

IN SEARCH OF A LIVING REASON: OR: WHY YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE

Murray Code

'Will the reader bid me wake with him to a world of chance and blindness? Or can I persuade him to dream with me of a more living faith than either he or I had as yet conceived as possible? As I have said, reason points remorselessly to an awakening, but faith and hope still beckon to the dream.' Samuel Butler: *Luck, or Cunning?*

'If you think about it, you will see that it is true.' An old Sioux chief, quoted by Vine Deloria, Jr.

ABSTRACT: In proposing to tell a Lamarckian story about evolution, Samuel Butler not only put into question the good sense of the neo-Darwinian approach which presupposes the adequacy of the modern conception of good reasoning. Modelled on systematic (e.g., logico-mathematical) ratiocination, this conception, he intimates, bespeaks a sick culture that actually betrays reason by elevating techno-scientific ingenuity to a god-like status. Evidence for this serious charge is afforded by neuroscientists who maintain, for instance, that consciousness can be 'explained' in terms of electro-chemical events in material brains. This reductive approach to the great themes of Life and Thought degrades the complex relationships between living and thinking. In this paper I propose to show that Butler's approach to naturalistic story-telling can be extended in such a way as to illustrate what Owen Barfield calls a 'living reason'; that is, a vitalistic form of reasoning that may help remedy a cultural malaise that is threatening the long-term health of this civilization, if not the entire world.

KEYWORDS: Nature; Evolution; Samuel Butler; Lamarck; A. N. Whitehead; Owen Barfield; Consciousness; Imagination; Life; Thought

1. EVOLUTION AND HOW TO THINK ABOUT IT

Despite the tendency of many serious thinkers to assume that thinking is an aspect of experiencing which is unique to the human organism, it is not hard to believe that all living organisms are capable of thought. An organism's very survival in an unpredictable and dangerous world attests to an ability to make sense of its immediate surroundings---if only to garner the next meal or to escape becoming someone else's. One might even have thought that the very idea of an organic 'species' presupposes significant differences between different ways of coping with the world. But if this is so, it is not a big leap to the view that evolution alludes to a cosmic process of development of a great variety of ways of world-making which bear witness to a vast range of forms of sensibility.

How to think about this wonderful fact must surely stand near the forefront of the would-be naturalist's concerns. In any case, one would have thought that the ancient philosophical question of the meaning of experience would be uppermost on the minds of those who think about the evolution of consciousness. This particular problem is moreover part and parcel of the now urgent question how best to conceive the role of the human organism in Nature, especially now that we have entered a new, anthropogenic stage of evolution. It takes a good deal of faith, in other words, to believe that modern science is up to the task of dealing with the urgent question of how best to depict the human condition.

That this is no minor philosophical quibble is evident from the fact that how we live influences how we think, and *vice versa*. However, a good many self-styled modern naturalists are committed first and foremost to upholding the scientific credo that science can, in principle, explain everything worth explaining, such as the emergence of conscious thought itself. In this case, one may reasonably ask whether something akin to religious fundamentalism is involved in the tendency to conflate rational thinking with scientific methods of reasoning.¹

This situation warrants asking anyway why so many laypersons are willing to subordinate their sense of the sheer complexity of daily experiencing to the reductive pronouncements of scientific experts. The irony is that a culture that prides itself on its 'modernity' is also one that appears proud of its narrow one-sidedness.²

¹ I have discussed this curious situation, in which the meaning of rationality is made to serve a dubious ideology, in my *Myths of Reason: Vagueness, Rationality, and the Lure of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Press, 1995) and in my *Process, Reality, and the Power of Symbols: Thinking with A. N. Whitehead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

² I shall use the term 'modern' in accordance with the usage of Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Latour argues that, strictly speaking, in order to be truly modern the expositor ought at once to acknowledge that

Consider the common tendency to deny the immaterial side of experiencing, a tendency that is entrenched by the emphasis placed on logical precision in philosophical inquiry. When combined with an emphasis on the practical side of education, the result is a suppression of the capacity for wonder, such as at the extraordinary emergence of a creature able to reflect upon its own ability to think. As for wonder itself, what logical argument could possibly do justice to the emergence of this apparently completely impractical mental capacity? Whyever think that this capacity could be 'explained' by methods that were initially designed to control certain physical aspects of Nature---or better, the naturing of Nature, assuming that science has accumulated sufficient evidence to show that evolution is indeed one of the most salient characteristics of this cosmos?

Once one has accepted evolution as a virtual 'fact,' does not this extremely vague notion refer in general to an ongoing creation of many different kinds of sensibility? If these range from virtually dead bits of organized 'matter' to the self-conscious thinking of the human organism, there is reason to wonder whether the popularity of the neo-Darwinian interpretation of evolution is itself evidence that *homo sapiens* is infected with a peculiar streak of irrationality that evidences a secular faith in the unlimited explanatory powers of science. The irony is that this faith upholds the prevailing dogma of scientism, that reason proper has nothing to do with faith. Such as the faith that infuses the materialistic conjecture that Life once upon a time arose spontaneously from fortuitous interactions of lifeless bits of matter in a primeval 'soup.'

Indeed, a good many neuroscientists and their cohorts appear to have no doubt that the strange factor of 'quickness' that characterizes Life in general can be 'explained' using scientific methods. Some very respectable scientists even go so far as to confidently predict that increasingly clever information-processing machines will eventually outperform human thinkers in all respects, which presumably includes the desire for a systematic 'explanation' of consciousness itself.³

explanations or descriptions of natural phenomena inevitably draw upon three resources: nature, culture, and discourse---which means that even the most 'objective' account of Nature is culture-dependent.

³ For a good sample of how the nonscientific public becomes indoctrinated by scientific propaganda, consider the pronouncements of neuroscientists as reported, for example, by Edward O. Wilson, 'On Free Will,' in *Harper's Magazine*, September 2014, pp. 49-52. It is simply and commonly assumed, Wilson observes, that the 'celebrated star player in the scenarios of consciousness' is the notion of a self with a functioning brain---which is an organ whose 'mass neuronal activity' refers to 'a repertory of firing cells.' It is as though a properly trained scientist would be able to understand his/her own thinking about thought by examining ultra-thin slices of his/her brain. Or by studying computer generated images of energy patterns in his/her self-stimulated brain. Yet it is hardly obvious that the obscure notion of a self is amenable to a methodical scientific investigation, a point that is usually overlooked by those who promote the grand neuro-scientific project which, says Wilson, runs parallel to the Human Genome Project since it

What else, in sum, but a quasi-religious faith could uphold the widespread belief that, however one chooses to interpret the fundamental idea of mind, it refers at bottom to a fluctuating stream of by-products of brain activity? It seems that a question such as this prompted the non-scientist Samuel Butler to reject the neo-Darwinian approach to evolution and pursue instead a Lamarckian interpretation of the idea of variation. In his four books on evolution, he not only puts into question the status of this doctrine as a scientific theory, he suggests that evolution alludes at bottom to a profound metaphysical puzzle by playing down, for instance, the hoary scientific ideals of precision, security, completeness, and finality. Not only are these ideals essentially distractions, for they tend to block serious inquiry into the complexity of organic life (and thought). They tend to obscure what is perhaps a key consideration: that an organism is essentially a sentient psycho-physical whole.

One upshot of this tacit assumption of Butler's concerns the common temptation to silently embrace the Cartesian assumption that the mental and the physical aspects of the experiencing of a living living organisms can be studied independently of one another. On the contrary, Butler is convinced a living organism is not a machine that can be dismantled; it is a complex psycho-physical whole whose most salient characteristics are generally referred to by the notions of body, mind, and soul.

Butler indicates, in other words, that the topic of more or less vital souls ought to be at the forefront of any interpretation of the vague idea of organization when attempting to give a comprehensive account of the evolution of different kinds of organism. That few modern naturalists appear to be much concerned with this matter is however not very surprising---given that they tend to beg most of the crucial metaphysical questions. Butler at least brings some of the most important of them to the fore, although he lacks the philosophical background needed to complete his story.

Butler, in short, is only able to promise a more or less plausible and adequate story about evolution that might be more conducive to good sense than that which is promulgated by the neo-Darwinians. For he also forces into special prominence not only the question of the meaning of a truly rational explanation but also the more particular question whether the only truly rational 'method' for doing natural philosophy is to fashion a form of story-telling that unashamedly enlists figurative modes of reasoning. For Butler's 'method' can be described as anthropotropic since his reasonings are based on a metaphoric centered on the trope of a self. His story about evolution can thus be read as an exploration of the relationships that connect a triad of key tropes (habit, power, and unconscious memory) which he evidently believes

aims 'to connect all of the processes of thought---rational and emotional; conscious, preconscious, and unconscious...to a physical base' (p. 50).

express salient characteristics of a living human self. This allows him to take seriously many aspects of experiencing that the moderns tend to down-grade, if not banish entirely, from would-be rational discourse---such as soul, spirit, wisdom, and, above all, faith.

For Butler indicates that the notion of faith must somehow be put front and center in any story that hopes to deal justly and adequately with Life itself. He states, for instance, that

Life...is faith founded upon experience, which experience is in its turn founded upon faith - or more simply, it is memory. Plants and animals only differ from one another because they remember different things; plants and animals only grow up in the shapes they assume because this shape is their memory, their idea concerning their own past history. *Life and Habit*.

Stemming from his decision to follow a Lamarckian interpretation of variation, wherein organisms are presumed capable of having feelings of need or want which can prompt them to make small changes in their characteristic habits of organization, Butler implies that the idea of emergence entails recognizing the existence of certain natural powers. The exercise of such powers attests moreover to a teleological component of the naturing of Nature, one that not only entails a growth of natural knowledge but the possibility of an evolution of wisdom in Nature.

Since this inherently vague *telos* is compatible with the idea of the cosmos as a sentient self, Butler's story implies that *homo sapiens* as this species happens to have evolved may have fallen far short of its own hubristic self-estimation. Indeed, the shocking extent of ecological destruction wrought by techno-scientific man affords ample reason to think human forms of sensibility are shot through with a kind of self-destructive stupidity that is allied to an uncontrolled cupidity. Yet Butler is nonetheless implying that a truly rational way of thinking about Life and Thought is still attainable. That is, he can be read as a cultural therapist who is proffering the hope that we can at least aspire to be wiser in the ways we choose to live and think than we have been up to now.

Butler thus presents a would-be non-modern naturalist with a difficult challenge, the enormity of which I shall attempt to outline below. He can thus be read as an incipient cultural therapist concerned with the urgent question of what can be done to save humanity from its worst inclinations. Beginning with the assumption that evolution refers roughly to a restless cosmic activity in which living forms of organization betoken self-organizing psycho-physical wholes, he indicates that the standard approach falls well short of adequacy. This requires at the very least a mode of reasoning that can deal justly with the question of whether and if so how such notions as faith, hope, wisdom should be given a place in a truly rational naturalism.

2. ON THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

One of the major hurdles in the way of finding support for Butler's many bold conjectures is that there is no method for judging the quality of reasonings that always refer to conditions that apply only 'after the event,' as it were. One must take a long view, in other words, a view that also includes a perspective broad enough to do justice to Butler's assumption of the existence of evolutionary 'forces' or powers that are responsible for significant changes in the actual histories of living organisms; or as he puts it, in the 'outward and visible signs of the impressions made upon animals and plants in the course of their long and varied history.' This is because each organ chronicles

a time during which such and such thoughts and actions dominated the creature, and specific changes being the effect of certain long-continued wishes upon the body, and of certain changed surroundings upon the wishes. Plants and animals are living forms of faith, or faiths of form, whichever the reader pleases. *Evolution, Old & New*

As for the question of the origins of such faith,

[n]o conjecture can be hazarded as to how the smallest particle of matter became so imbued with faith that it must be considered as the beginning of LIFE, or as to what such faith is, except that it is the very essence of all things, and that it has no foundation. *Life and Habit*

To undertake to criticize, defend, or expand upon Butler's intriguing insights and conjectures is thus, in short, to undertake a risky exploration in a treacherous swamp full of hidden pitfalls. But short of choosing to look the other way, there is nothing for it but to try to sketch a minimal metaphysical apparatus that might provide a background for a satisfactory extension of a type of story that shall very likely never be completed.

Hence in respect to the more specific problem of the meaning of consciousness, I shall presume that a rough idea of the depth of this puzzle can be gleaned from a simple analogy: brains are to thinking as eyes are to visual imaging. Since one cannot see without eyes or talk without a tongue, it is not hard to believe that one cannot think without a brain. There can be no doubt that the proper working of this organ is affected by sickness, drugs, alcohol, blood-loss, old age, and so on. But this elementary observation only assures us that healthy brains are necessary for clear thinking. Hence since it is obvious that whatever one happens to see or hear is conditioned by the state of health of such organs as eyes and ears, why not think that thinking is evidently conditioned in part by the state of health of the brain?

Furthermore, from the point of view of most laypersons, it is hardly news that fleeting immaterial ideas and images are as likely to affect malleable minds as hard

objects are to bruise their feeling bodies. Something is going on in conscious thinking selves, in other words, that suggests that the quality of a perception refers to a more or less well-performed psycho-physical action. Hence the first step to getting anywhere at all is surely to try to become clearer about the meaning of perception.

What seems most lacking in this regard is a language rich enough to do justice to the complex give and take in the tangle of dynamical relations that connect the psychical and the physical aspects of experiencing. Which is not to say that the language of science is unable to throw any light on this complicated business: it is just that scientific naturalists tend to beg the most important questions which, I am suggesting, allude mainly to 'inner' movements of mind.

Consider in this light the notorious 'interpretation problem' in quantum physics---which is generally regarded as a highly successful branch of natural science on account of the accuracy of its predictions. Yet this very success presents the defenders of this theory with a profound puzzle of interpretation since some quantum phenomena suggest either wave-like or particle-like behaviour---depending upon the experimental set-up. Although this situation is often described as 'bizarre,' it may mean only that not everything exposed or revealed about the naturing of Nature can be easily, let alone completely, accommodated in the language of 'classical' physics.

One of the most able and astute of quantum physicists, Wolfgang Pauli, has grasped this raging bull by the horns and suggested that a proper response to this anomalous situation is to renounce once and for all the standard assumption of many modern naturalists---that observers can be regarded as independent from what they observe. As for the philosophical implications of this central point, Pauli suggests that instead of referring to an 'external reality' it would be better to speak of a 'reality of symbols.'

But perhaps even more importantly, Pauli in his subsequent work indicates that the situation points up the over-riding importance of the factor of complementarity that was once recognized as highly relevant by the premodern alchemists.

That is to say, in brief, Pauli indicates that the sort of reasoning called for must be able to do justice not only to the indissociability of knowers and known but also to many of the fundamental contrasts that naturalists tend to elicit when they explore natural phenomena. Hence it is essential to tackle at once the problem of what constitutes good reasoning. While systematic methods have without doubt produced a successful theory in the sense that its predictions are remarkably accurate, the 'rightness' of these well-established findings undermine, ironically enough, the adequacy of the language that modern physicists are wedded to.

In other words, Pauli's latter-day interest in the writings of the alchemists indicates that Butler's 'method' of story-telling may not only be reasonable, it may well be a quintessentially rational way to elucidate the dynamic tensions that exist between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*. Hence when viewed from Butler's perspective, which recognizes the indissociability of this fundamental contrast, the situation in quantum physics confirms his apparently intuitive decision to adopt a figurative method of reasoning which aims to illuminate the relationship between human minds and the naturing of Nature.

Which is to say that Butler may only be flouting a deeply-entrenched modern dogma when he bases his story about evolution on the assumption that the best way to understand the macrocosmos is by studying the microcosmos of a living human self. The trouble is that there is no simple way to assess, elucidate, criticize, or supplement Butler's efforts to provide an alternative to the nihilistic Darwinian approach to evolution. The principal concern of the natural philosopher in this particularly urgent matter involves the question of how to do justice to the general nature of the relationships that evidently obtain between the physical and the psychical--which for the layperson involve the vexing tensions that spring from the merging of the material and the immaterial sides of experiencing.

3. SO WHAT IS A 'LIVING REASON'?

But it is one thing to point towards complementarity as a principle that can assist one to escape from the suffocating embrace of a self-constricting mode of thought: it is another to show how to conceive a truly liberating or re-vitalizing reason. The latter goal I am suggesting is implicit in Butler's apparently unconscious decision that the best way to tell a truly vitalistic story about evolution is to model a living organism upon the obscure notion of a human self. Although he lacks the necessary metaphysical tools to flesh out this key assumption, he can still claim that he is using a kind of 'living reason' of the sort that Owen Barfield calls for when he notes that the moderns deploy an unbalanced mode of reasoning that is so out of touch with reality it deserves to be called schizophrenic.⁴

The justice of this damning indictment of the moderns' self-serving conception of rationality, which has subordinated the idea of evolution to, as Barfield puts it, an 'abstract, scientific fantasy' governed by the mechanical image of a 'static, clockwork cosmos,' is evident (Butler might add) in the very popularity of the neo-Darwinian approach to evolution. His alternative approach amounts to a silent claim against a

⁴ See Owen Barfield, *History, Guilt, and Habit* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), p. 51, ff.

deadening mode of thought since his 'method' implies that there is simply no way to coax a 'living reason' out of the corpse of a moribund form of reasoning. More specifically, he indicates that it is above all necessary to first learn how to think in terms of a free, but not anarchic or uncontrolled, use of metaphors, analogies, and so on.

Hence it may be helpful to revert briefly to the afore-mentioned analogy between brain activity and the functioning of eyes in vision. Attributing this analogy to Rudolf Steiner, Barfield notes the hostility that is often shown towards Steiner's way of thinking about thinking. Steiner's views, however, derive in part from the investigations of another gifted natural philosopher, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.⁵ It is thus in order to ask whether the pervasive hostility towards Steiner's approach is due mainly to a partisan reaction to Goethe's unsparing criticisms of certain icons of modernity---such as Sir Isaac Newton whose theory of optics Goethe severely criticized. This famous judgment of inadequacy reflects a principled belief that the early moderns went seriously wrong when they invested their faith in the total adequacy of a science of quantity. Such a belief is totally at odds with the empirical fact that colour phenomena, for instance, come hand in hand with qualitative feelings.

Briefly, then, Butler can be said to have at least started on the right track inasmuch as an adequate account of natural phenomena must above all observe the complementarity of quantity and quality in investigations of natural phenomena. So in so far as the moderns tacitly invest their rationalistic faith in the complete adequacy of quantitative methods of reasoning, they effectively perpetuate an unbalanced collective mentality that reflects a diseased if not insane soul.

However, the very idea of a healthy soul is shrouded by a thick fog, although the notion of a confused and/or conflicted ensouled self is familiar enough to anyone who has ever paused long enough to contemplate the mystery of his/her own beliefs and desires. But what sane self-conscious self could entertain serious doubts about his/her actual existence, however great the difficulty of making sense of it? Instead of Descartes' formula, it might be better to say 'I am because I can think that I am,' thus leaving open the crucial question of who or what this thinking 'I' might be.

So assuming that the problem of the nature of a 'thinking I' lies close to the heart of the question of what consciousness means, one can at least say that if there is such a thing as a thinking self, there must be a non-self to be thought about; for a world consisting of an isolated, independent thinking self is not intelligible. This means that to begin to think about thinking is to find oneself immediately confronted by a

⁵ See the first chapter of Owen Barfield's *Romanticism Comes of Age* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966).

kaleidoscopic interplay of thoughts, ideas, beliefs, images, and so on--- which the history of philosophy tells us is hardly transparent to reason. So Butler has good reason, in short, to suspect that all one can hope to achieve in the end is an only more or less plausible and adequate story about a world of evolving forms of sensibility, one that appears to require a variety of sensitive bodies in order to...what, if not realize different forms of sensibility that are possible within a restless cosmic movement which would appear to have neither a definite beginning nor a final end if evolution is indeed a salient characteristic of Nature?

4. ON THE EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE

But whatever the point of it all, the question of how one might best *begin* to tell a story about evolution is surely one that is inseparable from the question of what `method' of story-telling might in the end prove provisionally adequate. In Barfield's view, the best place to begin to think about evolution is by contemplating the evolution of meanings in some natural language. For `the phenomenal world [i.e., the day-to-day world we actually live in] arises from the relation between a conscious and an unconscious and...evolution is the story of the changes that relation has undergone and is undergoing.'⁶ These changes refer, furthermore, to `the interpenetration of thinking and perceiving, of which all our consciousness consists [and which] happens to be more plainly evident in language than anywhere else.'⁷

Thus indicating that he is far from proposing a simple resolution of the problem of consciousness, Barfield also ties the notion of `interpenetration' to the presence of an active spiritual power---which is consonant with Butler's general depiction of a living organism as a sentient, ensouled psycho-physical whole.

So with this rough image in mind, let us try to follow some of Barfield's suggestions concerning the origins and evolution of the meanings that are stored and conveyed by the word-symbols of a natural language. These meanings, he suggests, have their origins in more or less inspired encounters between perspicacious `primitive' selves and natural events that once appeared to warrant capturing by means of some sort of symbolism.

Let us assume, then, that the invention of collectively approved word-symbols with consensually endorsed meanings attests to primordial `realizations' that some types of imagery are more significant than others. There is thus reason to think that the evolution of meaning-making that is always going on in every living language refers at bottom to especially perspicacious `primitive' mindings that once upon a time were

⁶ See Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances* (New York: Harcourt Brace), p. 136.

⁷ *History, Guilt, and Habit*, p. 37.

capable of apprehending 'primordial' truths if the form of special imagery related to fundamental aspects of the naturing of Nature. This possibility suggests in turn that current acts of minding might also be capable of apprehending the 'really real'---if only they could first learn to move more perspicuously in the realm of the imaginal. There is nothing anyway to prevent positing perspicacious occasions of sensibility as arising out of happy moments of intuitive or instinctive 'recognitions' of various 'objects of significance' (to use Whitehead's early terminology). Hence an evolving, living language can be regarded as a vital testament to the ever-present possibility of awakening, if only fitfully, to an intrinsically potentially meaningful world of symbolisms. But if being a language user means being involved in a collective but indirect or conceptually mediated interplay between certain responses to spontaneous products of imaging, the business of meaning-making is, not surprisingly, bound to be obscure. It may allude at bottom to unconscious, possibly astute natural powers among which the power of imaging may hold the key to the puzzle of meaning-making *tout court*.

Which is not to say that the daily activity of meaning-making can be simply tied to the business of imaging. Since perceiving appears for the most part to be governed by habit, it must be distinguished from the sort of 'seeing' of gifted poets who have the ability to expand the range of minding by, for instance, inventing new and striking metaphors. Since a good metaphor, as Barfield maintains, can be understood as a means for seeing beyond or through the opaque veils that limit habitual ways of looking, every image-based language is potentially replete with new possibilities of 'seeing.' But by the same token, if most common words of every natural language are shot through with once vital metaphors which were essentially poetic awakenings to a meaningful world, one can also say the language is a store of not only important natural knowledge but also a certain wisdom that 'hard' thinking can sometimes bring into the light.

Alluding to this possibility as the key to philosophical understanding, Whitehead in his introduction to *Process and Reality* in fact maintains that it is not possible to do natural philosophy without at the same time doing metaphysics. The principal task of the metaphysician is furthermore not to develop a final and complete system of ideas but rather to recover some of the wisdom that lies hidden in common words. And the only method available to the metaphysician for doing this is what he terms 'imaginative generalization.'

It is thus worth noting that Barfield claims that 'the most fundamental assumptions of any age are those that are implicit in the meanings of its common words.'⁸

8 Owen Barfield, *Speaker's Meaning* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1967). p. 44.

Assuming, then, that the roots of a natural language can be traced to more or less astute, primordial imagings, the creators of the word-symbols of the language must have been good metaphysicians. Some of them anyway must have been capable, on occasion, of intuitively 'recognizing' the metaphysical significance of certain kinds of imagery.

This is no small thing from Butler's point of view since his highly speculative account of evolution is a manifestly imaginative exploration of the implications of the little word 'self.' He not only illustrates the wisdom of Whitehead's principal claim for the indispensability of a metaphysics when he is forced to end his story prematurely on account of the lack of an adequate metaphysical 'background.' His bold conjectures also confirm the need to risk adventurous 'imaginative generalizations' in order to move this sort of story along. Which is to say that he himself may bear witness to an evolving wisdom in Nature that now and again shines through certain of his insights into the business of sense-making.

But Butler also illustrates the fact that whatever wisdom can be brought into the light by his imaginative method of story-telling is bound to be coloured by the language with which the tale is being told. Nonetheless, it is still in order to allude to a universally evolving wisdom inasmuch as all human story-tellers are ensouled sentient beings possessing, at least in principle, similar if not exactly the same embodied sense-making powers. That these are given to the organism only in a state of latency implies they need not be all developed in the same way and to the same degree of efficacy, as witnessed by the great variety in the ways of world-making that the human organism has invented. So while the word-symbols of different languages are usually amenable to translation, their meanings need not be fully commensurable. Meaning-making, and hence the evolution of a natural language is bound to be affected by, for instance, geographical circumstances, so it should hardly be surprising if different modes of meaning-making generally reflected significant differences in experiencing the actual world.

There can be no over-estimating, in short, the complexity of this curious activity, especially if as Barfield claims an adequate account of the meaning-making must take into account the spiritual implications of the interpenetration of perceiving and conceiving. If he is right and this interpenetration bespeaks the presence of a spiritual power or powers, such a presence can only be inferred 'after the fact,' as it were. So before trying to proceed much further it may be worth reiterating that every living language must be generally infused with culturally-inflected meanings that inevitably inform the consensual decisions as to what deserves to be accorded significance. This means that in respect to the cultural problem that concerns Butler, one of the biggest

obstacles in the way of telling an adequate story about evolution lies in the fact that in this techno-scientific culture the meanings of most of the key words relating to fundamental aspects of the naturing of Nature have been hi-jacked by an imperialistic mode of thought which tends to rob Life and Thought of their very quicknesses.

This means, in other words, that the quest for understanding is above all blocked by an obfuscating tendency typical of a mode of thought that prides itself on its rationality; which legitimizes the tendency to invest highly abstract concepts with ontological and/or epistemological significance. This tendency to suppress a good part of concrete experiencing precludes a comprehensive understanding of Life and Thought since it results in meaning-making becoming ever more abstract in the evolution of the language since meanings become ever more remote from their imaginal roots.⁹

So in so far as the latter do in fact provide the most firmly 'grounded' concrete meanings, and inasmuch as these meanings can be traced to the 'primordial sensings' of 'primitive' thinkers, the progressive 'distancing' of thinking from its roots in concrete imaging is not surprisingly conducive to the institution of life-denying ideologies that value material or secular control over the reconciliation of the elusive immaterial concerns that so trouble human existence. Since these concerns are obviously impossible to pin down exactly, especially if they can only be expressed through the use of materially-based metaphors, as Barfield argues, it is not hard to believe that Butler's early warnings about the dangers inherent in the ascendancy of the new Church of Scientism have been borne out, ironically enough, by the very 'progress' of science.¹⁰

Which is to say that the successful pursuit of secular powers by the leaders of a globally ambitious culture informed by a callous form of capitalism is very unlikely to welcome the birth of anything like a 'living reason.' This is because such a reason

9 Succinctly summing up this view of the origins of language, Barfield holds that '[t]he first metaphors were not artificial but natural.' As evolution proceeds, 'a very high proportion of the words in any modern language...refer to matters and events which are not part of the world accessible to our senses.' Such meaningful references employ 'shapes and objects of the outside world' as symbols for the mental images that ultimately provide the base-meanings for fundamental concepts. Barfield thus anticipates a principal feature of A. N. Whitehead's later theory of perception, about which I will say more below, as when he notes that these 'outer symbols' hold the secret to what is going on 'inside' perception itself. See Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), pp. 14-15.

10 'It may well be we shall find we have escaped from one set of taskmasters to fall into the hands of others far more ruthless. The tyranny of the Church is light in comparison with that which future generations may have to undergo at the hands of the doctrinaires....The so-called man of science...[needs] to be well watched by those who value freedom. Wait till he has become more powerful, and note the vagaries which his conceit of knowledge will indulge in.' *Life and Habit*.

requires at the very least the emergence of humble attitudes of mind that value justice and fairness rather than victory and triumph in the struggle to come to terms with the vicissitudes of Life. Which may be one of the very best reasons for thinking that every would-be natural philosopher ought to pay special attention to the meaning of a natural power when attempting to illuminate the role of the human organism in nature.

5. REASON AND POWER

It is evident that Butler's vague allusions to a cosmos replete with natural powers that are purposefully enlisted to develop increasingly sophisticated forms of sensibility are of a piece with the ancient quest for knowledge and truth. That is to say, he indicates that the philosophical search for wisdom is by no means quixotic since the naturing of Nature could well allude to an evolving wisdom that ought to be discernible in some of the modes of thought evolved by the human organism. Yet it would be a great wonder if any account of meaning-making were not inherently uncertain, provisional, and fitfully insightful. Especially if to get anywhere at all presupposes a proper cultivation of certain hidden natural powers that are perhaps guided, as Whitehead intimates, by a special, wisdom-loving power of imagination.

In any case, the primary focus of any would-be nonmodern naturalist who has lost faith in the scientific dogma that the world is ultimately governed by the eternal and immutable 'laws of nature' ought to be the notion of a natural power. Such powers may well be imperfectly developed in actual mortal creatures who are subject to the vicissitudes of a continually changing world, which is a consideration that renders otiose the idea that once upon a time a supreme Natural Power decreed that certain specific 'laws' should obtain always and everywhere. Indeed, the very idea of an evolutionary world implies, as Whitehead is well aware, that an evolving cosmos is characterized by just those general conditions of actual existence that happen to have become established. Hence a layperson who is inclined to wonder about the provenance of the 'laws of nature' may suspect that the modernist faith in scientific reason is just that--a peculiar form of faith that effectively imbues the worlding of the world with eternally valid and immutable rules for organizing mind and matter. Hence it is not unreasonable to ask for an intelligible picture of Nature into which a thinking, feeling complex of relationships between matter and mind can find itself.

It is thus not incidental that in his early writings on the philosophy of science, Whitehead explicitly addresses the *ur*-question: 'What is Nature?' His response is

however both terse and very vague: 'Nature is that which we observe in perception through the senses.'¹¹

But not only does Whitehead not try to make this statement more precise, he does not even attempt to define the key term 'sense awareness.' He rather evokes a very blurry picture of a more or less coherent Heraclitean flux of inter-connected 'percipient events'---where the adjective alludes to 'sense-awarenesses' that provide the glue, as it were, which holds the flux of events together.

Thus Whitehead's picture of this present cosmos involves a complex web of inter-communicating, more or less localized acts of perception---where each such act elicits an only more or less sensitive self capable of deploying natural powers capable of 'recognizing' relevant 'objects of significance.' As for what this last phrase might mean, it is enough to note here that an 'object of significance' does not refer to a bit of 'stuff' in the 'classical' sense of a 'something' possessing clear and definite properties. Nor is it like a 'solid' or compact packet of information that can be intercepted by, say, optical receivers called eyes and converted mechanically by a material organ called the brain into, say, a visual image.

An act of 'sense awareness' elicits, in other words, a sense-making operation that bespeaks a selective response to what can only be an invitation to 'make something' out of what *may* be of interest or concern to the percipient event. For such an event refers in the first instance to a constricted form of awareness that, as Whitehead puts it, is 'saved [from] being the whole of nature by the fact of its significations' (CN, p. 188). That is to say, such an event bespeaks a localized sentient activity that is partly furnished with an evaluative power capable of deciding and choosing what is or is not important or of interest to it.

But then an act recognition refers to an inherently fallible sensitive self which may or may not be able to deal properly with whatever may only in principle concern itself. The implication is that the coherence of the worlding of the world is anything but deterministic.¹² That is, perception generally presupposes localized sense-making powers that in the higher organisms include, but are not exhausted by the familiar sense organs. Indeed, biology tells us that there are many 'lower' organisms whose percipience does not depend on such organs since they do not have any.

¹¹ See Alfred North Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964, hereafter cited as *CN*), p. 3.

¹² Hence it is also worth noting that this interpretation of 'sense-awareness' is of a piece with Whitehead's later theory of actuality in which the formal notion of an actual entity can be modelled as a living ensouled self whose experiencings arise out of species-specific concerns. For more on this topic, see Chapter 6 of my *Process, Reality, and the Power of Symbols: Thinking with A. N. Whitehead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

In sum, then, the vague idea of 'sense-awareness' refers in general to a certain species-specific capacity for meaning-making that varies widely in respect to kind and degree across the organic spectrum. Although Whitehead in the early stages of his inquiry into the proper task of natural philosophy attempts to skirt the difficult philosophical question of the exact relation of sense-perception to thought, this turns out to be somewhat misleading.¹³ That is, a certain element of mindfulness has surely crept into his account when he describes a percipient event as a 'standpoint for perception' (CN, p. 188). Or again, when he more suggestively refers to a percipient event as 'the bodily life of the incarnate mind' (CN, p. 107).

This line of thought, in other words, seriously blurs the distinction between active perceiving and passive receiving of 'objects' that cannot be precisely identified. Of special interest to Butler, then, would surely be Whitehead's remark that '[e]volution in the complexity of life means an increase in the types of objects directly sensed.'¹⁴ It would perhaps be even more intriguing to Butler that Whitehead uses the example of music-making to illustrate one of his most important points, for this strange business seems to have induced Butler to think about evolution in the first place.¹⁵

Whitehead remarks that there are 'sense-awarenesses' that exemplify especially astute aesthetic sensibilities. That is, there are

perceptions of objects as distinct entities which are mere subtle ideas to cruder sensibilities. The phrasing of music is a mere abstract subtlety to the unmusical; it is a direct sense-apprehension to the initiated. CN, p. 163.

Indeed, it is not hard to believe that not everyone is capable of appreciating, at least on first hearing, an intricate fugue by Bach. Or a non-representational painting; that is, one that gives the impression of emulating a fugue by Bach. Some sort of learning is evidently involved in aesthetic sensing which is far from being automatic.

6. NATURE AND 'PERCIPIENT EVENTS'

It is thus small wonder that Whitehead's early reflections on the concept of nature induced him to declare that any attempt to clarify the foundations of natural philosophy is destined to open out into 'a boundless ocean of inquiries' (CN, p. 163).

¹³ 'We should concentrate on 'what the mind knows of nature,' not what nature does to the mind' (CN, 27). By contrast, the moderns, in Whitehead's view, invert this fundamental relationship, along with many other important contrasts.

¹⁴ CN, pp. 162-63.

¹⁵ Butler's story about evolution begins with a series of reflections on the peculiar skills of musicians who can, for instance, play a complicated piece of music while at the same time carrying on a conversation: it is as though their entire bodies had learned how to ingest a complex score so that they do not need to be able to read it note by note during a performance.

The foregoing discussion indicates something of the breadth of these inquiries. As for their depth, the pre-Socratic philosophers long ago noticed that certain arithmetical ratios can be used to express the regularities illustrated by different musical scales.

The celebrated efficacy of abstruse theories of mathematics in the esoteric researches of modern physics only deepens an ancient mystery. All that seems clear is that mathematics is a special form of symbolizing which happens to be remarkably well suited to explorations of the patterns and rhythms that modern physicists tell us are intrinsic to the organizing activity that is part and parcel of the naturing of Nature. So when Pauli declares in effect that mathematics is useless when it comes to the interpretative phase of inquiry in quantum physics, he is drawing attention to the possibility that the faith of mathematical physicists in the cognitive powers of mathematics may be not all that different from the faith of alchemists in the value of figurative-based modes of reasoning.

That is to say, both types of believers, who hold that the powers of human reason can expose the nature of the communicative ties that link human minds and Nature, indicate that the 'reality of symbols' Pauli speaks of must involve 'direct intuitive observations.' Whitehead in fact claims that such intuitions are the ultimate source of natural knowledge.¹⁶ He allows, moreover, for the possibility of intuitions of intermediate abstract qualities such as those indicated by two different shades of blue.¹⁷ But he more generally suggests that all natural knowledge may ultimately derive from more or less well-cultivated capacities to 'sense' the relevance of 'objects of significance.' This circumstance seems closely related to his early claim that percipient events hold the worldly flux of events more or less tightly together.

In any case, however one interprets 'recognition,' one must above all allow that different perceivers perceive the world differently and that there may well be especially gifted perceivers who can 'sense' things the existence of which others do not even suspect. This possibility Whitehead makes even more explicit in a chapter of *Science and the Modern World* on the so-called 'romantic' poets who strenuously object to the prevailing dogma of scientific materialism which strips the world of value and meaning.¹⁸ He credits Wordsworth in particular with a capacity to recognize aspects of the 'haunting presences of nature.' In regard to Shelley he credits him with a special

¹⁶ See Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 177.

¹⁷ That is, qualities of the sort that prompt one to say 'there it is again.' See *CN*, pp. 124-5 and *CN*, p. 144. Some abstract mathematical 'objects' can be 'sensed' indirectly with the aid of systematic symbolisms---for such objects are, says Whitehead, 'known by logical inference as necessarily in being' (*CN*, p. 126)

¹⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967, hereafter referred as *SMW*).

sensitivity to the powers of mind.¹⁹ These two lyric poets may even represent, he seems to suggest, complementary modes of sensibility that indicate that human powers of 'sensing' refer to a much more complex range of the possibility of 'seeings' than is deemed 'normal' by scientific materialists.

Whitehead's chapter on "The Romantic Reaction" can thus be read, in short, as an attempt to reverse some of the damage that has been done to the fundamental idea of mind by the early moderns. Not only can they be accused of a self-serving distortion of the idea of good reasoning by rendering it subservient to rule-governed methods. They have more egregiously propagated a static image of mind as a kind of receptacle for mental artifacts. On the contrary, says Whitehead,

[M]ind is inside its images, not its images inside the mind. I am immersed in a topic of mathematics, not the reverse. We are actors in scenes, not the scenes inside us.²⁰

Thus implying that it would be better always to speak of 'minding,' Whitehead indicates that the picture of the naturing of Nature that Butler elicits in the form of an ongoing development of psycho-physical wholes. This picture indicates that the hoary ideas of mind and matter refer at bottom to the complementary and indissociable activities of minding and mattering, which implies that a Cartesian approach to the problem of the evolution of consciousness is not only much too simplistic, it is essentially wrong-headed. Indeed, it also ignores the possibility that one of the more important discoveries of modern physics---that the cosmos is an incessant and unimaginably complex network of dynamically inter-connected activities, calls for a source of vitality that Butler alludes to when he brings in souls. It is thus small wonder that the moderns strive so hard to deceive themselves while covering over the profound metaphysical difficulties engendered by the conjecture that we live in the midst of relentlessly restless cosmic movement that is bent on evolving ever more complicated assemblages of related forms of minding and mattering.

The above considerations point up, at any rate, the need to explore the possibility, as Whitehead in fact explicitly notes in the Preface to *Science and the Modern World*, that 'the spiritual precedes the material.' Or as Butler might want to interject at this point, that the very idea of an ensouled, self-sustaining relationship between various forms of minding and mattering calls for a story about evolution that is especially concerned to do justice to the sheer complexity of human experiencing. Indeed, Whitehead in effect

¹⁹ See *SMW*, pp. 83-85. With respect to Shelley, Whitehead cites a passage from the poem *Mont Blanc* in which Shelley alludes to the 'secret springs' of thought.

²⁰ Quoted by W. E. Hocking (from a recollected conversation) in 'Whitehead on Mind and Nature,' in P.A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: Tudor Publication, 1951), pp. 383-404, esp. p. 385.

advises the non-modern naturalist to respect above all his/her 'naive experiences'; to hold on to the belief that we dwell 'within a world of colours, sounds, and other sense-objects, related in space and time to enduring objects such as stones, trees, and human bodies.'²¹

His later theory of perception can thus be read, in short, as an attempt to flesh out this basic plea for a full-bodied empiricism. Expanding upon his early views on perception Whitehead depicts this an activity that involves a 'fusing' of two more elementary modes of perception: the mode of 'presentational immediacy' and the mode of 'causal efficacy.' The former mode refers to the world of phenomena that in the mature organism is more or less automatically produced and which is normally referred to as a 'reality of appearances.' For it is the locale of daily experiencing into which all human infants are thrust at birth and which they must somehow learn to navigate with a minimum of expert help.

The natural philosopher who is in search of a deeper understanding of what is involved in learning the skills necessary for getting about in this world might therefore begin by contemplating the budding perceptions of infants. More specifically, he/she might ask whether the learning of infants illustrates the kind of initiations that Whitehead alludes to when speaking of the aesthetic capacity to 'sense' the worth of a new and difficult piece of music. In which case, this example affords Whitehead empirical justification for holding that the most crucial stage in learning how to perceive the world involves the primary mode of perception which he calls causal efficacy---which refers to the fact that various provocative 'somethings' can prompt or prod potential perceivers into trying to make sense out of whatever strikes them as interesting or important.

Although this preliminary mode of perception is not often noticed or remarked upon by adults whose perceptions are almost wholly governed by learned habits and instilled customs, Whitehead insists on both its primacy and its inherent vagueness. Indeed, the mode of causal efficacy is perhaps pre-figured in his initial reflections on perception when he declines to try to define 'sense-awareness.' In any event, he indicates it is necessary to face up to the possibility that all perceptions are only ever more or less adequate graspings of the 'really real,' for 'reality' is something that can only be discerned after the fact, as it were---when the constitution of the world has been 'fixed' by the fusing and/or mediating function called 'symbolic referencing' which gives us just the world-as-we happen-to-find-it.

It is just here, in other words, that Whitehead is most likely to offend against modern reason by rendering the notion of a veridical observation at once intelligible

²¹ *SMW*, p. 89.

and highly problematic. He not only throws open the closely guarded doors of modern philosophy to such symbol-making poets as Wordsworth and Shelley. He also indicates that a veridical perception alludes to a more or less successful juggling of an unruly host of images, ideas, concepts, and word-symbols, all of which bring with them a tangle of meanings that cannot be anchored to some fundamental 'ground' or absolute *Logos*.

So if a sensitive, perceiving human self refers at bottom to an embodied disposition to 'recognize' potential 'objects of significance,' and if such entities need not be definite or well-defined, it is no accident that Whitehead is led to support his musings by referring to the special intuitive acuity of certain poets. His later theory of perception points up the possibility, in other words, that a 'true' recognition of an object of significance can only be verified by more or less strong feelings of 'rightness'---such as those that guide the creative activity of good artists who frequently do not know what they want to create until they reach a point when they 'recognize' what they have blindly been aiming to achieve.

This conclusion runs directly against the grain of the modern tendency to neglect the body and concentrate solely on the mind, as though thinking does not really enlist a complex mix of body, mind, and soul---despite daily experiencing being an activity that usually involves attempts to balance the affective and the intellectual sides of sensibility---or the imaginal and conceptual dimensions of minding-mattering. Yet the emotional aspects of experiencing are always at hand to remind us, along with the intrinsic vagueness of perception, that adequacy, not truth, ought to be the primary concern of every would-be non-modern naturalist. Hence once he/she has cast aside the false obligation to continually genuflect towards the false ideals of certainty, precision, and completeness, the would-be non-modern naturalist can at least concentrate on finding a way to take into account the possibility that only feelings of 'rightness,' such as those that guide poets and artists in their quest for they know not what, hold the key to veridical perceptions.

That this consideration goes to the heart of the problem of interpretation is surely what Pauli is implying when he suggests that the thinking of the allegedly irrational alchemists is well worth attending to. But it is always a moot question what any putative discovery in the unimaginably complex and tangled network of inter-woven systems of symbolisms might be worth. So at this point it would be understandable if one were tempted to reject the quest for truth and knowledge entirely. However, one might on the other hand take up the burning question which the early Kant raised, and then abandoned, when in *The Critique of Pure Reason* he boldly stated that the very possibility of experiencing depends upon a faculty of imagination---which is a 'blind

but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever.'

While Kant retreated from this possibly key insight in later editions of the *Critique* (on account, it seems, of his fear that it would lead to mysticism), he at the same time indicated that the problem of perception has been falsely framed as a challenge to scientific experts when it is in fact a matter for humanistic philosophers who are at home with figurative modes of reasoning. More to the point, the mythopoeic capacity to connect elusive images and vague ideas in order to advance understanding can be cited as evidence for the need to bring in the powers of imagination. Why not think then that there are unconscious powers of imagination as well as conscious ones, for the former kind must somehow be involved in primordial acts of imaging?

7. SO WHAT MIGHT AN ADEQUATE THEORY OF PERCEPTION LOOK LIKE?

To sum up, Whitehead points towards the need for a highly convoluted theory of experiencing which may well require a living reason capable of roaming freely but responsibly in the realm of the imaginal. That a certain stress needs to be put on the notion of responsibility is implicit in Barfield's claim that the evolution of consciousness is best studied through the medium of a natural language. How we 'normally' speak about things manifestly affects how we think about them, and vice versa. The immanent-transcendent aspect of the evolution of meanings in any natural language indicates moreover that no mode of reasoning can be called 'good' if it ignores the need to do as much justice to the imaginal as to the conceptual.

This point bears directly on Butler's enlistment of sentient ensouled selves who possessing varying degrees of 'quickness' that allude to various degrees of vitality in the souls that engender the meaningful connections which are currently being made in the present reality of symbols. That these connections relate to the tensions that exist between the material and immaterial sides of experiencing is a sign that moral or ethical considerations are central to the idea of good thinking, as Whitehead indicates in the introduction to *Process and Reality* where he succinctly notes that '[m]orality of outlook is inseparably conjoined with generality of outlook'. This amounts to saying that the trick of a living reason is an art of balancing what has already come into being with what is yet to come and so must be first envisioned, for better or for worse.

It is just at this point that the question becomes unignorable: what natural power or powers other than imagination could manage such a trick if the overall aim is some improvement in extant habits? If Barfield is right and consciousness somehow arises out of an interpenetration of perceiving and conceiving, what else but a more or less well-cultivated representative of Spirit called the soul could guide the interweaving of

these two operations? Would not this line of thought then point to the conclusion that the only way to conceive the evolution of meaning-making in the cosmos is to think in terms of the model of artistic creation?²² But then one needs to ask what keeps the productions of some creative artists from merely lapsing into an anarchistic orgy of fantasies; a situation that suggests that all imaginings are equally worthwhile or equally worthless?

Such are only a few of the sticky questions that arise when seeking an adequate view of perception. If imagination is the executive agency in perception, and if the secret to good reasoning concerns well-cultivated souls capable of reconciling the imaginal and the conceptual, then the situation in natural philosophy may be not all that different from the situation faced by art critics. And it is not uncommon in the realm of art to find that a practitioner cannot say exactly what he/she is on about, or why one can often only vaguely sense that one has somehow arrived at the 'right' place.

Such elementary considerations indicate that a would-be naturalist might well pay attention to the psychologist C. G. Jung who insists that the activity of minding has an unconscious as well as a conscious side where the former side is, *ipso facto*, inaccessible to conscious, critical inspection. For he also suggests that the unconscious side of thinking is as important as the conscious side, if not more so.

Despite his claim that he is not doing metaphysics, it is thus highly significant for natural philosophy that Jung also stresses that there are aspects of perception that he terms 'synchronous events.' This is because they refer to instances of communication that span large gaps in space and/or time in the absence of a material medium of communication. They can thus be called 'acausal' since they lie outside the purview of a type of thinking that operates under the aegis of the 'laws of nature.'

Jung's general claim for the 'reality' of 'acausal' events is denied by orthodox naturalists whose very methods of reasoning prevent them from even recognizing the possibility of their existence. Yet there is abundant evidence for extra-sensory perceptions and so those scientific skeptics who deny their existence merely put their credentials as good empiricists into question.²³ His insistence on the reality of such elusive entities recalls the refusal of Whitehead to make the meaning of 'sense-awareness' precise apart from insisting on the indispensable role of the implicated 'percipient events' in holding the world together. So when the early Whitehead

²² The best way to 'get at' spirit, says Barfield, is through a study of how words are actually used. See, for instance, the essay "Matter, Imagination, and Spirit," in *The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays*.

²³ Jung declares, for instance, that those who cling to an 'exaggerated skepticism in regard to ESP' do so 'without a shred of justification.' See C. G. Jung and W. Pauli, *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche* (New York and London: 1954), p. 141.

associates such events with acts of recognition that may pertain to immaterial as well as material 'objects of significance,' he can be enlisted on Jung's side to support his claim for the existence of 'synchronous' events.

That is to say, Jung is making an essentially metaphysical claim, that there are 'real' communications in Nature that scientific inquirers cannot bring themselves to recognize since they refuse to abandon their badly truncated definition of causality. But in order to serve their limited practical interests they are obliged to promote the self-serving, hubristic assumption that modern scientists are entitled to define the fundamental ideas that are generally accepted as expressive of the most salient characteristics of Nature.

So while it cannot be denied that science is very good at detailed investigations of the material connections between natural phenomena that can be located in space and time, they can be accused of rendering the nonmaterial aspects of experiencing invisible for self-serving reasons. An outstanding exception is of course Pauli who expanded his range of interests to take in the thinking of the premoderns. During the course of a long correspondence with Jung on this topic, he observed that the latter's use of the term 'synchronicity' is misleading on account of its connotation of temporality. It would be better to describe such events in terms of the sort of 'meaning-correspondences' that were the chief concerns of the alchemists.²⁴

But the vexed question of the meaning of a veridical perception now looms larger than ever. What power or powers could span large gaps in space-time while making meaningful connections between different orders of symbols in a 'reality of symbols'? According to the later Whitehead's theory of perception such connections allude to acts of perception that involve 'fusions' performed by acts of 'symbolic referencing'---acts that bring together rough sensings, vague ideas and images, culturally inflected concepts, peculiar word-symbols, and so on. A picture of the world is thus presented which suggests an immensely complex and interplay of meaning-making of many kinds. The question thus becomes urgent: what power or powers might be capable of making and/or breaking the connections between different orders of symbolism in this vast network of symbolizing? Would not such a power or powers presuppose a more or less sensitive and responsible agency capable of forging sound connections between, for instance, visual images and abstract concepts in ways that are best illustrated by, say, gifted poets whose special facility with words suggests an almost magical capacity to engender symbols that enable new 'seings'?

²⁴ Pauli notes in particular that the alchemical term 'correspondentia' refers to the existence of acausal relations of meaningfulness. See *Atom and Archetype*, pp. 34-46.

In any case, if Pauli is right and what we call the real world is better termed a 'reality of symbols,' and if the ways in which we 'see' this world ultimately reflect the quality of the powers of imagination that enable 'seeing' *tout court*, then the early Kant may well have been intuitively right. But if so, why not think that whatever human beings acquire in the way of knowledge or truth is just as likely to be distributed throughout the musings of alchemists as those of poets and artists?

In which case, the question whether or not good sense actually issues from some act of experiencing would be intrinsically undecidable, especially if Jung is right and the most important powers of imagination dwell on the unconscious side of minding. It is thus not incidental that he also holds that this side is the home of the soul. It is into the very center of a very complex puzzle that Butler thus chose to leap, armed only with a firm faith in the enlightening powers of figurative language. By choosing to make his story of evolution revolve about the trope of an ensouled human self, his departure from the norms of modern reason renders more than just the special meaning of good reasoning problematic. He could hardly proffer a more vexing challenge to any self-styled naturalist who champions science as capable, at least in principle, of 'explaining' perception.

8. PERCEPTION AND CLAIRVOYANCE

Jung indicates that the topic of 'synchronous events' ought to stand near the front of the concerns of any natural philosopher who is seeking an adequate theory of perception. Butler indicates something of the extent of the difficulties that must be faced when he associates the development of an embryo with an unconscious memory of long past events. He also brings out the question whether there are 'acausal' connections between contemporaries that complement those connections elicited by acts of 'sensing' that span historical gaps in space and time when he enlists the powers of unconscious memory.

In alluding to the various stages of development that a maturing embryo passes through, Butler notes that

the small, structureless, impregnate ovum from which we have each one of us sprung, has a potential recollection of all that has happened to each one of its ancestors prior to the period at which any such ancestor has issued from the bodies of its progenitors - provided, that is to say, a sufficiently deep, or sufficiently often-repeated, impression has been made to admit of its being remembered at all. Each step of normal development will lead the impregnate ovum up to, and remind it of, its next ordinary course of action, in the same way as we, when we recite a well-known passage, are led up to each successive sentence by the sentence which has immediately preceded it. *Life and Habit*

Butler also adduces many intriguing and suggestive examples that suggest that under constantly changing, contingent circumstances there is a kind of unconscious thinking going on in the worlding of the world which is anything but unusual. As he puts the point,

We know that animals have great powers of communicating their ideas to one another, though their manner of doing this is as incomprehensible by us as a plant's knowledge of chemistry, or the manner in which an amoeba makes its nest, or a spider its web, without having gone through a long course of mathematics. I think most readers will allow that our early training and the theological systems of the last eighteen hundred years are likely to have made us involuntarily under-estimate the powers of animals low in the scale of life, both as regards intelligence and the power of communicating their ideas to one another; but even now we admit that ants have great powers in this respect.' *Life and Habit*

This suggests that there are connections established in the worlds of plants and animals that bespeak perceptions which differ from those which hold the human um-Welt together only in degree of sophistication.

Thus maintaining that high in the list of the powers that enable the continuities exhibited in this ever-changing cosmos is the power of unconscious memory, Butler ties the power of remembering very closely to the idea of instinct.²⁵ As for the meaning of instinct, he indicates that here the would-be naturalist encounters what amounts to his/her biggest challenge; for he goes to some lengths to say what an instinct is not:

Instinct is not the result of conscious deliberation; it is not a consequence of bodily organisation; it is not a mere result of a mechanism which lies in the organisation of the brain; it is not the operation of dead mechanism, glued on, as it were, to the soul, and foreign to its inmost essence; but it is the spontaneous action of the individual, springing from his most essential nature and character. *Unconscious Memory*.

Assuming that nature is bent on evolving an immense variety of instinctual types of behaviour, Butler points out that it would be a mistake to tie a particular instinct

to a soul standing outside the individual and near akin to Providence - a purpose once for all thought out, and now become a matter of necessity to the individual, so that he can act in no other way, though it is engrafted into his nature from without, and not natural to it. The purpose of the instinct is in each individual case thought out and willed unconsciously by the individual, and afterwards the

²⁵ It is also worth noting that Barfield maintains that 'the concept of "instinct," however it is taken....cannot be understood, cannot honestly be conceived, otherwise than as a superindividual wisdom at work in nature.' *Speaker's Meaning*, p. 112.

choice of means adapted to each particular case is arrived at unconsciously.

Unconscious Memory.

So unconscious memory may also be bound up with instinctive, non-sensory modes of perception, since Butler holds in effect that perception cannot be understood without taking into account that much neglected phenomenon called 'clairvoyance.' Although the existence of this mysterious form of communication is frequently denied out of hand, it may be as important as instinct for understanding perception.²⁶

In any case, Butler's allusions to 'clairvoyance' cannot be dismissed as proof of his irrational eccentricity since his reflections on this phenomenon are compatible with Jung's claims for the existence of 'synchronous events.' Furthermore, in terms of Whitehead's notion of the cosmic connective activity of percipient events, Jung's conjecture also brings to mind the possibility that scientists at times elicit when they speak of 'action at a distance.' This supposedly strange phenomenon appears to be quite common in the insect world where it is perhaps exemplified in the concerted actions of myriad, supposedly independent individual organisms which nonetheless carry out very complicated and well-coordinated tasks as though they were of one mind as to what needs to be done.

Butler cites in this context the example of a large colony of bees which, despite appearing to be a chaotic society of single-minded organisms, can perform a great variety of complicated tasks without any apparent need to stop and debate what needs to be done and in what order.²⁷ This suggests that the living cosmos that Butler evokes can be conceived as a complex assemblage of quasi-independent but cooperative living individuals who have of necessity a very limited idea of their actual role in the 'quickened' scheme of things. Indeed Butler elicits the image of a body as a complex, ensouled assemblage of enspirited 'lesser' bodies whose quasi-independence is regularly put to the test by even apparently minor disruptions when one malfunctioning organ threatens the well-being of the entire organism.

²⁶ Butler observes that, 'firstly,... clairvoyance is not confined to instinct, but is found also in man; secondly, that clairvoyance is by no means present in all instincts, and that therefore our experience shows us clairvoyance and instinct as two distinct things - clairvoyance being of great use in explaining instinct, but instinct serving nothing to explain clairvoyance; thirdly and lastly, that the clairvoyance of the individual will not continue to be so incomprehensible to us, but will be perfectly well explained in the further course of our investigation, while we must give up all hope of explaining instinct in any other way. The conception we have thus arrived at enables us to regard instinct as the innermost kernel, so to speak, of every living being. *Unconscious Memory*

²⁷ 'Many will be surprised at my ascribing to instinct an unconscious knowledge, arising out of no sensual impression, and yet invariably accurate. This, however, is not a consequence of my theory concerning instinct; it is the foundation on which that theory is based, and is forced upon us by facts.' *Unconscious Memory.*

That the proper functioning of a body illustrates the centrality of the notion of faith, as Butler suggests, is at least no harder to understand than the faith illustrated by the bodies called societies which play their limited parts in a wider interplay of sense-making. Consider, for instance, the murmurations of starlings whose well-coordinated flocks of twisting and turning individuals give the impression of a spontaneous production of an aesthetically pleasing figure being traced out 'on the fly,' as it were. It is as though there were a singular creative or artistic spirit guiding the entire flock, one which is bent on finding out what the 'body' of a collectivity of clairvoyant individuals can do in the worlding of the world.²⁸

A similar situation is also suggested by remarkably well-coordinated musical productions of an orchestra or string quartet in which a number of different personalities act as though their presumably independent minds were aspects of a singular act of minding. Such a sense of unified purposeful minding suggests also a possibly very long history of more or less successful past unifications that are unconsciously remembered as having been 'right' in some sense. Which is to say that each accomplished performer of a superior piece of music is conceivably connected unconsciously to an extensive collective mentality whose individual components bear witness to a common awareness of what specific movements of mind go well together.²⁹

In sum, then, if one grants that no theory of perception can be called adequate if it neglects the powers of unconscious memory in trying to do justice to the idea of experience, and if Whitehead is right that feelings of concern are in general behind the connectivities established in the flux of percipient event, it is not hard to credit Butler's principal claim---that the idea of evolution is infused with the aim to develop very gradually increasingly sophisticated forms of minding-mattering. This suggests that different forms of organization illustrate a faith in the reliability of both 'horizontal' and 'vertical' acts of 'sense-awareness'---where the latter pertain to the capacity of developing organisms to remember how their ancestors solved the

28 The allusion is to Spinoza's famous observation, that we do not know what a body can do.

29 'Ants, again, hit always upon exactly the right moment for opening the cocoons in which their larvæ are confined and for setting them free, the larva being unable to do this for itself. Yet the life of only a few kinds of insects lasts longer than a single breeding season. What then can they know about the contents of their eggs and the fittest place for their development? What can they know about the kind of food the larva will want when it leaves the egg - a food so different from their own? What, again, can they know about the quantity of food that will be necessary? How much of all this at least can they know consciously? Yet their actions, the pains they take, and the importance they evidently attach to these matters, prove that they have a foreknowledge of the future: this knowledge therefore can only be an unconscious clairvoyance.' *Unconscious Memory*.

complicated problems every organism is continually faced with as it attempts to survive in a dangerous world.

As for the 'horizontal' acts of awareness that link contemporary events together, some if not all of which illustrate the phenomenon of clairvoyance, the chief lesson appears to be that an adequate theory of perception must also be able to take into account the existence of more or less well-developed feelings of responsibility. Such feelings may even apply at very primitive levels of organization and thus account for the notorious slowness of evolution. For this latter characteristic of the naturing of Nature perhaps reflects an unconscious awareness that too great an alteration in established habits 'here' can have disastrous consequences for other equilibriums 'there'.³⁰

9. PERCEPTION AND SEMIOSIS

At this point, then, it is necessary to try to become clearer about the phenomenon of communication. Let us consider the musings of C. S. Peirce on the topic of semiotics, one that the early Whitehead reminds us needs to be taken seriously when he speaks of 'percipient events' as capable of acts of 'recognition' of 'objects of significance.' What could be more significant, one might ask here, than a sign or symbol that appears to convey something of interest or importance?³¹

During the course of an inquiry into the possibility of using Aristotelian logic to clarify the relation between generality and vagueness in human communications, Peirce appears to have been suddenly struck by a new thought. For while noting that general signs convey definite meanings, he observes that it must be left to the interpreter to complete the meanings of vague signs. The reason for this (he conjectures in a footnote)

lies in the fact that the entire universe -- not merely the universe of existents, but all that wider universe, embracing the universe of existents as a part, the universe

³⁰ For an excellent account of the view that so-called primitive cultures were instinctively aware that they lived in a 'moral universe,' see Vine Deloria, Jr., *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979). In summing up the matter Deloria notes that "[w]estern civilization, unfortunately, does not link knowledge and morality but rather, it connects knowledge and power and makes them equivalent," which is a much neglected view advanced by only a relatively few nonmodern philosophers of nature. See SMW, esp. Ch.V.

³¹ The centrality of affect calls for a body, and very likely an ensouled body, since 'a perceived object is merely known as signified by our bodily state,' a state that Whitehead also indicates can be affected by both material and immaterial 'objects.' See *CN*, 187-88.

which we are all accustomed to refer to as the `truth' -- that all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.³²

Peirce thus ties the notion of communication to a picture of an evolving cosmos as a Grand Semiosis; that is, an image of the worlding of the world as a complex network of interwoven semiotic processes in which meanings are continually being dynamically precipitated and absorbed, so to speak. No act of meaning-making in this cosmic movement is final since its completion is only the beginning of another such act. The world, in short, is shot through with dynamic meaning-makings which are comprised of non-reducible triadic relationships between objects, signs, and interpretants. Hence the meaning-making that is going on everywhere in this evolutionary cosmos evokes the image of a complex tapestry in process of being woven, unravelled, and rewoven in an incessant flux of interpretations of signs and symbols.

It is thus not incidental that Peirce's vision of a thoroughly evolutionary universe includes a version of platonism that allows for the emergence of novel forms of organization.³³ That is to say, he posits a realm of intrinsically vague platonic entities---which he terms `real vagues'---which is a view that reflects a conception of `reality' that he associates with scholastic realism.³⁴ Hence his image of a cosmic semiosis includes the possibility of the emergence of what Whitehead calls eternal objects which are forms of organization that for Peirce are not pre-determined---although once they emerge into the world they must remain available forever after as real possibilities during subsequent processes of organization.

Peirce allows, in short, for the possibility that a good deal of, perhaps all, meaning-making involves interpretations of intrinsically vague signs or symbols. In any case, he too evokes `a reality of symbols' in which communication in general is like ordinary human communication which frequently enlists imaginative interpretation of vague or ambiguous signs and/or symbols. Indeed, vagueness and ambiguity imply inevitable gaps between established meanings---such as those a hearing impaired listener experiences. Or anyone who attends to ambiguous body movements or facial gestures

³² See the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. I-VI, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; vol. VII-VIII, ed. Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), which I will hereafter to as *CP*, as in *CP* 5.448n.

³³ `[I]f we are going to regard the universe as a result of evolution at all, we must think that not merely the existing universe, that locus in the cosmos to which our reactions are limited, but the whole Platonic world, which in itself is equally real, is evolutionary in its origin, too.' *CP*, 6.200.

³⁴ Peirce defines this doctrine `as the opinion that there are real objects that are general, among the number being the modes of determination of existent singulars, if, indeed, these be not the only such objects. But the belief in this can hardly escape being accompanied by the acknowledgment that there are, besides, real vagues, and especially real possibilities. For possibility being the denial of a necessity, which is a kind of generality, is vague like any other contradiction of a general.' *CP*, 6.453.

that are amenable to many different kinds of interpretation. Or misinterpretations, which means that the vagueness and uncertainty that is inherent in Peirce's conception of a semiosis indicate that the actual worlding of the world can be described as intrinsically uncertain.

From Butler's point of view, this last characteristic of a living cosmos is only to be expected. That is, the intrinsic vagueness of the *telos* that he ascribes to the naturing of Nature is borne out by the trajectories of living human selves who like all other living creatures of this evolutionary cosmos do not know exactly where they are headed:

Animals and plants have travelled to their present forms as man has travelled to any one of his own most complicated inventions. Slowly, step by step, through many blunders and mischances which have worked together for good to those that have persevered in elasticity. They have travelled as man has travelled, with but little perception of a want till there was also some perception of a power, and with but little perception of a power till there was a dim sense of want; want stimulating power, and power stimulating want; and both so based upon each other that no one can say which is the true foundation, but rather that they must be both baseless and, as it were, meteoric in mid air. They have seen very little ahead of a present power or need, and have been then most moral, when most inclined to pierce a little into futurity, but also when most obstinately declining to pierce too far, and busy mainly with the present. They have been so far blindfolded that they could see but for a few steps in front of them, yet so far free to see that those steps were taken with aim and definitely, and not in the dark.
Life and Habit.

But by the same token, if processes of variation only cautiously reach toward a better foot-hold on life, there is reason to think that the worlding of the world is replete with more or less wise meaning-makers who may or may not have learned to make good sense most of the time. When the early Whitehead depicts the connectivities that hold the flux of actual events as more or less effective, generalized perceptions---which he later formally terms 'prehensions'---he indicates that such activities may not only be inherently fallible but also stupid or malign.

Whitehead allows for acts of recognition that involve a complicated process of choosing, evaluating, and deciding what may or may not be a genuine 'object of significance.' Peirce likewise associates semiotic activity with interpretative powers which, on account of the existence of 'real vagues,' may well attest to the indispensability of imaginative interpretative powers that must inevitably deal with the vicissitudes of choice. What else could make proper choices but a more or less wise representative of Spirit, one that is neither omniscient nor omnipotent? When Butler evokes the notion of an ensouled self does he not in the end point towards mortal artists as the most reliable makers of good sense in so far as their most valuable

creative work is guided mainly by visceral feelings? Such anyway is the vague conclusion that I am suggesting Butler's incomplete story of evolution points towards, at least when it is augmented by Whitehead's general presumption that Becoming always trumps Being. Which is to say Butler's image of a living cosmos bespeaks an overarching Self forever in process of becoming Another Self, for better or for worse, in a tragicomic dance of meaning-making---one that is incessantly forming and dissolving the patterns and rhythms that each of its participating selves exemplifies.

Hence the movement of the entire evolving cosmos can be viewed as infused with a kind of faith---in the value of a restless creation of ever new ensouled selves out of old selves---which is in itself a kind of assertion of the value of an ongoing partly free production of forms of faith in the guise of various organized connections between different forms of mattering and minding. Nothing in the way of eternal 'goodness' is guaranteed in this ongoing production of forms of faith for every cosmic process is inescapably at the mercy of unpredictable contingencies and unhappy accidents. Whatever happens to have come to be here and now may stem from whole series of misbegotten efforts of world-making that include unhappy choices and decisions that may even bespeak a preponderance of malevolent souls infused with toxic aims and desires.

10. PERCEPTION AND FAITH

The foregoing remarks put paid to the so-called postmodern view that the quest for knowledge and truth, never mind wisdom, is futile. There is no metaphysical argument that can prove that the notion of faith bespeaks delusory wishful thinking. That this taboo notion presents a special challenge to the natural philosopher is in fact indicated by M. Merleau-Ponty in his posthumous book *The Visible and the Invisible*. He observes (in the first paragraph) that even to speak of reality is to bear witness to a kind of 'perceptual faith':

We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher--the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep-seated set of mute 'opinions' implicated in our lives. But what is strange about this faith is that if we seek to articulate it into theses or statements, if we ask ourselves what is this *we*, what *seeing* is, and what *thing* or *world* is, we enter into a labyrinth of difficulties and contradictions.³⁵

³⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968, hereafter cited as VI), p. 3. The quotation cited is in the very first paragraph of this text.

Merleau-Ponty goes on to point out that we would not know the meaning of truth if we had not encountered what is manifestly false. The empirical justification for this observation is afforded by the exigencies of everyday life which frequently indicate that it is an ongoing general problem of how to deal justly with certain complementary notions that pertain to the salient characteristics of the naturing of Nature. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty puts his finger on the core of the difficulty in understanding perception when in this context he evokes the contrast between looking and seeing---as when he notes that

It is at the same time true that the world is *what we see* and that, nonetheless, we must learn to see it (VI, 4, emphasis in original).

If the capacity to 'see' well, as opposed to merely looking 'normally,' is indeed possible, as seems clear from the evocation of perceptual faith which alludes to the possibility of good or veridical seeing, all the above remarks point to the overwhelming importance of the idea of education. That is, the question of what sort of learning contributes to a good education and hence a sound perceptual faith, which is a question that is not easy to answer, and not only because of the obscurity of the very idea of good learning. Yet while it may be impossible to say what good learning means, one can perhaps get a good idea of its nature by contemplating the learning of infants who are thrust into the world without a book of instructions as to how to go about living in it.

So if the first concern of the natural philosopher is to learn how to distinguish between good and bad belief-habits, as Butler intimates when he speaks of the evolution of wisdom, the idea of good learning may not be so elusive after all; especially if a good part of the learning of infants involves the sort of steps that Butler describes when he traces the development of an embryo to various stages of unfolding unconscious memories that recall what its ancestors learned under similar circumstances.

In sum, then, the kind of knowledge required to solve the recurring problems of Life and Thought suggests that an organism is a kind of life-long learner engaged in solving a certain range of problems that the enveloping world constantly presents to it and for which it can only ever find temporary solutions. Hence an organism's fortunes seem bound to become more and more precarious as it encounters more and more complex problems that cannot be resolved entirely by applying previously learned solutions.

Hinting at both the limitless obscurity of the notion of perceptual faith, Merleau-Ponty frequently employs the little words 'we' or 'us.' He thus reminds us of Jung's claim that the learning of individual members of a given culture is very much under

the influence of the unconscious predilections of the entire culture, past as well as present. While it is true, as Merleau-Ponty points out, that each individual perceiver lives in a 'private world,' each private *um-Welt* is at the same time an only more or less individualized variant of a culturally partitioned common world. Thus when he states that between 'my perceptions and some things of this world' there must be a 'perceptual bond' (VI, 38), he evokes a multi-stranded tangle of bonding threads that allude to a continual interplay of different modes of sensibility, some of which may be life-enhancing and others not. One is thus led in the end to see that the notion of 'perceptual faith' presumes that 'private worlds' may well overlap in many places, although seldom if ever without-remainder.

When Merleau-Ponty suggests furthermore that the meaning of 'perceptual bond' has a good deal to do with a common perceptual faith, it is therefore just as important to remember that 'perception does not come to birth just anywhere...it emerges from in the recess of the body' (VI, 91). Since he at the same time calls his body 'the stage director of my perception,' he evokes an image of an assemblage of individual meaning-makers which is an only more or less well-integrated company of dancers whose vital movements bespeak more or less wise souls whose quality is partly visible in the expressive figures and rhythms of the movements of the dancers. As Butler intimates, it is ensouled psycho-physical bodies that reflect the quality of sense-making. Indeed, although the body does not perceive, says Merleau-Ponty, 'it is as if it were built around the perception that dawns through it' (VI, 8-9). Which implies once again that the most important factor in any perception of the world is the condition of the whole ensouled body through which something that is not just a repetition of old or approved ways of world-making may hesitantly bring something new into the world.

Since the topic of 'perceptual faith' is bound up with the question of how to judge the quality of a living reason, and since the latter elicits a certain freedom in the crucial business of imaging, the possibility that anarchical acts of imaging can subvert good learning becomes ever more likely as evolution proceeds. Indeed, the anarchic nature of the powers of imagination are surely illustrated by the ubiquity of dreaming. Yet even if dreaming generally refers to conceptually uncontrolled powers of imaging, this does not mean that all dreaming is nonsensical thinking. As Jung makes very clear, with this aspect of thinking one meets here perhaps one of the more important implications of Butler's story, at least as I have outlined it here. The ubiquity of dreaming is consonant with his implied contention that organisms are in general embodied and ensouled instruments for sensing in the broadest sense of this word; that

is, more or less sensitive instruments for extending the reach of natural knowledge by increasing the range of 'recognition' of possible objects of significance.

This consideration is in accord with an inherent capacity in perception to acquire supernatural knowledge.³⁶ But given the difficulties involved in making good sense, since a happy result is ultimately dependent on learning how to conceptually control the promiscuous business of imaging, it is not possible to overestimate the importance of a good educational system for nurturing imaginations capable of a critical conceptual acuity which can test the worth of favourite belief systems.³⁷ So it is worth noting once again that different modes of experiencing introduce different meanings into the worlding of the world. Which is to say that the best way to think about the quality of an educational system is in terms of the kind and quality of the souls of the culture's most influential meaning-makers.

In the case of a perhaps fatally diseased science-obsessed collective mentality, this bespeaks a distorted or moribund collective soul that is inclined to locate itself on the same level as mechanical robots. This means that the present condition of sense-making in the so-called enlightened West is anything but enlightened if it is the case, as Jung holds, that a 'large company composed of wholly admirable persons [can have] the morality and intelligence of an unwieldy, stupid, and violent animal.'³⁸ Which implies that a remedy for this dire situation calls for a very radical cultural therapy that may well be akin to the notoriously difficult work of 'individuation' that a neurotic individual must undertake to become a whole person. As Jung puts the point,

[t]he larger the community is, and the more the sum total of collective factors peculiar to every large community rests on conservative prejudices detrimental to individuality, the more will the individual be morally and spiritually crushed...Hence every man is, in a certain sense, unconsciously a worse man when he is in society than when acting alone; for he is carried by society and to that extent relieved of his individual responsibility.³⁹

³⁶ That all the 'higher' animals are able to enter the realm of the imaginal is evidenced by the ubiquity of dreaming. In the case of the human animal, dreaming tends to produce, however, a baffling confusion of images, concepts, and ideas that only on occasion appear to have some relevance to the vast network of symbolisms in which one is currently immersed --- when one is reminded that the sensitive ensouled body very likely knows more than the conscious ego can say.

³⁷ Peirce accords great weight to 'acritical indubitable beliefs' in his account of knowledge-making. Such beliefs, like all other beliefs, are essentially fallible; yet they are foundational in the sense that one cannot bring oneself to doubt them.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁹ From "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," in *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung*, p.133. The upshot, Jung implies, is a sick culture which effectively traduces the efforts of many individuals to become individuated.

Hence if the main drift of the story that Butler starts points to the need to cultivate more sensitive souls capable of truly responsible ways of world-making, the outlook is indeed grim. Perhaps a complete recovery from degenerate ways of world-making is next to impossible in a culture infused with a fear or hatred of the very powers required to do justice to the immaterial side of sense-making. Perhaps this benighted culture is faced with an ultimately invincible enemy, which is itself. Or as Jung puts the point,

i]n the same way that the atom bomb is an unparalleled means of physical mass destruction, so the misguided development of the soul must lead to psychic mass destruction.⁴⁰

In any case, a culture whose collective mentality is indifferent to the possibility that psychic health depends on fostering the spiritual side of unconscious thinking is destined to implode on account of having adopted narrow perspectives that Nietzsche long ago associated with the teaching of stupidity. In which case Jung is prophesying a grim future for this beleaguered planet inasmuch as such teaching involves inculcating pernicious myths which militate against the introduction of broader perspectives.

11. A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION.

But with the topic of myth this essay invites a deeper inquiry that calls for a look at some of the spiritual hazards faced by every evolving culture; hazards that may mirror to an unknown extent those that suffuse the individual quest for good sense. I have argued that Butler's story-telling can be read in tandem with Whitehead's account of this world as an immensely complex, dynamic flux of events that involve the activity of meaning-making at both individual and the cultural levels. So if his Heraclitean image of the world can be further elucidated as a series of acts of becoming guided by values that can only be identified in the making thereof, Butler's image of a dynamic assemblage of indissociable ensouled selves leads to an interpretation of evolution in general as a cosmic process of processes of meaning-making whose quality must be dependent on the health of all the souls involved. That is, on the progress, or lack of it, in what may be termed a cosmic process of soul-making.⁴¹

Which is to say that if a healthy ensouled culture is to emerge from this dehumanized and brutalized collective mentality, it requires the prior education of a majority of imaginative and morally concerned souls. For if the notion of soul-making encapsulates the supreme difficulties involved in the sort of therapeutic project that

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴¹ The allusion is to John Keats who, in a letter to his brother, denied that this world is a 'vale of tears.' It is rather 'a vale of soul-making' (which unavoidably, perhaps necessarily, involves the shedding of tears).

Butler is pursuing, one which revolves about the burning question of how a whole culture might learn to make better sense, he sums up all the difficulties involved when he associates evolution with a growth of natural knowledge. For he at the same time asserts that this growth allows for the possibility of a parallel growth of wisdom in Nature.

Hence if the obstacles in the way of the 'getting of wisdom' are like those that Jung outlines, a certain pessimism is warranted. Indeed, if one is inclined to regard the absence of a profound concern for ethics and/or morality as one of the major symptoms of a degenerate culture, the supposedly enlightened culture of the West may have long since passed the point of no return. Having adopted the scientific interpretation of cultural 'progress,' one in which the principal measure of good sense is based on the undoubted technical advantages and comforts that flow out of the ingenious creations of techno-science, an optimistic view must first find a way to nullify the effects of a voracious and parasitic form of capitalism---one that is clearly advantageous to a powerful few and detrimental to the general well-being of the many.

This dark and gloomy assessment of the current global situation does not entail, however, an inevitable or unavoidable collapse of this once promising civilization. I suggested at the outset that Butler can be viewed as a budding cultural therapist who envisages a more thoughtful future---if only it could be induced to stop and think. His implicit optimism is indeed justified, I have argued, provided this benighted culture can learn to evolve a truly enlightened collective imagination whose primary aim is justice in the delicate balancings of the material and the immaterial sides of experiencing.