as to summon at any moment exactly such groups of ideas as shall justly fit each other:

MP IV, Pt.V, Ch.II, para,16.

As Ruskin's prose follows the trail of Turner's imaginative wanderings, Ruskin is himself suddenly, 'gifted'. As Ruskin tunes in to Turner, Turner is tuning into his own vision of the universe, such that individual memories of the world coming to creative life are like lesser equivalents of the universal storehouse itself. That storehouse of nature, with its almost infinite details and relations, is the repository of the endless creation of God's pictures in God's world, out of the resource of God's own memory. As Ruskin recalls the word 'storehouse', he opens up a meeting point between Ruskin, Turner, Nature and God through the analogical links of creation. In the process of explaining to others, by means of analogy, Ruskin finds analogy coming back to him as a gift in a flash of recognition so that he remembers and knows the truths of creation again as if for the first time.

Given or gifted words are 'storehouses' which tell, in part, of one whole world in which underlying laws and connections hold and fuse all things together. They hold open that thought for as long as the word takes, before the prose moves on and closes it: 'The hiding places of my power/ Seem open; I approach and then they close' ⁹ Ruskin understood the thought of hidden meeting places in prose as something revelatory and wonderful:

Hence, that strange and sometimes fatal charm, which there is in all things as long as we wait for them, and the moment we have lost them; but which fades while we possess them; - that sweet bloom of all that is far away, which perishes under our touch. Yet the feeling of this is not a weakness; it is one of the most glorious gifts of the human mind, making the whole infinite future, and the imperishable past, a richer inheritance, if faithfully inherited, than a changeful, frail, fleeting present: it is one of the many witnesses in us to the truth that these present and tangible things are not meant to satisfy us.

MP III, Pt.IV, Ch.X, para.13.

Linguistic meeting-points (like 'mountain passion') have, in Ruskin's memory work, spatio-temporal dimensions. There are moments and locations within the labyrinth of his prose that make known 'the infinite future' and 'imperishable past' as one whole inheritance, before him and behind him. Ruskin can never quite dwell upon the momentary meeting places or force fields in his writing, for the forward movement of linear prose must hurry on leaving its meaning behind itself, as Hopkins' poetry can hardly bear to do.

No finite mind, even fleetingly, can hold the immensity of all underlying connections, but in the human

⁹ William Wordsworth, The Prelude (1805-6), xi, lines 336-7.

connection between Ruskin writing of Turner looking at Nature, and a reader reading Ruskin, there is a Coleridgean sense of single energy and original unity. Here the ideal reader is Proust:

It is impossible that there should be no one who takes any pleasure in what has given me so much. For no one is unique, and fortunately for the sympathy and understanding which are such great pleasures in our life, our individualities are shaped within a universal framework. If we could analyze the soul as we analyze matter, we should see that under the apparent diversity of minds as well as of things there are but a few simple substances and irreducible elements, and that into the composition of what we believe to be our personality enter elements that are quite common and that are met again to some degree everywhere in the universe.¹⁰

There is a deeply communal area of being and of meaning 'under' the apparent diversity of minds, into which nature and painting and prose can open a way. Turner stands in the presence of nature, Ruskin in the presence of Turner, Proust in the presence of Ruskin, just as Ruskin himself had realized when he went with his painting teacher to see the work of Tintoretto:

When we came away, Harding said that he felt like a whipped schoolboy. I, not having been at school so long as he, felt only that a new world had opened to me, that I had seen that day the Art of Man in its full majesty for the first time; and that there was also a strange and precious gift in myself enabling me to recognise it, and therein ennobling, not crushing me. That sense of my own gift as interpreter strengthened as I grew older.
MP II, Epilogue para.12.

¹⁰ Marcel Proust, *On Reading Ruskin*, transl. and ed. by Jean Autret, William Burford and Philip J. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p.10, hereafter cited as Proust.

Tintoretto's 'Crucifixion' opens up to Ruskin three areas in one: a whole new universe of being; a primary sense of Human Art at its greatest; and the recognition of an analogous, internal capacity to realize these things. The 'strange and precious gift in myself' of recognition has relation to 'that strange and sometimes fatal charm, which there is in all things as long as we wait for them'. The gift of recognition must always appear 'strange', for the opening of meeting-places between anticipating and remembering is always too brief to allow familiarity.

The interpreter translates from one world to another. Proust himself, translating Ruskin into French, noted 'the religious veneration with which he expressed this feeling [of the divine which works of art inspired in him], his fear of distorting it in the slightest degree when translating it' ('Proust', p.36). The supremely accurate and rigorous translation from one medium to another, produced in Ruskin deeply analogical work which is not merely false imagination, association or projection, nor what Ruskin would have understood as the artificially false language of 'pathetic fallacy'. Nor was it, as Hopkins would have wished, a permanent fusion. There were instead, in Ruskin's prosaic sense of earthly time, simply renewed moments when analogical language seemed prophetic of a final and underlying

unity which was not sustainably or permanently available to man on earth save by glimpses.¹¹

What makes Ruskin essentially loyal to the language of analogy, I have argued, is his faith in the maintenance of distinctions. In the eighteenth century, the analogical tradition, derived first from Aristotle and Aquinas and epitomised in the work of Butler, had operated from a rigorously poised position between extremes, austerey recognising linkage through making fine distinctions rather than obliterating them. Ruskin was raised as an Aristotelian.¹² What he saw in the mid-nineteenth century was what he took to be a degeneration of the Anglican tradition of analogy into mere liberal compromise, a too easily achieved middle way. Alasdair MacIntyre describes something of the complex system of differences and connections that Ruskin was educated in:

Phronêsis is an intellectual virtue; but it is that intellectual virtue without which none of the virtues of character can be exercised. Aristotle's distinction between ... two kinds of virtue is initially made in terms of contrast between the ways in which they are acquired; intellectual virtues are acquired through teaching, the virtues of character from habitual exercise. We become just or courageous by performing courageous acts; we become theoretically or practically wise as a

¹¹ Hilary Fraser and Daniel Brown note that analogy for the Idealist philosopher William Whewell (who had been Tennyson's tutor at Cambridge) is 'one of the criteria indicating the truth of the hypothesis... separate sciences may progress in parallel and their discoveries often draw them together in what he calls a 'consilience': the Consilience of Inductions takes place when an Induction obtained from one class of facts, coincides with an Induction obtained from another different class. This Consilience is a test of the Theory in which it occurs.' The authors point out the idealist conviction that 'reality comprises a rational unity, a whole which precedes its parts.' Hilary Fraser and Daniel Brown, English Prose in the Nineteenth Century (London: Longman, 1997). p.244.

¹² 'I once knew nearly half of Aristotle's Ethics word for word, by heart'. Works X, p.374.

result of systematic instruction. None the less these two kinds of moral education are intimately related.¹³

There is, of course a fundamental difference between the practical and the theoretical level, but, crucially, what goes on at one level is analogous to the procedures appropriate to another - the mental level translates into its own terms what goes on in a different way at the physical level.¹⁴

Nonetheless there were times at which Ruskin saw himself as substantially modifying Aristotle's interlocking system in the light of changed historical conditions. In Aristotle's classification of the virtues there are three precisely defined categories: the excess, the deficiency, and between the two, the mean. These distinctions went on analogously within all the realms of human being, physical, moral and intellectual. To Ruskin, the nineteenth-century via media was nothing like so rigorous. He felt that the 'mean' had become a way of not doing something very precise and radical but simply splitting the difference:

It is impossible to overrate the mischief produced in former days, as well as in our own, by the mere habit of reading Aristotle, whose system is so false, so forced, and so confused,

¹³ Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (1981; London: Duckworth, 1982), pp.144-5.

¹⁴ Iris Murdoch refers to the 'porous' character of the larger moral concepts: 'Courage is composed of imagination. Truthful imagining requires courage and humility. Truthfulness is aware of the obligation not to cause distress. In this way of seeing, there are not just external clashes between alien principles (an idea which is at home in politics). It is a matter of deepening the concepts in question through a relation to each other. There is a continuous and spontaneous interplay. 'Becoming better' is a process involving an exercise and refinement of moral vocabulary and sensibility'. Iris Murdoch, Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p.324.

that the study of it at our universities is quite enough to occasion the utter want of accurate habits of thought, which so often disgraces men otherwise well educated.

Works X, pp. 373-4.

Ruskin opposed a degenerated form of Anglican Aristotelianism in which what was once a refined and very deliberate mean had become a more English form of compromise. The danger of opening up a merely comfortable space in which to be reasonable was that it tended to encourage imprecision and slackness. The want of accurate habits of thought was making it so much harder to hold onto the tension of a mean, making it all too easy for things to turn into their semblances and for semblances rather than analogies to prevail. Ruskin was ever alert to such degeneration:

...that strange twilight of the virtues; that dusky debatable land, wherein zeal becomes impatience, and temperance becomes severity, and justice becomes cruelty, and faith superstition, and each and all vanish into gloom.

SL, Ch.II, para 1.

It was the realm too in which analogy itself could degenerate into pathetic fallacy, the willed travesty of a more careful sense of rightly perceived relationship. It was time, felt Ruskin, to make accurate distinctions again:

If a man were disposed towards system-making, he could easily throw together a counter system to Aristotle's, showing that in all things there were two extremes which exactly resembled each other, but one of which was bad and the other good; and a mean, resembling neither, but better than one and worse than the other.

MP III, Ch. XVII, p.385.footnote.

Ruskin radically reformulates Aristotle's three categories - the excess, the deficiency and the mean in between them - so that there are only two categories, the good version and the bad alternative. Thus in the Stones of Venice, Ruskin talks of the completeness of the expression of ideas in art, or 'finish':

Whenever finish is given for the sake of realization, it is wrong; whenever it is given for the sake of adding ideas it is right. All true finish consists in the addition of ideas, that is to say, in giving the imagination more food; for once well awakened, it is ravenous for food: but the painter who finishes in order to substantiate takes the food out of his mouth, and it will turn and rend him.

SV 111, Ch.IV, para.23.

As there is right and wrong finish so, in scattered passages throughout his work, Ruskin tells of a 'healthy love of change' and 'a diseased love of change' (SV II, Ch.VI, para 29), of a true and false 'grotesque' (SV III, Ch.III, para.46), and thus it follows:

In almost all things connected with moral discipline, the same results may follow from contrary causes; and as there are a good and evil contentment, a good and evil discontent, a good and evil care, fear, ambition and so on, there are also good and evil forms of this sympathy with nature and disposition to moralize over it

MP III, Pt.IV, Ch.XVII, para.41.

It is still an analogical system: the bad thing results from a good thing in its wrong place. On the other hand discontent in one sphere could be translated into right ambition in another. And an achievement at the mental level requires analogous modification at the physical level: as, says Ruskin 'the grasp of truth involves all

strength of sense' as well as, evenness of judgement, and honesty of purpose (MP III, Pt.IV, Ch.III, para.24).

Ruskin was indeed the man he describes as 'disposed towards system-making', for in the Divisions of Humanity (Works IX, Appendix 14, pp.444-8) he was tempted into amalgamating his reformulation of Aristotelian categories with the concomitant idea of the interrelation of levels of being, to try to come, as he elsewhere claimed, to 'the sum of the human soul' (MP III, Pt.IV, Ch.III, para.24). But in order to hold his intuition of correspondent shape together, he was pressed into putting his thoughts into tabular form and referring to it as a 'scheme', as if it were the only possible way for him to see as a whole across compartments and categories and states. Ruskin tabulated the actions of mind and body in the sciences and in the arts. It was not simply to be an argument as to which is the noblest arena of action, but rather a question of the degree and level at which the faculties of man might be engaged in the practice of his art. His scheme is tabulated as follows:

	Passive or Receptive Part	Active or Motive Part
Body . . .	Senses	Muscles
Soul . . .	Feeling	Resolution
Intellect. . .	Understanding	Imagination

Works IX, p.445

The entire man is made up of Body, Soul and Intellect ('the word soul is a short expression for the moral and responsible forms of being' p.445), and Ruskin held that no part of the human system could act independently. For

good or for ill, all areas of being 'have a reciprocal action on one another'(p.445):

Thus in a healthy state, the acuteness of the senses quickens that of the feelings, and these latter quicken the understanding, and then all three quicken the imagination, and then all four strengthen the resolution; while yet there is a danger, on the other hand, that the encouraged and morbid feeling may weaken or bias the understanding, or that the over-shrewd and keen understanding may shorten the imagination, or that the understanding and imagination together may take the place of, or undermine the resolution, as in Hamlet.

Works IX, p.445.

'What a piece of work is man': the sheer arithmetic of humanity, the infinite compounds of the system are more than a single mind can hope to hold. Yet Ruskin's inspired vision momentarily glimpses the continuous and spontaneous interplay of all the parts of the human system. For that is where his sense of system is best expressed: in time.

Here however he concentrates on spatial formulations on the page. Having delineated a series of right and wrong developments in particular categories, Ruskin moves on to a translation from one category in his tabular scheme to another by dividing the arts into three orders and into further stages within those orders. Although it is true that something good from the third rank might be better than something false from the second, Ruskin nevertheless insists on the distinction between the orders - for it is also true that, as he says in the Stones of Venice, 'a noble character in the abstract becomes ignoble when it causes us to forget the relative dignities of that nature itself and to prefer the

perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfection of the higher' (SV II, Ch.VI, para 11). The 3rd order of bodily dexterity is manifested in three stages:

First, Bodily power by practice;
 Secondly, Bodily power by moral habit;
 Thirdly, Bodily power by immediate energy
Works IX, p.446.

For the first stage, Ruskin offers the example of a good blacksmith having command of his tools. Fencing, shooting and riding require something of the second stage as each accomplishment requires a dexterity of grace given by character together with a gentleness and steadiness of hand which is the result of practice coupled with decision. Thirdly, the fine arts admit (through the channel of the bodily dexterity) the expression of the whole man.¹⁵

In Ruskin's delineation of the second-order arts, in which intelligence becomes less dependent upon bodily dexterity, it is still the same matter of proportion and harmony. It may even be that a second-order art does not even include the need for third-order bodily dexterity as for instance a general at war, or a captain in command of a ship. Hence it is not simply a question of having the requisite knowledge in any particular field but, increasingly as we move up from the third level, a matter of having the subtle intelligence needed to bring that knowledge into proper play:

¹⁵ It would be surprising to find 'moral habit' second to 'immediate energy' had Ruskin not explained that such energy is 'produced by the operation of present strength, feeling, or intelligence' (Works IX, p.446). It is not only the reciprocal action between the categories, but the degrees (greater or worse) of dexterity which together make up the difference in bodily power 'between a common soldier and a man in the circumstances of the Horatii'. pp.446-7.

It is never so much the question, what is the solitary perfection of a given part of man, as what is the balanced perfection in relation to the whole of him.

Works IX, p.446.

Balance is all. The achievement of balance would be like the restoration of the ancient precision: not as static ideology but undertaken as a process towards perfection, in the midst of the constant flux and change of living things. But harmony won is fragile and transient, just as balance is never a given constant but must be constantly regulated.

Finally Ruskin comes to the arts of the 'first order':

...those in which the Imaginative part of the intellect and the Sensitive part of the soul are joined; as poetry, architecture, and painting; these forming a kind of cross, in their part of the scheme of the human being, with those of the second order, which wed the Intelligent part of the intellect and Resolute part of the soul.

Works IX pp.447-8.

In effect Ruskin's cross would look like this:

Body	Senses	Muscles
Soul	Feeling	Resolution
Intellect. . .	Understanding	Imagination

Just for the briefest moment all these things can be held together in analogous relationship as Ruskin's cross, under the pen, marks and holds open the meeting point. But the pen moves on and the moment is gone. In the very next sentence Ruskin admits the 'impossibility' of holding together all the threads of connection and difference, and his whole 'scheme' seems to unravel as the visionary moment passes. 'You always see something,

but you never see all', said Ruskin of Turnerian mystery: only God appoints the 'exquisite finish and fulness' (MP I, Pt.II, Sec.II, Ch.V, para.3). Only God sees all. Ruskin gave up the pursuit of the enquiry, knowing 'the scheme' of God's blueprint to be humanly impossible to grasp, and relegated Divisions of Humanity to an appendix. Ruskin was a man torn between wanting to know the system and catalogue the whole soul of man on the one hand, while at the same time knowing the impossibility of believing in any man-made ordering. But if Ruskin is finally defeated in theory it is not a defeat in practice: God's blueprint works through Ruskin dynamically in time in his prose's commitment to mundane transience. The vision of an underlying analogy is the framework that faithfully holds together the whole body of his work as surely as it had held Bishop Butler's - but the analogical system is taken on trust, is enabling and immanent but not directly describable or translatable as a whole. In that way Ruskin's faith allows him freer and wider remits of experience, in the continuous re-finding of his way, than is found in Newman, let alone Hopkins. Ruskin's is a religion in the universe, as it was with Wordsworth.

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Ruskin demonstrates how a non-philosophic but still speculative visionary might use the resources of a sort of literariness, albeit not poetic, to produce a type of thinking that is not pathetic fallacy, nor projection, but is essentially analogical thinking. In this respect, Ruskin offers an alternative in nature to what Newman

The most terrible paradox of all for Hopkins must be that the means of producing a language of celebration is the same poetic process that produces a language of damnation. Syntax now creates a wracked fusion of flesh, blood and sin, as gall and heartburn hover between being nouns and verbs, and bitter is instressed as 'my taste was me'. 'What you look hard at seems to look hard at you' was Hopkins' criterion for 'true instress' (Journal, 204). In the sonnets of desolation all that looks back is Hopkins' own sinful reflection. Damnation is imprisonment in the mind's endless reflections of itself within the body of the verse: 'Where, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe and shelterless, thoughts against thoughts in groans grind' ('Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves', 1.14). The balance that once sustained the vision of God as at once 'Father and fondler of heart thou hast wrung', is gone. All Hopkins now knows is the 'selfwring' heart in total isolation.

Hopkins' Catholic poetry of absolute connection must always be fearful of absolute separation. When the language of one extreme is the same language for the other, poetry can hardly hope to be the clear means of re-finding the lost way of connection except almost by accident or grace:

That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my
God!) my God.

'Carrion Comfort', 13-14.

Even in the split-second between words, the words '(my God!) my God' which seem to be pulling themselves together as in a flash of communication hard upon a

preceding moment of absolute separation, are already coming apart. The sharp intake of breath '(my God!)' must come fractionally prior to the sudden and complete clarity of the moment of absolute connection that knows 'my God'. In haecceitas, it is the speed of the turn-around between salvation and damnation that makes Hopkins so vulnerable to the apparent disappearance of God. Hopkins' poetry seeks to preserve moments of connection on the page, but his abiding problem is how the connection could then be maintained from any movement from loss to damnation. But I am arguing that even on the page the moment of connection is not what it seems, as a twentieth-century poet, Douglas Oliver, explains:

In a poem, each stress is held in memory and perceived as a unity of sound, meaning and special poetic emotion. All durational things on either side of the stroke (the wing-beat) of stress - the length of its syllable, all its sound qualities, what words come immediately before and after it in the poetic line, the whole movement of the line - make us think how weighty or light the individual stress is. The stress centres a tiny island in memory. The centre of the island is occluded; it is the moment when we believe the stress has actually happened. We can even strike its instant, a little late, by tapping a finger. If we could bring all those instants fully into consciousness, the poem would become vivid. ¹⁶

The problem that Douglas Oliver outlines is that only by a deep 'mental trick' can we 'convince ourselves that we experience the model as a present moment' ('Oliver', p.57). In fact we can only experience an instant of time 'a little late'. The attempt to link the temporal with the eternal makes the temporal more momentary than ever.

¹⁶ Douglas Oliver, Three Variations on the Theme of Harm: Selected Poetry and Prose (London: Paladin, 1990), p.57, hereafter cited as 'Oliver'.

From the inside the poetry is vivid, but the instants can never be brought fully into sustained consciousness. In other words, the terrible thing for Hopkins is that the moment was already over even in the instant that he knew the instress. The nineteenth-century Christian philosopher, Friedrich Schleiermacher taught the impossibility of knowing God in God's time:

A feeling of absolute dependence, strictly speaking, cannot exist in a single moment as such, because such a moment is always determined, as regards its total content, by what is given, and thus by objects towards which we have a feeling of freedom. ¹⁷

By analogy dependence implies the existence of someone to depend upon. But Hopkins wanted to hold both the dependent and the dependable for ever and in one moment from '(my God!)' to 'my God'. And he wanted to hold the two in one by immediate experience, not argument.

In a discussion of Browning and Schleiermacher, W.D. Shaw refers to what he calls Schleiermacher's 'analogy of dependence'. Shaw points out that in opposition to Schleiermacher D.F. Strauss speaks sceptically of analogical inference as 'a backward inference' (Lucid Veil, p.210). From the inward experience of dependence as an effect, Schleiermacher argues to the real existence of the person of Christ as a cause. That is a presumption, an assumption, as Strauss sees it. For Hopkins too, from a position opposite to that of the sceptical Strauss, there is barely legitimate time for

¹⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, ed. by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, English translation of the 2nd German edition (1928; Edinburgh: T.& T. Clarke, 1976), p.16, hereafter cited as CF.

such inference. For Hopkins, dependence is experienced as inadequacy, as loss on its way to damnation. In this Section I shall turn to a poetic and religious alternative to Hopkins, returning to a poet who maintains the experience of dependence as the crucial human position just short of the certitude of God: Christina Rossetti. In what follows I shall show how she takes on the risks of dependence: how it may prove to be of analogical worth as a clue to God; how it may equally plausibly be a sign of need which nonetheless there is nothing outside us to fulfil. The first position, as we shall see is Schleiermacher's; the second Strauss' and Feuerbach's.

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In the Christian Faith (1821-22), it was Schleiermacher's concern to free theology from both speculative philosophy and dogma as objectively authoritative truth, by showing that religious experience is universally natural to human life and is prior to intellectual experience. Starting from the human experience of consciousness, he infers its anterior source:

In every self-consciousness there are elements which we might call respectively, a self-caused element (ein Sichselbstsetzen) and a non-self-caused element (ein Sichselbstnichtsogesezthaben); or a Having-by-some-means-come-to-be (ein Sein und ein Irgendwiegewordensein). The latter of these pre-supposes for every self-consciousness another factor besides the Ego, a factor which is the source of the particular determination, and without which the self-consciousness would not be precisely what it is.

CF, p.13

Of the two elements within the unity of self-consciousness, 'the one expresses the existence of the subject for itself, the other its co-existence with an Other' (CF, p.13). The human consciousness cannot be entirely self-aware, for it can never be independent of the realm of Otherness. Emotions themselves are testimony to being affected, not autonomous. Neither is it possible to think away this co-existence, for it is a natural part of the human condition, having its 'source' outside the Ego:

The common element in all those determinations of self-consciousness which predominantly expresses a receptivity affected from some outside quarter is the feeling of Dependence.
CF, p.13.

The feeling of dependence and the consciousness of being 'in relation with God' are fully one and the same (CF, p.17). This is the fundamental relationship which includes all others: self-consciousness includes God-consciousness, the two cannot be separated.

Karl Barth, among others, has argued however that a feeling-centred religion such as Schleiermacher's invites a host of objections, among them:

That Ludwig Feuerbach is the logically inevitable nemesis that overtakes Schleiermacher's (and Luther's) attempt to ground religion in feeling. Take that path, make God man-dependent even in the most restrictive sense, make religion man centred, and Feuerbach follows.¹⁸

¹⁸ Eugene Kamenka, The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach (London: Routledge, 1970), p.41, hereafter cited as 'Kamenka'.

For Feuerbach religion arises from the feeling of dependence which is the inevitable consequence of man's inherent helplessness: but that feeling of dependence has no real object that assuages our natural existential anxiety; there is no one and nothing for us securely to depend upon:¹⁹

That is dependent, the possibility of whose existence lies out of itself; that is independent which has the possibility of its existence in itself. Life therefore involves the contradiction of an existence at once dependent and independent, - the contradiction that its possibility lies both in itself and out of itself. The understanding alone is free from this and other contradictions of life; it is the essence perfectly self-subsistent, perfectly at one with itself, perfectly self-existent. Thinking is existence in self.

The Essence of Christianity, p.60.

According to Schleiermacher the active feeling of freedom and the passive, receptive feeling of dependence are both to some extent present in secular experience. But religious experience is the feeling of absolute dependence in which there can be finally no element of freedom. In contrast, the Feuerbachian realm of 'independence' is the realm of thought, which being 'at one with itself' is thus free to abolish the 'Other' as simply a self-reflection projected into the absolute. Human thought, reflecting upon the human condition even from within it, replaces God.

The consequence of Feuerbachian understanding is that when all human knowledge of the Divine is reduced to a process of human projection, religious analogy becomes

¹⁹ As a student in Berlin, Feuerbach heard Schleiermacher deliver lectures and sermons ('Kamenka', p. 161).

a fiction, albeit a somewhat necessary and involuntary one: 'God is a need of the intelligence - a necessary thought' (Essence, p.60).

Mansel himself helps us see how Barth is right to see Schleiermacher giving way to Feuerbach. To Mansel Schleiermacher's God is manifested with no attribute of personality and can be understood only as an object of infinite magnitude: 'the feeling of absolute dependence is in fact that of annihilation of our personal existence in the Infinite Being of the Universe. Of this feeling, the intellectual exponent is pure Pantheism' (Limits, p.77). Towards such a depersonalised and increasingly abstract conception, man can stand in no real relation. But here Mansel ran into the contradictions of feeling which Feuerbach had so easily swept aside:

It is our duty, then to think of God as personal; and it is our duty to believe that He is infinite. It is true that we cannot reconcile these two representations with each other as our conception of personality involves attributes apparently contradictory to the notion of infinity. But it does not follow that this contradiction exists anywhere but in our own minds: it does not follow that it implies any impossibility in the absolute nature of God.

Limits, p.59

For Feuerbach, God as thus conceived is impossible. But for Mansel such inconceivability is what God is. The agnostic position - of felt dependence in life but uncertainty as to the nature or even existence of that which dependence implies - is here the quintessential human position, putting analogy, inference, the impossibilities of religion under probation.

As Schleiermacher sought to reach behind the propositions and the dogma of nineteenth-century theology to the felt dependence upon a Something More which underlies conscious existence, so, I shall argue, the poetry of Christina Rossetti, from the midst of human experience, cannot always recognize God as God, but can only be vaguely but powerfully aware of an agnostic dependence from which religious feeling must take its origins. As Schleiermacher asserts, 'the double constitution of self-consciousness causes us always to look objectively for an Other' (CF, p.13):

What can lambkins do
All the keen night through?
Nestle by their woolly mother
The careful ewe.

What can nestlings do
In the nightly dew?
Sleep beneath their mother's wing
Till day breaks anew.

If in the field or tree
There might only be
Such a warm soft sleeping place
Found for me!

'A Chill'

Rossetti's High Anglican poetry is rooted in the analogical tradition. Her stanzas offer the very shape and movement of analogy itself, seeking another line or level in the chain of being. Although the poem is conscious that the feeling of loneliness is analogously connected to the dependent relationship of young creatures to their mothers, the final verse still weakly ('might only') takes dependence for a condition of 'place'. It seems so easy in nature to get from cause to effect and yet so hard at higher levels to get back from effect to cause:

A cold wind stirs the blackthorn
 To burgeon and to blow,
 Besprinkling half-green hedges
 With flakes and sprays of snow.

Thro' coldness and thro' keenness,
 Dear hearts, take comfort so,
 Somewhere or other doubtless
 These make the blackthorn grow.

'Endure Hardness'

This poem does not tell of having come 'thro coldness' but is written in the midst of living in coldness. In the fallen world of nature, man's double consciousness is only 'half-green'; we only half see ahead, by analogy from what we presently know. The vagueness of 'Somewhere or other' obscures, but implicitly contains, some 'Other': the cause hidden behind the effect. Rossetti is 'doubtless' much closer here to the thought of the cause, than merely suffering the effect. Yet there is still a missing link between the creature and the creator:

As regards the identification of absolute dependence with 'relation to God' in our proposition: this is to be understood in the sense that the whence of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word God, and that this is for us the really original signification of that word. In this connexion we have first of all to remind ourselves ... this 'whence' is not the world, in the sense of the totality of temporal existence, and still less is it any single part of the world.

CF, p.16

We may one day remember that 'whence' and God are synonymous and are not of this world; yet as worldly creatures it seems natural that in the process of making the connection from 'whence' to 'God', we would begin from what we know - our temporal existence:

Somewhere or other there must surely be
 The face not seen, the voice not heard,
 The heart that not yet - never yet - ah me!
 Made answer to my word.

Somewhere or other, may be near or far;
 Past land and sea, clean out of sight;
 Beyond the wandering moon, beyond the star
 That tracks her night by night.

Somewhere or other may be far or near;
 With just a wall, a hedge, between;
 With just the last leaves of the dying year
 Fallen on a turf grown green,

'Somewhere or Other'

The echoing repetitions of 'somewhere or other' indicate a more purposeful phrase than its apparent vagueness would at first suggest. As Schleiermacher sought to re-direct the search for God from up above to the passive feeling down within, so in Rossetti's poem the second verse breaks free from 'somewhere or other' as negative limitation, and travels imaginatively 'beyond' the limits of the universe, before bringing that sense of somewhere or other closer to home - 'just a wall a hedge between'. The highly significant shift from 'near or far' (1.5), to 'far or near' (1.9) puts the poet closer or nearer to finding the 'answer' albeit short of the word 'God'. The poem starts from the feeling of lack, and infers intuitively from what it lacks - 'the face not seen, the voice not heard' - that there is something to be seen and heard. Feuerbach would declare God as the fiction with which we fill the lack, yet this poem does not merely project its neediness beyond earthly life but comes close to realizing that sense of beyond or otherness within itself.

Many of Rossetti's poems work stoically backwards from the symptoms of loneliness even when those symptoms

threaten to obscure rather than clarify the presence of God. One of the early sonnets from the sequence Later Life could so easily have become the representation merely of the prison of Arnoldian solitude. But the expression of suffering leads the sufferer instead to a new perspective and a clearer consciousness, and not simply to a foregone conclusion:

So tired am I, so weary of today,
 So unrefreshed from foregone weariness,
 So overburdened by foreseen distress,
 So lagging and so stumbling on my way,
 I scarce can rouse myself to watch or pray,
 To hope, or aim, or toil for more or less,-
 Ah always less and less, even while I press
 Forward and toil and aim as best I may.
 Half-starved of soul and heartsick utterly,
 Yet lift I up my heart and soul and eyes
 (Which fail in looking upward) toward the prize:
 Me, Lord, Thou seest though I see not Thee;
 Me now, as once the Thief in Paradise,
 Even me, O Lord my Lord, remember me.

'Later Life' 4.

Words 'so' often repeated add up to the overload which in turn presses down the weary mind and body. The question to be answered then is how does the poet produce line 10 ('Yet lift I up my heart and soul and eyes') out of the pattern and press of trouble that preceded it. It is as if the poem itself bears in mind something which the overburdened mind of the subjective 'I' has temporarily forgotten. The pain-full phrases, 'half-starved', 'I scarce could' and 'as best I may', may seem to tell only of the limit of endurance, but they implicitly retain the positive sense of what is only felt as negative. 'Even while I press/Forward', the toil which seems hope-less and aim-less preserves the hope and aim in parallel existence that is 'even while' and 'yet'. It is a parallel existence which only God can see whilst I cannot

('Me...Thou seest though I see not Thee'). So it is that 'lift I up heart and soul and eyes' is like a purely instinctive or intuitive reaching out of self by a soul not isolatingly 'at one with itself', but as if intuitively recalling a sense of the doubleness of religious existence, in God's eye as well as through one's own, in the hidden as well as the experienced meaning of one's own effort. Two, not one, is the shorthand sum for the crucial distinction between Rossetti here and Hopkins.

Schleiermacher distinguishes between consciousness as knowing and feeling (which 'simply takes place in the subject, and thus, since it belongs altogether to the realm of receptivity, it is entirely an abiding-in-self') and consciousness as a form of doing:

Life, then is to be conceived as an alternation between the abiding-in-self (insichbleiben) and a passing-beyond-self (aussichheranstreten) on the part of the subject. The two forms of consciousness (Knowing and Feeling) constitute the abiding-in-self, while Doing proper is the passing-beyond-self. Thus far, then, Knowing and Feeling stand together in antithesis to Doing. But while Knowing, in the sense of possessing knowledge, is an abiding-in-self on the part of a subject, nevertheless as the act of knowing, it only becomes real by a passing beyond self of the subject, and in this sense it is a Doing.

CF, p.8

Feeling becomes religious by becoming conscious of its own dependence; knowing becomes Doing by imagining itself translated into the realm of what it knows. The vital move of Sonnet 4 might be understood as something akin to Schleiermacher's 'passing-beyond-self'. The eyes fail to see upward, yet heart and soul know the feeling of

absolute dependence as religious. As Schleiermacher states, 'God signifies for us simply that which is the co-determinant in this feeling' (CF.p.17). 'Thou seest though I see not Thee' finds the sufferer realigned with the parallel existence which had been lost in the concentration on the suffering self, but which the poem, like God, has remembered. For Rossetti, we are sometimes like young children who, covering their eyes, think that they cannot be seen. To be able to say 'Thou seest though I see not thee' must be, in a sense, an imaginative passing beyond self, whilst spoken still within a fallen world.

Thus in this sonnet, the increasing isolation in the experience of private suffering turns out to be not single-minded damnation, as it might for Hopkins. Rossetti's imagination offers a second view. She recovers an idea that Hopkins seems altogether to have left too far behind and finally lost: that is to say she infers from a separate self that separation is a clue and a sign of dependence, not necessarily a symptom of damnation:

We lack, yet cannot fix upon the lack:
 Not this, nor that; yet somewhat, certainly.
 We see the things we do not yearn to see
 Around us: and what see we glancing back?
 Lost hopes that leave our hearts upon the rack,
 Hopes that were never ours yet seemed to be,
 For which we steered on life's salt stormy sea
 Braving the sunstroke and the frozen pack.
 If thus to look behind is all in vain,
 And all in vain to look to left or right,
 Why face we not our future once again,
 Launching with hardier hearts across the main,
 Straining dim eyes to catch the invisible sight,
 And strong to bear ourselves in patient pain?

'Later Life' 6.

Here in this great sonnet sequence is at least Rossetti's holding on and refusing to let 'lack' make her become, so

to speak, Hardy in his poetry. Lack for Rossetti is still not a sign of no God. It is still mysteriously 'somewhat' rather than Hardy's nothing.

Christina Rossetti's poetry offers a sense of implicit trust in analogy as mysterious:

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I or you:
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing thro'

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you or I:
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.

'Who Has Seen the Wind'

With child-like trust the questions can be asked in expectation of an answer. And if the answers cannot throw light upon the earthly predicament, there is nevertheless some sense of a foregone conclusion, something inevitably worked for in the pre-conditioned shape of her poems, so different from Hopkins refusal of such. The poem's natural repetitive cycle ensures that it will come back to 'but when' and in this assurance of some future promise yet to be fulfilled there is also implicit assurance of the wind's constant if unseen presentness: the 'invisible sight' (Later Life 6, 1.13), whether it is passing 'by' or 'through'. There is for Rossetti, I suggest, recurrently an implicit sense of inevitable destination at the very start:

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end...

Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.

'Up-Hill', 1-2; 15-16.

As Schleiermacher taught, 'the double constitution of self consciousness causes us always to look objectively for an Other' (CF, p.13). Rossetti's frequent use of a question and answer sequence anticipates an objective answer and demonstrates a present sense of doubleness. It is as if analogy is always in some sense waiting to be part of Rossetti's equipment; rather than uncovered in the midst of the world as it is in Ruskin.

Thus, finally, Rossetti's poetry cannot fully demonstrate the passing on of religious analogy into the hands of a poetry becoming religious by this means rather than already being it. In a review of In Memoriam for the Anglican journal English Review, the reviewer compares the poetry of Rossetti and Tennyson, concluding that 'we remain undecided as to Mr Tennyson's faith, though we opine that strictly speaking, he has none, whether negative or affirmative'. The reviewer quotes an offending example as being 'strictly and purely blasphemy':

Though truths in manhood darkly join,
 Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
 We yield all blessing to the name
 Of Him that made them current coin.

In Memoriam, XXXVII, 1-4

For the orthodox believer, such as Rossetti, Tennyson's assertion that 'truths' are 'deep-seated in our mystic frame', and not in the christological event is 'simply blasphemy'. D.A Kent adds, 'To a liberal or Broad Church mind of course it is nothing of the sort. Rossetti's poetry offers sharp contrast to Tennyson's because her theology never skirts what she would have regarded as

dangerous liberal positions' ('Kent, p.8).²⁰ In contrast I shall argue that Tennyson's true faith in In Memoriam does not finally fall into a 'dangerous liberal position' but comes from a 'backward inference from a feeling of dependence' (Lucid Veil, p.212) purposefully and faithfully, to the occupation of an agnostic *middle* ground which is the true territory of Butler's analogy. Analogy must start from agnosticism.

Finally then, this thesis must return to Tennyson, whose poetry of loss began in a situation of not knowing whether he was in metaphor, simile or analogy, and who being 'without a plan' can best test the possibility that analogy might be rediscovered under the pen. It is the element of discovery - so crucial to Ruskin - that is the vital force of recall in In Memoriam: the recall of a lost God.

²⁰ D.A.Kent draws attention to the review of In Memoriam in the English Review in the Introduction to his book.

CHAPTER 6

Tennyson: Honest Agnostic

i. Tennyson Through the Looking-Glass

To follow Christina Rossetti's analogy of dependence with Tennyson's version of the same would be a neat but false conclusion. Tennyson does not immediately arrive at analogical inference from the feeling of dependence. Rather, in the slow development that is the Way of the Soul, it will be the journey's end. The verse which complains -:

but what am I?
 An infant crying in the night:
 An infant crying for the light:
 And with no language but a cry.

In Memoriam, LIV. 17-20.

- knows, as Rossetti knew, the sense of helplessness, loneliness and loss. But here, Tennyson's illustrative analogy of the sufferer to an infant only reinforces the disinheritedness and inarticulacy without being able to summon a language for the wider or fuller implications of the analogy, that is to say, the infant in relation to the parent.

In LIV, the under-potentiated analogy is only illustrative of the immediate earthly predicament, so that the lyric ends once again in the dark of a dead-end thought. But the shape and form of In Memoriam is such that another time, another lyric, or even another stanza within a lyric, might possibly break through to the thought that is analogously on the other side - or the

originating, parental dimension - of the initial intimation. Thus from the despairing thought which begins LXX:

I cannot see the features right,
When on the gloom I strive to paint
The face I know...

The poet reaches the discovery in the same section:

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And through a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face...

LXX. 1-3; 13-15.

The primary task of this chapter is to pursue the extension of meaning that is gained from the new perspective available on what I call the 'other side' of what once had seemed to be bounded and limited mortal thoughts. In speaking of the other side of a thought I follow Chalmers on the belief behind disbelief in his reinterpretation of Butler in Chapter Two.

But first, the question of how Tennyson arrives at his breakthroughs must be addressed. It will be helpful to consider a version of such a leap in a famous moment of Tennyson's real-life experience:

A kind of waking trance I have frequently had... This has generally come upon me thro' repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this is not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no

extinction but the only true life
 (Memoir, i, p.320).

The name which is the symbol of his identity is chanted as a repeated incantation until, without quite knowing how, Tennyson has passed through the boundaries of the familiar to a state 'utterly beyond words'. The loss of individuality is the gain of a changed perspective, as if from the other side of bounded being. Whereas from this side infinity can find a measure of relevance to the human scale only in relation to the limitedness of individual human understanding, from the other side, boundlessness is an unframed perception. Years later Tennyson translated the experience into the poetry of 'The Ancient Sage'¹ :

More than once when I
 Sat all alone, revolving in myself
 The word that is the symbol of myself,
 The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
 And passed into the Nameless, as a cloud
 Melts into Heaven. I touched my limbs, the limbs
 Were strange, not mine - and yet no shade of doubt,
 But utter clearness, and thro' loss of self
 The gain of such large life as matched with ours
 Were sun to spark.

'The Ancient Sage', lines 229-38.

The gain is the vital new perspective of 'such large life', not as something absolutely separate but analogically connected ('as a cloud/ Melts into Heaven') and seen in analogical relation ('as matched with ours / Were sun to spark'). Through the incantation Tennyson found the 'mortal limit of the Self' to be not a fixed, unalterable boundary, but an altogether more flexible

¹ 'If you turn to your father's account of the wonderful state of consciousness superinduced by thinking of his own name, and compare it with the argument of The Ancient Sage, you will see that they refer to one and the same phenomenon.'
 John Tyndall, 'A Fragment', in Memoir ii, p.478.

to accommodate ideas not of a future world but a parallel world-within-world:

'Now, if you'll only attend, Kitty, and not talk so much, I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass - that's just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way. I can see all of it when I get upon a chair - all but the bit just behind the fireplace. Oh! I do so wish I could see that bit!' ³

As Tennyson is not alone in the ability to conceive of the self passing through from the sensible world into the supersensible, in this chapter I want to suggest that there is a case for seeing In Memoriam as a serious version of Through the Looking-Glass, for Ruskin knew 'the true grotesque [is] the expression of the repose or play of a serious mind' (SV III, Ch.III, para.49). It is Lewis Carroll rather than the more earnestly direct John Ruskin who best serves to highlight the odd logic of perspectives within the experimental nature of In Memoriam, a poem that experiences seriousness increasingly as disturbing and peculiar.

Charles Dodgson was 18 when In Memoriam was published. Twelve years later in 1862, he and his sisters (with Tennyson's permission) published An Index to In Memoriam. In 1871, despite the fact that he had quarrelled with Tennyson over some unpublished poems, Dodgson sent Tennyson one of only two specially bound copies of Through the Looking-Glass.⁴ There is no

³ Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking-Glass, The Annotated Alice, Notes by Martin Gardner (1872; London: Anthony Blond, 1960), pp.180-181, hereafter cited as TTLG.

⁴ Anne Clark, Lewis Carroll: A Biography (London: Dent, 1979), p.168.

evidence to show that Tennyson read it, but what is clear is that the back-to-front thinking that is the courageous achievement of In Memoriam is comically reproduced in Carroll's book where 'things go the other way', in parallel but inverted thinking. While still in this world Alice, like the Ancient Sage, has the sense of something beyond. But the room that Alice sees through the looking-glass, which is 'just the same as our drawing room', is still within the drawing room. Just as Tennyson repeats his name in order to pass through mortal limits, so Alice, wishing to see more, plays the game of 'Let's Pretend':

'Oh, Kitty, how nice it would be if we could only get through into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got, oh! such beautiful things in it! Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through -' She was up on the chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she had got there. And certainly the glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist.

In another moment Alice was through the glass, and had jumped lightly down into the Looking-glass room.

TTLG, pp.181-184

The extraordinary outcome of 'let's pretend' is that it surpasses the need for make-believe since, as the opaque gauziness of the glass begins to melt away, what had at first been pretend, turns out to be 'certainly' real. For Tennyson too there had been 'no shade of doubt/ But utter clearness' in his altered state. In this world, as Alice knows, 'things go the other way', just as for Tennyson, in the lines 'I touched my limbs,

the limbs/Were strange, not mine', the familiar ('my limbs') became 'the limbs' in that inversion I have called strangeness. This strangely repeated world was, Tennyson insisted, the real world. He said that there were moments when 'the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the spiritual only the real and true, depend on it the spiritual is the real'.⁵

Alice has no explanations; 'she hardly knew how she got there', until 'in another moment Alice was through the glass'. In the same way Tennyson, both in LXX and when chanting his name, passes through the frame of the sensible world into strange and boundless larger life 'all at once'. As to quite how he had made the transition - according to Alice the way-through began in the passage:

'But oh, Kitty! now we come to the passage. You can just see a little peep of the passage in Looking-glass House, if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open: and it's very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different on beyond.'
TTLG, p.181.

From this side, the passage can be glimpsed 'if you leave the door wide open'. The struggle in In Memoriam is the avoidance of closed doors; but even with the door open Tennyson will never have the full overview, as if the door frame, mirrored within the looking-glass, tantalisingly restricts the vision of the whole. But Carroll's mirrored perspective shows objects going the other way, and Alice, at the far end of the passage,

⁵ Charles Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson (1949; London: Macmillan, 1968), p.384.

close to the mirror, infers by analogy ('it is very like our passage as far as you can see') the part she cannot 'know' for sure. It is this sense of parallel, inverted inference that is so important to the direction of Tennyson's thinking, as XLVI demonstrates:

We ranging down this lower track,
 The path we came by, thorn and flower,
 Is shadowed by the growing hour,
 Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
 In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
 But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
 The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time revealed;
 The fruitful hours of still increase;
 Days ordered in a wealthy peace,
 And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
 A bounded field, nor stretching far;
 Look also, Love, a brooding star,
 A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

XLVI.

The initial danger is that Tennyson might become stuck within the boundaries of the first verse, ever experiencing life as linear descent. The concentration is centred upon the present 'ranging down' in on-going vertical decline, away from a past that is not shadowed by but against unbearable memories. But astonishingly 'lest' turns out to be what I have called in Chapter 3 one of Tennyson's 'enabling', pivotal words - a word which allows thought to turn freely - as the backwards look turns him further forwards in the next stanza, allowing him, like Alice, 'just a little peep of the passage ... beyond'. What would fail if he were to look back is the movement onwards: thus it is possible to see that in the break between the first and second stanzas

Tennyson has, as it were, gone through the looking-glass. 'So be it' is both a last word or conclusion to one perspective and the solemn assent to the other ('there'). From the second verse, thought is directed simultaneously to the experience of both verses, inferring by analogy from the lived experience of the first to the felt intuition of the second. As Myers said, we are 'living equally in both': still 'ranging down the lower track' yet now with the intuited view which from the other side is like a panoramic overview. From the moment Tennyson gains this analogous but inverted perspective, he sees the landscape and the track as part of an 'eternal' tract: the word 'behind', so unexpected, nevertheless confirms that the poet has gone through to the other side, as I call it, to the inconceivable world that antecedes the conceivable:⁶

'Living backwards!' Alice repeated in great astonishment. 'I never heard of such a thing!'
 ' - but there's one great advantage in it, that one's memory works both ways.'
 TTLG, p.247

From the other side of the looking-glass the memories of 'fruitful hours' will 'still increase' but increase in the stillness of time-becoming-space, within the blooming of an eternal landscape:

O Love, thy province were not large,
 A bounded field, nor stretching far;
 Look also, Love, a brooding star,
 A rosy warmth from marge to marge.
 13-16.

⁶ W.D. Shaw writes that paradoxically 'the tomb is the frame through which Tennyson views "The eternal landscape of the past" (Lucid Veil), p.133.

Lines 13 and 14 together recall the linear experience of life, feeling life's bounding restrictions from the inside; but the parallel lines 15 and 16, with the gain of the overview, powerfully sense, from beneath, something above that colours everything differently. This new direction of thought conceives love as part of the larger Love. Thus apparent limitations 'from marge to marge' are understood as but the dimensions of human perception which, as mortal limits are loosened, shift and expand within the poet's mind as if in an experience of the starry sublime. Mary Warnock paraphrases Kant on the sublime:

The faculty which in the *Critique of Judgement* gains pleasure from the contemplation of objects both beautiful and sublime is the faculty which *frames images*. In the case of beautiful objects, the imagination takes pleasure in the free power to frame its images: in the case of the sublime, however, its pleasure, as we shall see, is different... On the other hand, in the case of sublimity, the imagination in trying to encompass the vastness of the power before it is led to the awareness of something mysteriously great in the human mind itself. We can think, but not imagine, such vastness, or such power. The idea somehow embodied in the sublime object is beyond representation or explanation, but yet can be apprehended by the human mind. We are grand in that we can touch such grandeur and be touched by it, though we shall always struggle and fail to say what it means.⁷

In XLVI, the beautiful image is the 'bounded field' of human love: the frame that we, in terms of human love, must stay within. The second look - 'look also Love'- reveals the invisible world that antecedes the visible and the boundlessness that is the experience of the

⁷ Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (London: Faber, 1976), pp.55 and 61.

sublime. As human creatures we have merely a creaturely view from within and beneath, rather than the omnipotent overview. But in trying to think of boundlessness or vastness without an image of what vastness can be, we seem to burst the limits of our merely human mind. And in this venture into the mysteriously strange we find that there was always something of 'such grandeur' analogously within us.

Mary Warnock says 'we can think but not imagine such vastness'. For a poet who thinks in images this would seem to bring Tennyson disastrously up to a dead end. The problem now must lie in the struggle to express in poetry an apprehension of the sublime which is not only 'Nameless' but beyond imagination. The lines quoted earlier from the 'Ancient Sage' continue:

thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark - unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow world.

'The Ancient Sage' 236-9.

The extraordinary difficulty for the poet in going further than earthly terms is his having to bring the beyond back into terms that in some sense he must always struggle, and fail, to transcend. He can only attempt to make the terms transcend themselves as in Tennyson's strange repetition of his own name. Hence shadow words are what Tennyson employs, together with analogy and the repeated use of the comparative as a form of denser repetition. Accordingly, in the 'Ancient Sage' and in his own life-experience Tennyson comes to know the sublime state in terms of what I shall call Tennyson's 'comparative superlative' operating within its own

repeated terms: 'the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest' (Memoir, p.320). In contrast to Hopkins' single-minded need for the superlative, the increasingly sure use of the repeated comparative in In Memoriam indicates Tennyson's growing trust in analogy, of which the comparative is a version.

To show this, I turn to lyrics LI, LXI and LXIII as a way of following this trust in analogy. Starting fearfully and hesitatingly, Tennyson is haltingly brought by what Hutton called reiteration to a declaration of faith in a spiritual reality, not outside, but powerfully within the terms of the sensible world. Each of these poems starts from the inference that even as I, Tennyson, am thinking of Hallam, so he may be thinking of me - the mystic number here is two, as it was for Rossetti, not one as with Hopkins:

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
 Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
 There must be wisdom with great Death:
 The dead shall look me through and through.

Be near us when we climb or fall:
 Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
 With larger other eyes than ours,
 To make allowance for us all.
 LI, 9-16.

Even here there is some sense of the expansion of the narrow frame of the grave into 'great Death'. The 'look' from elsewhere that goes transpiercingly 'through and through' begins with the small creaturely thought of the great power behind the look. 'We are grand', says Mary Warnock, 'that we can touch such grandeur and be touched by it'. This poem in its needy loneliness has a ghostly

sense of both grandeur and smallness, but the grandeur is as yet all Hallam's, 'like God'. There is a tacit sense of the father watching as we children climb and fall but the analogy never quite comes into the forethought. The 'larger other eyes' reinforce the comparative difference from 'ours'. As Alice suggests 'it may be quite different beyond' (TTLG,p.8). This poem brings Tennyson closer to the 'Looking-glass' but leaves him simply noticing that things go some 'other' way.

But in LXI it is as if, like Alice, Tennyson begins to help himself to look more closely: 'I can see all of it when I get upon a chair' (TTLG,p.181):

If, in thy second state sublime,
 Thy ransomed reason change replies
 With all the circle of the wise,
 The perfect flower of human time;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
 How dimly characterized and slight,
 How dwarfed a growth of cold and night,
 How blanched with darkness must I grow!

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
 Where thy first form was made a man;
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
 The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

LXI

In the first verse the sublime state is only Hallam's and by the second verse 'I' am almost obliterated in the build up of comparative difference ('how dimly', 'how dwarfed', 'how blanched') between thy state and my state. Despite being governed by the hypothetical 'if', the first two verses seem full of risk, and yet Tennyson stays honestly with the comparative, trusting that there is more, and that it comes from elsewhere. In Chapter Three of this thesis I described how Tennyson's fear of losing sight of Hallam suddenly turns to the fear of

Hallam losing sight of Tennyson. I now wish to stress the importance of this redirection of thought.

As Tennyson asks 'How blanched with darkness must I grow!' he reaches a point where 'individuality seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being' (Memoir, i, p.320). It is at this point that Tennyson steps across the verses as easily as Alice goes through the 'silvery mist', and comes to the other side, from where the backwards thought recalls the clear, sure truth at heart - 'I loved thee':

There is both care and ease in every line, - the care of delicate touches, the ease which hides the care. Tennyson is not a poet whose poetry bubbles up and flows on with the superfluous buoyancy and redundancy of a fountain or a rapid. It is inlaid with conscious emotion, saturated with purpose and reflection. Its grace and ease, - it is always graceful and easy, - are the grace and ease of a vigilant attention. There is what theologians call 'recollection' in every line.⁸

Hutton is a critic whose interests link Tennyson to Newman in terms of thought as turning backwards. To recollect is, as Hutton suggests, to reach back against the movement of time flowing on. The importance of recollection as the reversal, as well as the collection, of thought is that where, in the first two stanzas, thought works from the top down, from the idea of Hallam above casting his 'eyes below', in stanza 3 the exciting and difficult thought is produced from the bottom up: 'I loved thee, Spirit and love', re-collecting the love as the continuing link between the two dimensions. The gain of this reversal is its connection to the larger life

⁸ R.H. Hutton, 'The Genius of Tennyson', A Victorian Spectator, p.254.

'Sun to spark'. At such a moment - vitally for my thesis - the words of Bishop Butler become particularly pertinent again in the history of human feeling as Butler contemplates 'this little scene of human life in which we are so busily engaged, as having reference of some sort or other to a much larger plan of things':

Whether we are any way related to the more distant parts of the boundless universe into which we are brought, is altogether uncertain. But it is evident that the course of things which comes within our view is connected with somewhat past, present, and future, beyond it. So that we are placed in the middle of a scheme, not a fixed but a progressive one, every way incomprehensible.

Analogy, p.110.

Comparative links from little to larger are available to Tennyson as they were to Butler. In the course of writing out his grief, Tennyson slowly frees himself from a spiritual suspense in which he is unable to move backward or forward, to a perception that his place in the middle is the dynamic point of connection of two distinct parts of one scheme: heaven and earth. The overall plan is still everyway 'incomprehensible' but the littleness of ordinary human life begins to find a relation to the boundless universe and to have comparative reference to a 'larger plan':

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,
 And love in which my hound has part,
 Can hang no weight upon my heart
 In its assumptions up to heaven;

And I am so much more than these,
 As thou, perchance, art more than I,
 And yet I spare them sympathy,
 And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
 As, unto vaster motions bound,
 The circuits of thine orbit round
 A higher height, a deeper deep.

LXIII

Starting with the assumption that earthly love, even for animals, might bear the weight of heavenly comparisons, the reasoning operates analogously from earth 'up to heaven': from animal to 'more' than animal, from human to 'more' than human 'as thou, perchance, art more than I'. The analogical argument 'so mayst thou watch me' rests upon a backward and upward inference where 'may' derives from the risk of 'perchance' but also is partly invoked in the name of prayer. It is as if the very thinking from more to more knows no limits. As Tennyson takes the earthly terms and extends them 'vaster', 'higher', 'deeper', the comparative language, from a large sense of smallness, suggests the liberating connection to the larger plan that is the reality behind and within his thinking.

In the final stanza the act of circling, which was once the poet's own exhaustive circling of grief in lieu of a real starting or ending point, has become Hallam's circuits round Tennyson 'where I weep'. But, lest it be a presumption, the gain of such a thought must always include a certain but honest risk as Burke, writing on the sublime, helps us see:

All general privations are great, because they are all terrible - *vacuity, darkness, solitude and silence.*⁹

⁹ Edmund Burke, 'A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful' The Works of The Right Honourable Edmund Burke, 12 vols (1756; London: John Nimmo, 1899), i, p.146.

Every groping step forward in In Memoriam risks such failure. The great achievement of In Memoriam is in Tennyson's coming purposefully to occupy positions that he had once found himself fearfully and helplessly stranded in: that through reiteration is the greatest reversal of all. Emptiness becomes a space for intimation, through a glass darkly.

By picturing himself being watched by Hallam, Tennyson does not quite lose the direction of thought that is bottom-up, for the thought is still riskily analogical: 'as' from earth's orbit, 'so' to 'thine orbit'. The comparatives do transcend themselves, but inevitably the weeping poet must get left behind by insights that finally, if they are true, belong only to Hallam.

What Tennyson has done here is begin to solve the dilemma posed by his friend and fellow-member of the Metaphysical Society, the scientist and cosmic evolutionist, John Tyndall. In his Belfast Address, Tyndall describes the parallel existence of physical and spiritual worlds in terms of the relation of religion to science:

On the one side we have a theory derived ... not from the study of nature, but from the observations of men - a theory, which converts the Power whose garment is seen in the visible universe into an Artificer, fashioned after the human model, and acting by broken effort, as man is seen to act. On the other hand we have the conception that all we see around us, and all we feel within us - the phenomena of human nature as well as those of the human mind - have their unsearchable roots in a cosmical life, if I dare apply the term, an infinitesimal span of which is offered to the investigation of man. And even this span is only known in part. We can trace the

development of the nervous system, and correlate with it the parallel phenomena of sensation and thought. We see with undoubting certainty that they go hand in hand. But we soar in a vacuum the moment we seek to comprehend the connection between them.¹⁰

Tyndall is effectively drawing the scientific distinction between what I have referred to as top-down and bottom-up thinking, as if between Kant and Darwin. On the one hand there is, top-down, the theory of an Artificer derived 'not from the study of nature'. On the other hand there is, bottom-up, the theory of consciousness as rooted in cosmical life, 'a mere by-product of molecular physics'¹¹. Tyndall believed undoubtedly in parallel systems of matter and spirit but, as a scientist and agnostic, believed with equal certainty that there was no means of finding the causal connection or indeed of crossing the separating distance: 'Man the object is separated by an impassable gulf from man the subject' (Fragments, p.197). In conversation with Tennyson, Tyndall confessed 'God and spirit I know, and matter I know; and I believe in both' (A Memoir, ii, p.380).

Moreover, significantly for this thesis, Tyndall admired the negative form of Butler's reasoning in his argument against the Deists, namely 'that for every difficulty found upon our side, quite as great a difficulty was to be found on theirs' (Fragments,

¹⁰ John Tyndall, 'The Belfast Lecture' Fragments of Science: A Series of Detached Essays, Addresses, and Reviews, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1879), ii, p.196, hereafter cited as Fragments. Tyndall was a member of the Metaphysical Society.

¹¹ R.A. Armstrong, Agnosticism and Theism in the Nineteenth Century: A Historical Study of Religious Thought (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1903), p.114.

p.168).¹² In other words, the claims of neither science nor religion can ever be fully satisfied by the understanding. But Tennyson occupies, at first by his bereavement, the very vacuum between two parallel worlds that Tyndall judges uninhabitable.¹³ In his use of the comparative, rooted in this world, Tennyson comprehends from bottom up the true parallel that is the simultaneous separation and connection between two worlds:

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
 So far, so near in woe and weal;
 O loved the most, when most I feel
 There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
 Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
 Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
 Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
 Loved deeper, darker understood;
 Behold I dream a dream of good,
 And mingle all the world with thee.

CXXIX.

From being very much earthbound, the gain of this lyric is the soaring gain of the vertical axis. The superlative 'most' is only reached because Tennyson is now able to make felt use of the vertical comparative from lower to higher, and to feel the connection between far and near rather than merely to suffer the effect as paradoxical. Hallam, love of Hallam analogous to Hallam himself, occupies Tyndall's vacuum-space. The remaining lyric describes a strange world of paradox in which, far

¹² In the 'Belfast Address' 1874, Tyndall imagines an argument between a disciple of Lucretius and Bishop Butler in which the outcome finds the two agreeing that the human understanding can never be satisfied in its demand for logical continuity between body and soul. In Tennyson's poem 'Lucretius' Tyndall is in part a model for Lucretius.

¹³ I repeat: it is not simply that Tennyson did not understand science, indeed W.G. Ward remembered that Huxley 'once spoke strongly of the insight into scientific method shown in Tennyson's In Memoriam' (Memoir, ii, p.143).

more than Alice in her world of logical contradiction, Tennyson is entirely at ease. In the overview of the range between extremes, Tennyson comprehends, like the 'Ancient Sage', 'This double seeming of the single world'. Echoing words reverberate through this section, not simply recalled, but as if positioned in order to view two worlds sometimes in sequence, sometimes in opposition. Not only do words turn over to reveal their other side, as with 'known unknown', but the perspective alters so that as 'dear friend' is felt more closely he becomes 'strange friend'. Like the room through the looking-glass where things go the other way, earthly reality is reversed and found to be in reality - strange.

Tyndall says of the parallel systems that 'There is no motor energy in the human intellect to carry it, without logical rupture, from the one to the other' (Fragments, p.197). Yet in the unusual use of the comparative as adverbs, the words 'deeplier' and 'darklier' take on their own quality of strangeness as if they are no longer passive forces but are actively involved in their own transcendence; energised even, in this strange sense of pointing analogously beyond the limit of human meaning in a way that defies, say, the logic of a Mansel.

The final stanzas of CXXX are the culmination of these transcendent thoughts:

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
 But though I seem in star and flower
 To feel thee some diffusive power,
 I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
 My love is vaster passion now;
 Though mixed with God and Nature thou,
 I seem to love thee more and more.
 CXXX, 5-12.

The bold and confident use of the comparative, that once had been so tentative and unsure, is not the result of mood swing, but the triumphant achievement of repeated effort:

The response to all that is highest in Nature is found in the heart of man, and man cannot deny this highest, because it is latent in himself already.¹⁴

The words survive from a conversation between Tennyson and the Bishop of Ripon on the duality of Nature. There is a comparison, an analogy, for divine love cannot be apprehended without the experience of human love. Love therefore does not end in the death of the beloved and, far from being left bereft and redundant, is on the contrary an undefeated survivor if it can believe in itself and what it points to in the further and higher dimension: 'Shall love be blamed for want of faith?' (LI,10).

The difficulty for Tennyson as mourner will be in sustaining the faithful view. As Hutton says his poetry 'does not bubble up and flow on'. Every recollection must be won again and again, each gain tested and practised.

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¹⁴ William Boyd Carpenter, Right Rev. The Bishop of Ripon, 'Tennyson and His Talk on Some Religious Questions', in Tennyson and his Friends, ed. by Hallam, Lord Tennyson (London: Macmillan, 1922), p.303.

I shall return to that final difficulty in my concluding section. For the moment, it must be said that there is a second way of regarding In Memoriam as a serious religious version of Through the Looking-Glass. For what sometimes happens in In Memoriam is that in the act of reflecting upon a subject, it becomes apparent that there is a reflection within the reflection, as XX will show:

The lesser griefs that may be said,
 That breathe a thousand tender vows,
 Are but as servants in a house
 Where lies the master newly dead;

 Who speak their feeling as it is,
 And weep the fulness from the mind:
 'It will be hard,' they say, 'to find
 Another service such as this.'

My lighter moods are like to these,
 That out of words a comfort win;
 But there are other griefs within,
 And tears that at their fountain freeze;

For by the hearth the children sit
 Cold in that atmosphere of Death,
 And scarce endure to draw the breath,
 Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,
 So much the vital spirits sink
 To see the vacant chair, and think,
 'How good! how kind! and he is gone.'

XX

Tennyson constructs an image of a house with the master dead in order to explore the levels of what can and cannot be spoken. The 'lesser griefs', as represented by the servants, are found to be comparable not simply to a greater grief but to a more inaccessible and inexpressible 'other' grief as represented by the children. But as the house is likened to the body in line 9, the life and interactivity of metaphor and simile tangles curiously with the comparative to produce an

image within an image, a world turned outside in. In life we live in a house but here, through the looking glass, instead of a man in the house the house is also inside the brain of the man, in Tennyson's metaphor and in Tennyson's own imagination. Writing bravely at the limit of what can be said, the poet's pragmatic means of expressing an idea turns out to be sanctioned by something closer to the idealism of Edward Caird or T.H. Green: 'it is the God in you which strives for communication with God'.¹⁵

If Tennyson can at last find one thing within another, he also finds one thing creating from within itself its own opposite - as here:

The hills are shadows, and they flow
 From form to form, and nothing stands:
 They melt like mist, the solid lands,
 Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
 And dream my dream, and hold it true;
 For though my lips may breathe adieu,
 I cannot think the thing farewell.
 CXXIII, lines 5-12.

In imagination, evolution speeds up in a series of fearful, fleeting images and a fantastic accumulation of unstoppable phrases: 'and they flow', 'and nothing stands', 'and they go'. Just for a moment, the 'But' of line 9 seems to announce a merely defensive move, yet in turning away from the external world, Tennyson has in fact turned savingly and resolutely inwards as if into 'the true world within the world we see' ('De Profundis', II, 5). In an effort of almost superhuman imagination

¹⁵ T.H. Green, The Works of T.H. Green, ed. by R.D. Nettlehip, 3 vols (London: Longmans, 1888), iii, p.209, hereafter cited as Works.

('dreaming my dream' as if in incantation again), the vision of an increasingly formless external landscape opens mistily into the vision of the permanence of the formless spirit. 'In my spirit will I dwell' finds there to be in the world of being yet another chinese box in which the spirit in man is wonderfully found to be man within the spirit. Again, it is the oddness of the journey to orthodoxy that makes the arrival there a surprise and a revelation rather than a conventionalism.

However, to hold a dream true is, arguably, impossible:

'I can't believe that!' said Alice.
 'Can't you?' the Queen said in a pitying tone. 'Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes'.
 Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said: 'one can't believe impossible things.'

TTLG, p.251.

Alice is forgetting that she is through the looking-glass; that she is herself in the midst of the impossible:

'Now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question, my dear, and you should not go on licking your paw like that - as if Dinah hadn't washed you this morning! You see, Kitty, it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course - but then I was part of his dream, too!'

TTLG, p.343.

The problem of whose dream it was is entirely serious, especially for Tennyson thinking of Hallam thinking of Tennyson. 'Behold I dream a dream of good/ And mingle all the world with thee' (CXXIX,11-12). Who was it that

dreamed? In Alice the question was no doubt prompted by Tweedledum saying:

'You're only one of the things in his (the Red King) dream! You know very well you're not real.'

'I am real!' said Alice, and began to cry.
TTLG, P.239.

Either the dream is in Alice, or Alice is in the dream. Tennyson discovers that the visible world is not the primary reality: rather primary lies within the shadow-world; and the dream is a medium through which the real antecedent world is interpreted. I repeat: the man who dwells in the Spirit finds the Spirit dwells in man.¹⁶ The games of looking-glass become the Pauline seriousness of through a glass darkly, 'dark, distorted, broken'. Tennyson, in the dark, lives in what Ruskin called the 'strange twilight' and 'the dusky debatable land':¹⁷

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.
CXXIII lines 9-12.

The incomprehensible and mysterious world in which we live is analogous to the world of dreams which are neither logical or finished. In the dusky debatable land of dreams the real is at once something that is itself and yet not itself. A characteristic Tennysonian formulation - 'dream my dream' (CXXIII) and 'I dream a

¹⁶ They who by Thy Spirit see these things, Thou seest in them. Therefore when they see that these things are good, Thou seest that they are good; and whatsoever things for Thy sake please, Thou pleasest in them, and what through Thy Spirit please us, they please thee in us. The Confessions of St Augustine, transl. by E.B. Pusey (1838; London: J.M. Dent, 1953), Bk XIII, xxxi.46, pp.343-4.

¹⁷ See Chapter 5 below, pp.219 and 226.

dream' (CXXIX) - recognizes the dream both as subject and verb and, like Lewis Carroll, takes dreaming to the core of real being.

In a poem written for the inaugural meeting of the Metaphysical Society in 1869 Tennyson wrote:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills
 and the plains -
 Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
 Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He
 seems?
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live
 in dreams?
 Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and
 limb,
 Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from
 Him.

'The Higher Pantheism', 1-6.¹⁸

Each question unfolds to reveal another curled inside. As rhetorical questions they are twin-sided, 'contrariwise', like Tweedledee and Tweedledum asking and answering the question at the same time. In the 'Higher Pantheism' life is the dream from which we wake at last into reality, but while we dream the dream of life we have intimations of the presence of God as if in a dream. God, ambiguously 'Him', is both the subject and object of the vision, and God alone can be the Vision and the Visioner, both at once. The dream is both dream and dream of the dream-dissolving reality at once; and one thing is lodged within its very opposite. But while we may speak of the simultaneity of the two realms we are, in earthly life, also still divided from a heavenly dimension. The sun, the moon, and stars 'are the vision of Him', but they also 'are' the real sign and symbol of

¹⁸ T.H. Green also quotes from the 'Higher Pantheism' in his essay 'Faith' (Works iii, p.209).

physical division. Thus the faith of the 'Higher Pantheism' and of CXXIII is not reached by turning towards Pantheism per se or Idealism or even immediately to orthodox Christianity but by a holding true to experimental unfinish that is 'my dream' in Wonderland.

6.ii. The 'Agnostic Element'

The spiritual direction of In Memoriam is not simply a movement from doubt to faith but involves a shading within the whole spectrum of unbelief, from negative scepticism to positive agnosticism. As such the poem takes in virtually the whole of religious experience within the mid-nineteenth century.

In an essay entitled 'Popular Philosophy in its Relation to Life', T.H. Green concluded that Joseph Butler was not possessed of a 'unity of system': 'he was content to leave the moral nature a cross of unreconciled principles' (Works, iii, p.104). Sadly the intellectually ambitious Green did not recognise the importance of Butler's middle-ground position at the 'cross' where, holding to the limits of reason, he reasoned analogically from the very limits of reason.¹⁹ It is precisely because Butler is content to be much more unknowing and to leave the unity of system unreconciled and unfinished that

¹⁹ Green's friend and admirer, Henry Scott Holland, had recognized that 'Butler's position is that we know enough of reality to know that we imperfectly comprehend it' ('Scott Holland'), p.23.

Green should have found him both valuable and honourable in offering a holding-ground. As Ruskin realized, 'God alone can finish; and the more intelligent the human mind becomes, the more the infiniteness of interval is felt between human and divine work in this respect' (MP III, Pt.IV, Ch.IX para 5). Ruskin was intensely interested, as we saw in Chapter Five, in the possibility of holding onto what could not be permanently grasped, precisely by the failure to do so. In striving for reconciliation and finish, man so often increases the separation at the expense of the connection. To put it also in Newman's terms, the explicit can never exhaust the implicit: there is always an intimation of the residual. The unfinished in Tennyson thus takes him, as Ruskin had intimated, beyond earthly finish. And I am arguing that Tennyson, more than Newman, more than Ruskin, is the heir of Butler, in preserving that holding-ground which Tyndall called a vacuum and which Green dismissed as incompleteness. For as Green himself admitted, in poetry and in particular in In Memoriam 'reflecting men' had found the expression of 'logically irreconcilable' convictions (Works, iii p.cxxvi).

Tennyson's positioning of his thought within that range of possibilities is precise. The Cambridge philosopher and friend of Tennyson, Henry Sidgwick, retrospectively recognised that his own agnostic temper was not the same as Tennyson's 'honest doubt'. 'Our views', Sidgwick wrote to Hallam Tennyson at the close of the century, were not 'really in harmony with those which we found suggested in In Memoriam. They were more sceptical and less Christian ... I remember feeling that

Clough represented my individual habits of thought and sentiment more than your father, although as a poet he moved me less' (A Memoir, i,p.301). There is a deep significance in this finally realized distinction between the two poets which is vital to my conclusion with regard to the meaning of agnosticism.

In a review of The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough of 1869, Sidgwick took the opportunity to look back over a period of twenty years, reflecting on the increasingly sceptical and less Christian tendency:

We are growing also more sceptical in the proper sense of the word: we suspend our judgment much more than our predecessors, and much more contentedly: we see that there are many sides to many questions: the opinions that we do hold we hold if not more loosely, at least more at arm's length: we can imagine how they appear to others, and can conceive ourselves not holding them. We are losing in faith and confidence: if we are not failing in hope, our hopes at least are becoming more indefinite: and we are gaining in impartiality and comprehensiveness of sympathy. In each of these respects, Clough, if he were still alive, would find himself gradually more and more at home in the changing world.²⁰

'How blanched in darkness must I grow?' asked Tennyson, in the mid 1840s. For Sidgwick, the response in 1869 was that, religious faith was growing more and more and still 'more indefinite', in a counter-Tennysonian use of the comparative.²¹ Only fifteen years after the publication of In Memoriam, in the very year in which Huxley coined the term 'agnostic', Sidgwick is correctly

²⁰ H. Sidgwick, 'The Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough', Westminster Review, xcii, 1869, pp.363-87, in Clough: The Critical Heritage, ed. by Michael Thorpe (London: Routledge, 1972), pp.268-9.

²¹ In the year of this review, 1869, Henry Sidgwick resigned his fellowship at Cambridge on conscientious grounds.

indicating that it was not in fact Tennyson, but Clough who would have been the inheritor of Huxley's ever increasingly agnostic world. Clough represented the liberalism Christina Rossetti held in abhorrence.

In a later diary entry of 1887, Sidgwick retrospectively and rather inaccurately went back to considering that Tennyson was 'representative of an age whose most characteristic merit is to see both sides of a question' (Sidgwick, pp.469). I want to insist however, that Tennyson's particular and precise agnosticism finally and defiantly makes him unrepresentative of an increasingly sceptical age. For what Tennyson ultimately achieves is not merely that liberal balancing of both sides of a question, or a suspense of judgment between two sides, but a perception of the earth he could see as *the other side of a heaven*, which he could not see or know but could finally believe in. He turns Cloughian liberalism into Rossetti-like belief, renewing the links from scepticism to faith. In contrast Clough, the unfortunate representative of a sceptical age, was tormented by 'many sides to many questions':

'Tis gone, the fierce inordinate desire,
The burning thirst for Action - utterly;
Gone, like a ship that passes in the night
On the high seas; gone, yet will come again.
Gone, yet expresses something that exists.

'Dipsychus', Scene XII, lines 1-5.

Suspense of judgment for Clough is not simply between 'both sides of a question', rather he is torn amid the multiple plausibilities of the many sides to the many questions. He is forced to inhabit a no-man's-land in which a universe of potentiality exists already in

possibility. Thus reflection and action are two sides held together only by a third unsettling recognition of both succeeding each other again and again. To Clough the thought of something that exists always, potentially and intellectually, is the alternative to living repetitively and reactively in serial time. But the thought almost stops him living in time at all.

In reaction, part of him would sometimes think it not worth while to keep thinking:

Take larger views (and quit your Germans)
 From the Analogy and Sermons;
 I fancied - you must doubtless know-
 Butler had proved, an age ago,
 That in religious and profane things
 'Twas useless trying to explain things;
 Men's business-wits the only sane things.
 These and compliance are the main things.
 God, Revelation, and the rest of it,
 Bad at the best, we make the best of it.

'Dipsychus' Scene VIII, lines 39-48

Against the idealist Dipsychus, the worldly spirit as the other side of Clough wilfully misinterprets Butlerian agnosticism as proof of the uselessness of ever trying to know God. All he is really proposing is not agnosticism but a form of comfortable laziness.

As fellow and tutor of Oriel College Oxford in the 1840s, Clough was in close contact with Newman's follower W.G. Ward who brought him under the Tractarian influence but also made him the butt of a college joke. 'There goes Ward, mystifying poor Clough and persuading him that he must either believe nothing, or accept the whole of

Church doctrine'.²² If Clough could not aspire to the whole certitude of Newman, neither could he accept the finality of nothing to which his rejection of certitude threatened to push him:

At any rate -
 That there are beings above us, I believe,
 And when we lift up holy hands of prayer,
 I will not say they will not give us aid.

'That There Are Powers Above Us', 15-18.

According to Mansel, prayer was the natural outcome of the feeling of dependence. But for Clough the need to pray might simply represent something that permanently exists in mankind without external, extra-human validation. The double negative of the final line does not (as crucially with Chalmers and Butler) turn the argument round to reveal the positive on the other side but only weakly attests to the doubting distance between 'I' and 'they'.

Clough can never quite dwell inside the spirit, nor completely vacate it: he is essentially a half and half man, occupying a middle position in a way quite opposite to what is finally discovered again to be Tennyson's Anglican middle way. It is as if Clough knows too much to be sure, and too little to be certain of his doubts:

Do only thou in that dim shrine,
 Unknown or known, remain, divine;
 There, or if not, at least in eyes
 That scan the fact that round them lies.
 The hand to sway, the judgment guide,
 In sight and sense thyself divide:
 Be thou but there, in soul and heart,

²² Quoted in the introduction to A Selection from Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. by John Purkis (London: Longmans, 1967), p.7.

W.G. Ward was a close friend of Tennyson and a fellow-member of the Metaphysical Society.

Peter Levi remarks on the friendship of Tennyson and Clough 'they greatly liked each other as persons, though not much as versifiers' ('Levi', p.206).

I will not ask to feel thou art.

'A Hymn Yet Not a Hymn', lines 33-40

These lyrics 'That There Are Powers Above Us' and 'A Hymn Yet Not a Hymn' are the nearest Clough gets to the Tennysonian position, via negatives. But the 'dim' shrine does not bear intimations of a greater dimension of Mystery but only of uncertainty. The problem for Clough is that he could never intellectually *know* that the need was anything other than the Feuerbachian fictional projection of human want. For the image of the divine spirit within the human spirit could never be known for certain as having real objective existence. Without this knowledge, every possibility has plausible objections lying behind it which insidiously unbalance a sense of personal reality. Hence, as the words slip between religious and secular definitions, this poem must at once be a hymn yet not a hymn; a prayer yet not a prayer. In contrast, during the writing out of grief in In Memoriam as we have seen, Tennyson breaks free from a position that is helplessly between such opposing definitions:

Known and unknown; human, divine;
 Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
 Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
 Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine.
 CXXIX, 5-8.

As I have argued, he comes at last to an apprehension of the unknown as the other side of the known, and in parallel existence to it. Heaven and earth divide the divine life from the human life, but heaven and earth are one divine system seen from two sides. Love is the surviving link by which Tennyson, in a stretch of thought

across different levels of being, circuitously holds 'mine' 'for ever' on one side, to 'ever mine' on the other side. As inheritor of the Butlerian agnostic middle ground Tennyson will not, like Clough, speak of 'known or unknown' but with faith in their simultaneity will write known and unknown, as Butler before him might have:

With regard to Christianity, it will be observed; that there is a middle between a full satisfaction of the truth of it, and a satisfaction of the contrary. The middle state of mind between these two, consists in a serious apprehension, that it may be true, joined with a doubt whether it be so. And this, upon the best judgement I am able to make, is as far towards speculative infidelity, as any sceptic can at all be supposed to go, who has had true Christianity, with the proper evidence of it, laid before him, and has in any tolerable measure considered them.

Analogy, p.252

Before the existence of the word agnostic, Butler used the term 'sceptic' to define what is an agnostic rather than Cloughian middle state. The truly agnostic middle state of mind after Butler as modified by Chalmers does not involve a suspense of judgement between the truth of a thing and the satisfaction to the contrary, but as we saw in Chapter 2, a holding together of both faith and doubt at once. Following in the analogical tradition of Newman and Butler, Tennyson turns an Anglican broad liberalism back into a hard-won achievement: a holding together of two things in relation such as there are neither entirely two, nor entirely one. All that we can humanly know for certain is that we cannot know. This is the Christian commitment of belief without certainty.

Richard Holt Hutton had, it will be remembered, observed the 'agnostic element' in Tennyson, which 'kept reiterating' (Aspects, p.406):

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
Prologue, line 21-2.

As if in answer to Huxley's scornful remark that faith 'is the power of saying you believe things which are incredible' ('Agnosticism and Christianity', p.939), this phrase from the Prologue syntactically demonstrates a true agnosticism that is not merely negative scepticism, nor an empty or groundless posturing, but a vital and honourable holding of belief just short of knowing:

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me than in half the creeds
XCVI, lines 11-12.

Suddenly a cliché comes to life in Tennyson, the old way new found. Thus as Clough's agnosticism was based upon doubt, so Tennyson's doubt is based upon faith. A state of honest doubt is the human condition: a state Tennyson can and does inhabit, deeply intuiting that existence embodies 'more' than what is empirically here, whilst finding in doubt, like Butler, 'a degree of evidence for that of which we doubted' (Analogy, p.251). It is this vital finding in the state of doubt a positive rather than a merely negative side that enables Tennyson to redirect thought analogously to the other side of what he can merely humanly know. So it is that with re-orientated perspective the poet tackles an old adversary, Time:

O days and hours, your work is this
 To hold me from my proper place,
 A little while from his embrace,
 For fuller gain of after bliss:

That out of distance might ensue
 Desire of nearness doubly sweet;
 And unto meeting when we meet,
 Delight a hundredfold accrue.

CXVII, lines 1-8.

Time, so often the cause of confusion for Tennyson and the agent of regret, is here not so much the foe as the friend for thought turns from retrospection to anticipation.²³ The time that once had seemed cruelly to 'hold me' from my place was always, back-to-front from another perspective, carrying me towards it. In an unsigned review of In Memoriam, Tennyson's friend Franklin Lushington wrote:

The despair of the moment is fixed and deep;
 but in its very depth there is a longing to
 look forward.²⁴

So out of the painful sense of distance in earthly time, Tennyson retrieves the doubly sweet thought of heavenly time on the other side. It is as though the second verse does not follow from the first but was behind it all the time.

It is only by first keeping a feeling of distance, nonetheless, that Tennyson comes to find a reorientation

²³ In the introduction to T.H. Green's Prolegomena to Ethics, Edward Caird writes 'In so far as he [man] views the world from the point of view of his own individuality and acts with sole regard to it, his thought and his action are illegitimate. Hence those who view human life in a comprehensive way are apt to describe it antithetically, alternately emphasising the different aspects in which it presents itself.' T.H. Green, Prolegomena to Ethics, ed. by A.C. Bradley, 5th edn (1883; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p.vi).

²⁴ Unsigned Review of 'In Memoriam', Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, N.S. XVII (August 1850), p.503.

of time itself. For it is as if Tennyson anticipates Simone Weil's advice, as Iris Murdoch explicates it:

'To lose somebody: we suffer at the thought that the dead one, the absent one, should have become something imaginary, something false. But the longing we have for him is not imaginary. We must go down into ourselves where the desire which is not imaginary resides. The loss of contact with reality - there lies evil, there lies grief. The remedy is to use the loss as an intermediary for attaining reality. The presence of the dead one is imaginary, but his absence is real, it is henceforth his manner of appearing.' ...

A deep, or a real, or a proper, recovery demands, it may be replied, some sort of moral activity, a making a spiritual use of one's desolation. Simone Weil speaks of good and love. Loving is an orientation, a direction of energy, not just a state of mind.

Metaphysics, p.502-3.

The death of a loved one undoes a sense of reality. In the midst of disorientation and absence, Simone Weil is urging the bereft to stay close to the pain since that is real. Think not in terms of imaginary presence, she urges, but in the opposite direction to a real absence. Use the real feeling of loss to redirect thoughts to their other side, beyond death itself:

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things ever dim
 And dimmer, and a glory done:
 CXXI, 1-4.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
 For what is one, the first, the last,
 Thou, like my present and my past,
 Thy place is changed; thou art the same.
 CXXII, 17-20.

Facing his own sadness in the poignant sadness of the dying of the day, it is as if, the glory being done, the eyes that look into darkness, turn instinctively in

search of light. So thought, through the medium of the brilliant prompting image of Sad Hesper, is redirected to bright Phosphor at the birth of a new day. Whether Sad Hesper on one side or Sweet Phosphor on the other, they are always 'like my present and my past'. Like day and night and darkness and light, they are one whole which man looking heavenwards can only see in separate succession. For both morning and evening star are but two distinct names for the 'same' planet: Venus, the planet of Love. Human love is imagined, not in terms of endings and beginnings, but as a constancy 'behind'(1.12) transient lives and stars that lighten and darken, fading in and out of their earthly span. Only the place changes, not the thing itself.

'Loving is an orientation, a direction of energy'. So it is at almost the lowest physical and emotional moment of In Memoriam:

Be near me when I fade away,
 To point the term of human strife,
 And on the low dark verge of life
 The twilight of Eternal day.
 L, 13-16.

The faintness here cannot even sustain a verb, yet also hardly needs to, for somehow in those last two lines it is held within the distant and half-forgotten implicit promise of 'twilight'. For, as Butler knew, a faint light may be all that there can be:

It was intended revelation should be no more than a small light, in the midst of a world greatly overspread with darkness; that certain glimmerings of this light should extend and be

directed to remote distances, in such a manner as that those who really partook of it should not discern from whence it originally came; that some in a nearer situation to it should have its light obscured, and, in different ways and degrees, intercepted: and that others should be placed within its clearer influence, and be much more enlivened, cheered and directed by it; but yet that even to these it should be no more than a *light shining in a dark place*.

Analogy, pp.183-4

Tennyson gradually becomes familiar with the paradoxical sense of seeing and unseeing in the uncertainty of glimmerings and half-lights. At worst the twilight will be partial darkness, but at best a re-orientated thought will know it as partial light. At the very verge and limit of life, the light shining in a dark place is called a light from 'otherwhere' (LXXXII,12).

It is that word 'otherwhere' which is agnostic vocabulary, where agnostic means deeply if blindly religious, able to name even God only as 'That which':

That which we dare invoke to bless;
 Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
 He, They, One, All; within, without;
 The Power in Darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
 Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
 Nor through the questions men may try,
 The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
 I heard a voice 'believe no more'
 And heard an ever breaking shore
 That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
 The freezing reason's colder part,
 And like a man in wrath the heart
 Stood up and answered 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
 But that blind clamour made me wise;
 Then was I like a child that cries,
 But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
 What is, and no man understands;
 And out of darkness came the hands
 That reach through nature, moulding men.
 CXXIV.

Just as at the lowest, most lonely moment, or even because it is the lowest moment, there is an almost instinctive human cry to someone else, to something else, for help: 'Be near me'. But here the answer is within: 'I have felt'. Yet in the ensuing momentary silence of the break between verses it is as if Tennyson overhears, in the fading echo and fading bravura, a stiller, smaller voice that speaks not of compensatory calm but of fear: 'No, like a child in doubt and fear'. The realism of this lyric seems far removed from the mysticism of 'The Ancient Sage' which was this chapter's starting point. But what links the two yet again is R.H. Hutton's assertion of Tennyson's sense of recollection, that word of both memory and mystic contemplation. What brings CXXIV to a temporary halt after verse four is the reiterating recollection of something much more deeply and instinctively felt - like a child. And it is the move not forward but back, from man to child, that takes Tennyson's spiritual progress back from creature to God the father-creator.

Thus alone, in the dark, Tennyson hears himself crying like a child. And suddenly, like a light shining in a dark place, what had beforehand been an unhelpful simile is revealed to him and understood as not merely simile but the key analogy, as if simile or likeness had been a wrong key fumbling in the lock for analogy or relation. For what is crucially recalled, in the reversion to crying like a child, is the dependent

relationship: even in the act of crying, the child that cries '*knows his father near*'. 'The conception of God which is the child's' said Ruskin, 'is the only one which for us can be true' (MP IV, Pt.V, Ch.VI,para.7). We have to stay loyal to 'us', to what we are in living.

In the final verse, working from the ground up, in darkness and in fear, the poet tries hard to hold onto agnosticism as an austere vocabulary of primal unknowing, using the very simplest of agnostic terms, 'what I am', and 'what is', and knowing them to be but shadows of a shadow world'. They tell us nothing of either party save 'what' is in relation. But beyond their essential inarticulacy they bear intimations of the silent anterior realm of the Creator which is prior to human language and behind it. As 'faith-doubt', 'He-They', 'One-All' 'within-without' collectively exhibit two separate sides to what can only sometimes be understood as one whole, so Tennyson, trusting in a sort of braille-like language, works in the very dark, holding on to two worlds in analogical relation. In the same way those two apparently different worlds of experience, faith and doubt, like light and darkness, belong together, the old paradoxes rediscovered as genuinely new and strange in Tennyson.

There is only the fight to recover what has been
 And found and lost again and again. ²⁵ lost

²⁵ T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, 12th edn (1943; London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 'East Coker' V, 15-16.

Appendix.

GLADSTONE'S READING

Records of Gladstone's reading of works which are quoted in this thesis, as noted in his diaries.²⁶

Aristotle

Ethics. 1/2/1830, 9/5/30, 10/5/30, 1/10/30,
25/7/31, 2/11/31

Arnold, Matthew

Poems. 1856 2/5/57

Augustine, St.

Confessions. 3/6/32, 31/8/34. 5/10/34. 26/11/34

Bagehot, Walter

Literary Studies. 1879 2/6/79

Bartlett, Thomas

Memoirs of Joseph Butler. 1839 3/10/58. 6/9/63

Boswell, James

Life of Johnson. 1791 25/9/87

Burke, Edmund

Sublime and Beautiful. 1756 21/6/31

Butler, Joseph

Analogy. 1736 27/4/30, 28/4/30, 10/5/30,
19/7/30, 8/10/31, 24/10/31, 29/1/38, 28/8/76

Works, ed. S.Halifax, 1807 26/6/45, 4/3/94,
18/3/94

Works, ed. S.Halifax, 1804 18/3/95

Chalmers, Thomas

Works. 1848 10/4/49

Clough, Arthur Hugh

Poems. 1862 4/8/62

Poems. 1888 10/5/90

Darwin, Charles,

On the Origin of Species. 1859 10/12/59

Hanna, William

Memoirs of Thomas Chalmers. 1849-52 18/12/49

Hennell, Sarah

Essay on Analogy. 1859 23/12/60, 31/5/93

²⁶ All information taken from 'Gladstone's Reading' The Gladstone Diaries, ed. by H.C.G. Matthew, 14 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), vol xiv, pp.285-610.

Gladstone did not always keep record. For example 'Bishop Butler and his Critics' (J.Eaton) has Gladstone's annotations, but is not recorded.

- Hume, David
Enquiry. 1758 22/10/34
Philosophical Works. 1826 2/6/45, 5/2/79
- Hutton, Richard Holt
Cardinal Newman. 1891 14/9/90, 3/10/90
Essays Theological and Literary. 1871 (1877 edn)
23/5/77
- Keble, John
The Christian Year. 1827 31/5/29, 8/4/32, 23/9/32,
30/9/32, 18/11/32, 16/12/32, 13/1/33, 14/4/33
- Locke, John
Essay on Human Understanding. 11/12/34, 25/2/36,
31/3/36
- Mansel, Henry
Limits. 1858 24/10/59
- Mozely, James Bowling
Letters. 1854 19/10/84
- Newman, John Henry
Grammar. 1870 27/3/70, 28/9/73, 25/8/78, 12/3/79,
9/12/83, 1/1/88
Essay on Development. 1845 28/11/45
Apologia. 1864 24/4/64, 22/5/64
Idea of a University. 1852 9/4/52, 26/5/92,
19/10/92
Lectures on Justification. 1839 15/4/38, 25/4/41
Essays. 1872 22/12/71
University Sermons. 1843 26/3/43
- Pattison, Mark
Memoirs. 1862 12/3/85, 27/7/90
- Rossetti, Christina
Poems. 1862 28/8/66
Poems. 1866 22/7/66
Verses. 1893 22/4/94
- Ruskin, John
Modern Painters 111. 1856 20/3/56
Seven Lamps. 1849 15/2/50
Stones of Venice. 1851-3 29/7/51
- Tennyson, Alfred
In Memoriam. 1850 23/6/50, 30/8/50, 14/7/59,
8/9/79
Maud. 1855 14/7/59, 26/8/63, 15/5/70
- Wesley, John
Journal. 1827 20/6/58
- Williams, Isaac
Subject of Reserve as Taught in Tract for the Times.
1841 8/12/41
-

Wordsworth, William

Poetical Works. 1865 28/8/79

The Prelude. 1850 7/2/53

The Excursion. 1814 15/11/33, 8/5/34, 26/12/34,
22/1/35, 17/8/40, 11/12/44, 27/1/91

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Gladstone working on the Analogy

26/6/45, 5/9/47, 4/3/94, 11/3/94, 2/4/94, 12/6/95

labours finished 29/12/96 (Gladstone Diaries xiv,
p.6310.

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