

Perceptions of Providence: Doing one's duty in Victorian England

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

Intellectual history responds to that most difficult question—‘What were they thinking?’ Intellectual historians who concern themselves with the moral thinking of Victorians often view that thinking through a political lens, focussing on moral norms that were broadly accepted, or contested, rather than the moral thinking of particular Victorians as individuals—each with their own assumptions, sensibilities and beliefs. In this thesis, I interrogate the work of nine individual Victorians to recover their moralities, and discover how they decided what is the right, and what is the wrong, thing to do. My selected protagonists contributed variously to Victorian intellectual life—George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens, as novelists; Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, as participants in the public discussion of Christian belief; and William Whewell, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Hill Green, as moral philosophers. I make comparisons between my protagonists’ moralities, but it is not my aim to generalise from them and, by a process of extrapolation, define a ‘Victorian’ morality. Rather, my aim is to understand the reasoning underpinning the individual moralities of these particular Victorians.

My strategy has been to take a deep dive into my protagonists’ works—including their treatises, lectures, sermons, essays, novels, letters and diaries—to recover their moral beliefs, sometimes communicated explicitly but often implicitly, and to weave them together into webs of belief. Following R. G. Collingwood, I have sought to transpose myself into the perspective from which my protagonists formed their views and created their works, and, as a historian, re-think their thoughts. My approach has also been informed by the hermeneutics of both Hans-Georg Gadamer and Mark Bevir.

My thesis focuses on two key themes—conceptions of providence and conceptions of duty. My initial aim was to simply explore the moralities of my protagonists, but as I read their works for this purpose, it became apparent to me that, for the most part, conceptions of providence and duty are central to their moral beliefs. I have found that, while the practical duties they acknowledge are very similar, the conceptions of providence that inform their moralities are both diverse

and contested. Further, I have identified tensions in their various webs of belief—some inherent in their conceptions of providence and some in the relationship between their conceptions of providence and their moralities. It seems to me that these synchronic tensions indicate likely drivers of diachronic change in moral thinking, warranting further study outside the scope of this thesis.

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Every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other. ... Every beating heart ... is, in some of its imaginings, a secret ... inscrutable.

— Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Intellectual history responds to that most difficult question: ‘What were they thinking?’ In this thesis I interrogate the work of nine individual Victorians to discover what they thought about right and wrong; to recover their moralities. My selected protagonists contributed variously to Victorian intellectual life—George Eliot (1819–1880), Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) and Charles Dickens (1812–1870), as novelists; Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), John Henry Newman (1801–1890) and Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), as participants in the public discussion of Christian belief; and William Whewell (1794–1866), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), as moral philosophers.¹ Clearly, in selecting my protagonists I have had to negotiate the practical tension between breadth of scope and depth of study. I have chosen nine protagonists so as to engage with a variety of viewpoints, while retaining sufficient focus to engage intimately with their work. Further, I have chosen three groups, each of three protagonists, with similar focuses but different approaches. So, while Arnold, Newman and Spurgeon all write concerning Christian belief, Arnold does so as a liberal Anglican, Newman as an Anglo-Catholic, and Spurgeon as a Baptist preacher. And while Whewell, Mill and Green all write on moral philosophy, Whewell does so as conservative, Mill as a utilitarian liberal and Green as a radical liberal who grounds his morality in philosophical idealism. Similarly, while George Eliot, Gaskell and Dickens all write with a mid-Victorian moral purpose—‘seeking to illuminate the process of “salvation” by which the [reader’s] inward world might survive’ the ‘sordid realities’ of Victorian England—they each do so in the light of their own moral philosophy tempered by their own world view.² I make comparisons between my protagonists’ moralities, but it is not my aim to generalise from them or otherwise articulate a shared ‘Victorian’ morality. Rather, my aim is to discover the individual moralities of

¹ The philosophical work of each of Whewell, Mill and Green extends well beyond moral philosophy, but my focus is on their works bearing (directly or indirectly) on moral philosophy.

² Barry V. Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The novel as book of life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 15.

nine particular Victorians. Further, I am not concerned to establish the worthiness of my protagonists' moralities, nor to determine whether my protagonists' actions sit squarely with their moralities. I reject the notion that inconsistencies between one's actions and one's moral beliefs show those beliefs to be a sham—it is apparent, on a moment's reflection, that few of us who aspire to live at all well can claim to live as we believe we ought.³ I am concerned only with recovering the webs of belief that constitute their moralities and identifying any tensions inherent in those webs of belief.

My strategy has been to take a deep dive into my protagonists' works to recover their moral beliefs. These beliefs may be stated explicitly—in their treatises, lectures, sermons, essays or, sometimes, in their letters or even in novels. But often these beliefs are communicated implicitly—in their letters, diaries and in novels, but also in their lectures, sermons and essays.

Writing their novels, our novelists write fiction, not philosophy or theology. Similarly, in their sermons and essays, our theologians offer criticism or encouragement suited to particular circumstances, rather than a comprehensive moral philosophy.⁴ So the works of our novelists and theologians provide fragmentary evidence, rather than complete expositions, of their moralities. Nevertheless, because our novelists and theologians write deliberately, with a moral purpose, their works are rich sources of such evidence.⁵ As Dickens himself explained—'a reader will rise from the perusal of a book with some defined and tangible idea of the writer's moral creed and broad purposes, if [the writer] has any at all'.⁶ But, because so much of our understanding of their moralities is garnered from the incidentally implied rather than the deliberately explained, it is unsurprising that we find complexities, inconsistencies and gaps in the recovered moralities.

This thesis focuses on two key themes—conceptions of *providence* and conceptions of *duty*. My initial aim was to simply explore the moralities of my protagonists, but as I read their works for this purpose, it became apparent to me that

³ The historian qua historian, unlike a citizen, is concerned with identifying and understanding the facts of the past (in this case, past moralities), rather than making a moral judgment regarding those facts. See Amit Ron, "The Logic of the Historian and the Logic of the Citizen," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 73 (2012): 652.

⁴ In this thesis I use the term 'theologist' to denote a person concerned with the theology and practice of the Christian faith. I have avoided the term 'theologian' as I do not want to imply that my theologians are engaged in the scholarly or professional study of theology. Rather, my focus is on their concern with the beliefs and practices of Christians in their own community, and the moral implications of those beliefs and practices.

⁵ Regarding the moral purposes of our novelists, see Chapter 2, pages 31–34.

⁶ Speech at banquet in his honour at Hartford, 7 February 1842 in Charles Dickens, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. K. J. Fielding (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 24.

conceptions of providence and duty are central to their moral beliefs. I have found that, while my protagonists' world views (including their conceptions of providence) differ markedly, their moralities (including their conceptions of duty) which reflect their varying world views, are nevertheless remarkably similar. Indeed, I have found that some of my protagonists—namely, Whewell, George Eliot, Arnold and Green—willingly modify their conceptions of providence to accommodate new understandings, but nevertheless hold conceptions of duty that prove to be very resilient, despite their changing conceptions of providence. In this regard, my thesis reflects and substantiates Stefan Collini's observation that, as to the practical rather than the theoretical, there was very little moral dispute among the educated classes in Victorian England.⁷

This thesis is something of an experiment—both as to its focus and method. Victorian morality has been studied extensively and variously. Commonly, historians consider Victorian morality incidentally, with their eyes on something more tangible. Political historians consider Victorian moralities within a particular political context. Boyd Hilton, in *The Age of Atonement* (1986), examines the usefulness of Evangelicalism as an explanatory idea in relation to Victorian political history and, incidentally, identifies the moral beliefs that characterise Evangelicalism—human depravity and guilt born of original sin, and the need for redemption through atonement.⁸ Thomas Metcalfe, in *Ideologies of the Raj* (1995), examines how the British, while upholding a liberal ideology, claimed the moral right to subjugate the Indian sub-continent and, incidentally, identifies Victorian moral beliefs bearing on gender and race—the masculine virtues of control and self-discipline, necessary for effective government, and the feminine virtues of tenderness, feeling, purity and modesty.⁹ Cultural historians likewise consider Victorian morality incidentally, within a particular cultural context. Margot Finn, in *The Character of Credit* (2003), explores personal debt and credit in modern England and identifies moral beliefs bearing on indebtedness and obligation—the presumed honesty of the genteel; the mutuality of trust implied by the consumer credit relationship; and the loyalty implied

⁷ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 64.

⁸ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3–35.

⁹ See for example, Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 92–94, 101–110.

by consumer debt.¹⁰ Intellectual historians, too, often consider Victorian morality incidentally, with their eyes on something more objective, more intellectual. George Stocking, in *Victorian Anthropology* (1987), considers Victorian perceptions of non-European cultures, and incidentally considers Victorian moral beliefs—the moral superiority of British commerce, the English language and the Christian religion, and the importance of both marriage and religion.¹¹

But some intellectual historians focus on Victorian morality itself. Walter E. Houghton, in *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (1957), identifies certain moral attitudes that he claims are characteristic of Victorian society—the commercial spirit, the worship of force, earnestness, enthusiasm, hero worship, love of home and family, and hypocrisy. Houghton identifies these attitudes as characteristic of Victorian society by generalising from samples of Victorian literature, both public and private, that reflect the attitudes or perceptions of individual Victorians.¹² Similarly, Ian Bradley, in *The Call to Seriousness* (1976), identifies certain moral values as being characteristic of Evangelical Victorians—commitment to work and philanthropy; condemnation of pleasures including dancing, cards, hunting and novel reading; disapproval of secular literature and the arts more broadly; and a puritanical zeal for improving the ‘manners’ of others. Like Houghton, he identifies these characteristic values by generalising from the texts of many individual Victorians.¹³ J. B. Schneewind, in *Sidgwick’s Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (1977), traces the public discussions of moral philosophers. Schneewind’s is a historical study of philosophical argument, viewed through the lens of Henry Sidgwick’s *Methods of Ethics* (published in seven successive editions from 1874 to 1907) and including the development of the ideas that Sidgwick explores in *Methods*, and subsequent responses to them. Schneewind concludes that the key question for Victorian moral philosophers was the extent, if any, to which one could rationally set limits to the principle of utility on the basis of religious belief or otherwise.¹⁴

¹⁰ See for example, Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20, 37, 286–287, 293.

¹¹ George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: MacMillan, 1991), 84, 105, 189–96, 197–204.

¹² See for example, Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830–1870* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957), 187.

¹³ Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 94–95, 121, 145, 151–152.

¹⁴ J. B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 9.

Other intellectual historians, including Gertrude Himmelfarb in *Poverty and Compassion* (1991), Collini in *Public Moralists* (1991) and M. J. D. Roberts in *Making English Morals* (2004), focus on Victorian moralities, but do so through a political lens—seeing moralities primarily as explanatory of the political thought and the political activity of individuals, public associations and political movements. In *Public Moralists* Collini focuses on a ‘loose assortment’ of some two dozen ‘unusually articulate’ Victorians—including some of our protagonists, namely Mill, Arnold, George Eliot and Green—along with another half-dozen individuals belonging to the early twentieth century. His aim is to get a better grip on the history of political thought in Britain by gaining a more nuanced understanding of the culture of the intellectual elite.¹⁵ As we have noted, Collini finds that the educated classes in Victorian England more or less agreed as to the scope and content of morality. Their disputes were primarily theoretical, concerning the foundations of morality. They all accepted the moral obligation to discharge one’s duty, and more or less agreed on what one’s duty comprised. Moral perplexity arose only where there was a clash in perceived duties, or where one’s duty conflicted with one’s selfish inclination.¹⁶ Further, Collini argues that the literary elites deployed didactic literature for the purpose of fostering altruistic sympathy, and overcoming the inherent selfishness that oftentimes made doing one’s duty difficult.¹⁷ Similarly, in *Poverty and Compassion*, Himmelfarb examines the ideologies of various individuals and groups, and how they expressed themselves in social reform movements targeting the amelioration of poverty. She highlights the moral beliefs of key individuals—including Green—but her main focus is the practical expression of those beliefs; the way in which they manifest themselves politically.¹⁸ And in *Making English Morals* Roberts likewise focuses on the practical expression of moral beliefs. He examines Victorian associations and reform movements that sought to change the moral behaviours of others. He is not concerned with individual beliefs except to the extent that they manifest themselves politically—in public actions intended to affect others. His protagonists are activists, and their strategies are his key concern.¹⁹

¹⁵ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 1.

¹⁶ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 64–65.

¹⁷ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 75–82.

¹⁸ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

¹⁹ See for example, M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1, 141, 148, 195, 233.

But in *The Moral Imagination* (2006) Himmelfarb focuses on the moralities of individual Victorians for their own sake. *The Moral Imagination* is a collection of essays that ‘pay tribute’ to the moral imagination of ‘some notable thinkers and writers who are eminently praiseworthy’—including our protagonists George Eliot, Dickens and Mill. Himmelfarb is unapologetic in her admiration of her chosen protagonists.²⁰ Each essay considers just one aspect of the moral imagination of a protagonist as an entry to that protagonist’s morality. For example, in respect of George Eliot, Himmelfarb asks, ‘Why does Dorothea marry Ladislaw?’, which Himmelfarb sees as the key moral question in *Middlemarch*. Himmelfarb uses this question to uncover George Eliot’s own moral beliefs regarding marriage, redemption, feminism, and the ground of duty.²¹

In this thesis, my aim is to come to grips with the moral beliefs of nine individual Victorians by digging deeply into their written works. I focus, like both Collini and Himmelfarb, on a loose assortment of ‘unusually articulate Victorians’ but, unlike them, I am concerned primarily with their moral beliefs, not their intellectual culture nor their moral imagination—although, like Himmelfarb, I often use the latter to access the former.

But this thesis is not only about getting at the moralities of nine Victorians. It is also an experiment in historical method. The philosopher of history does not instruct the historian on historical method, but the prudent historian engages in a little ‘philosophic reflection’.²²

This thesis is *intellectual history*. It follows Collingwood in holding that ‘all history is the history of thought’, because interpreting artefacts as traces of thoughts is the only means we have of recovering the past.²³ But, as intellectual history, it focuses on past thoughts for their own sake, not merely as the means to recover past events or even to understand them. The ‘ideas, thoughts, arguments, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and preoccupations that together made up the intellectual, or reflective, life of previous societies’ are the stuff of intellectual history.²⁴

²⁰ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Moral Imagination* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Inc., 2006), xi.

²¹ Himmelfarb, *The Moral Imagination*, 13–24.

²² Martyn P. Thompson, “‘The Logic of the History of Ideas’: Mark Bevir and Michael Oakeshott,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 73 (2012): 606.

²³ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: Revised Edition with Lectures 1926–1928*, ed. Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 115. As to whether we can meaningfully talk about recovering a no longer existent past, see Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 93.

²⁴ Stefan Collini, “What is Intellectual History,” *History Today* 35 (1985) at <http://www.historytoday.com/stefan-collini/what-intellectual-history>, accessed 30 May 2017.

My purpose in this thesis is the purpose of all histories—to achieve some measure of ‘human self-knowledge’ by attempting to ‘give a rational account of the world’.²⁵ But as an intellectual historian I do not do this directly; I do not seek to explain how past events make our present world intelligible. Rather, I seek ‘to make intelligible the way someone else has made the world intelligible; ... to understand how someone else has understood things; ... to explain the way someone else has explained things’. So I do not seek to understand past events as such, rather I seek to understand ‘products of intelligence ... products of mind’.²⁶ And, as a historian, I consider these products in their ‘unique and historical concreteness’.²⁷ I am not concerned with the eternal problems addressed by philosophers or theologians or, indeed, novelists—rather I am concerned with what particular individuals thought about particular problems.²⁸ I am concerned with identifying and understanding what my protagonists, as individuals, believed.

Intellectual historians take various approaches to identifying and understanding what individuals believed. The practice of every historian ‘consists essentially of interpreting evidence’, and as soon as something has become past, language becomes the primary means of recollecting it.²⁹ As Koselleck explains, while events continue, they are experienced as both action and speech, intertwined and necessarily connected. But once they become past events, they are experienced primarily as language.³⁰ Further, because ‘reading with understanding is always a kind of reproduction, performance and interpretation’, literature is peculiarly suited to preserving the intellectual past, not merely as a ‘dead remnant’ of the past but as a means of bringing the intellectual activity of the past into the present.³¹ So, as an intellectual historian, I am bound to start with literature. But, because any text is ‘dumb except to a mind that can interpret’ it, literature yields ‘no *historical* results

²⁵ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 10; Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes*, 125. See also 118.

²⁶ Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178.

²⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 4. See also William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3; Gert-Jan van der Heiden, “The Voice of the Past in the Present: On Dialogue and Testimony,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 8 (2014): 434.

²⁸ In much the same way as Collingwood observed—“The savage is confronted by the eternal problem of obtaining food. But what really confronts him is the problem, quite transitory like all human things, of spearing this fish, or digging up this root, or finding blackberries in this wood.” R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 32–33.

²⁹ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 10.

³⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2002), 27.

³¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 160–161.

whatever’ until a method of interpretation is established.³² Because interpreting texts is front and centre of the intellectual historian’s task, Collini urges intellectual historians to look to other disciplines that, for their own purposes, focus on the interpretation of texts, for guidance as to how to go about it.³³ I have looked to Collingwood, a British philosopher of aesthetics and history and a practising archaeologist; Hans-Georg Gadamer, a German philosopher and a ‘decisive figure in the development of twentieth century hermeneutics’; and Mark Bevir, currently a Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for British Studies, University of California, Berkeley, whose interests include interpretive theory.³⁴

As a preliminary matter, I want to clarify the kind of meanings I am after when I interpret my protagonists’ utterances. We can distinguish two relevant kinds of meaning—hermeneutic meaning and structural meaning. The *hermeneutic meaning* is the meaning of language as ‘a set of words written, or spoken, or understood in a particular way on a particular occasion’—or its meaning as a *work*. The *structural meaning* is the meaning of language as ‘a set of phonemes, words and sentences possessing, say, certain linguistic and semantic properties ... as the site for various works—the site of the work of its author and the total works of all those who ever read it’—or its meaning as a *text*.³⁵ Because I am interested in the utterances of my protagonists as evidence of their own, individual beliefs, the indeterminate meaning of a *text* has little to offer me. I am after the hermeneutic meaning of the *work*. In particular, because I am using the works of my protagonists as evidence of their own beliefs, I am after the meaning that each work had *for its author*. These meanings, because they are *meanings*, are human constructs and necessarily attributable to individuals, rather than any collective consciousness.³⁶ So the meanings I seek to identify are the meanings their works had for each of my protagonists as individuals, not for Victorian intellectuals as a group. Further, these meanings, because they are *historical*, are also constructs of the historian—my constructs. They are *constructed*, but not *invented*, by me.³⁷

³² Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 368. See also 377. Emphasis added.

³³ Collini, “What is Intellectual History”.

³⁴ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Robin George Collingwood” (by Giuseppina D’Oro and James Connelly), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/collingwood/>, accessed 30 May 2017; *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Hans-Georg Gadamer” by Jeff Malpas, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/gadamer/>, accessed 30 May 2017; “Mark Bevir,” at <http://polisci.berkeley.edu/people/person/mark-bevir>, accessed 30 May 2017.

³⁵ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 57–58.

³⁶ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 61.

³⁷ Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes*, 109–110. See also Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 204, 252, 485.

Interpreting the hermeneutic meaning of a work has two aspects. Firstly, determining what the work is intended to mean—what is ‘supposed to be expressed in it’ and, secondly, ‘what is also expressed by the words without being intended’—what it ‘betrays ... involuntarily’.³⁸ Further, both intentionally and involuntarily, a work reflects, and is evidence of, not only the author’s *beliefs* (that is, the author’s conceptions of how the world *is*) but also what Bevir calls the author’s *pro-attitudes* (that is, the author’s conceptions of how the world *should be*).³⁹ But the intellectual historian has a different focus here than other historians may have. Whereas other historians may be concerned about the pro-attitudes that motivate the creation of a work, the intellectual historian is concerned with the beliefs a work expresses, and concerned with pro-attitudes only to the extent that they cast light on those beliefs.⁴⁰

So, what guidance have I gleaned from Collingwood, Gadamer and Bevir as to how I can legitimately construct the meanings that their historical works had for my protagonists?⁴¹

Firstly, the intellectual historian must approach the historical work *as* a historian. This means that, if a historical work ‘makes an impression on a historian’, that impression should have no ‘hermeneutical significance’. It is ‘fundamentally impossible’ for historians to ‘regard [themselves] as the addressee of the [work] and accept its claim on [them]’. It is not the task of the intellectual historian to evaluate the cogency of the arguments set out in a work, or to assess the validity of the author’s answers to the author’s questions. Rather, the intellectual historian examines the work ‘to find something it is not, of itself, attempting to provide’.⁴² The intellectual historian examines the work to find in it answers to the historian’s own questions. And this task is not always straightforward. Sometimes, even though they may be conceived clearly by the author, concepts are ‘denoted imperfectly’ in the work. Sometimes the author’s conceptions themselves may be ‘unclear or open-ended’. This ‘terminological vagueness and conceptual vagueness’ can give rise to polysemy requiring further analysis.⁴³

³⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 345. See also Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 260.

³⁹ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 130.

⁴⁰ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 140–141.

⁴¹ Collingwood, Gadamer and Bevir are not advocates of one view. There are some tensions between the approaches they advocate. The approach I have taken in my research, and outline here, borrows from all three.

⁴² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 344.

⁴³ Colin Tyler, “Performativity and the Intellectual Historian’s Re-enactment of Written Works,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 3 (2009): 182. See also 183–184.

Secondly, we must ‘be sensitive to the [work]’s alterity’ and mediate between the thoughts expressed by the work and our own thinking. To try to escape the expectations we bring to the interpretation of a work ‘is not only impossible but manifestly absurd’. If we are to interpret at all, we must bring our preconceptions into play ‘so that the text’s meaning can be really made to speak for us’.⁴⁴ But it is essential to be aware of our bias, and allow the work to ‘present itself in all its otherness’ and assert itself against our expectations.⁴⁵ Reading Whewell, I found myself continually surprised by his willingness to bend his mind to new conceptions. Given my own experience of life and his firmly held Christian beliefs, Whewell’s social and moral conservatism seemed to me strangely paired with a truly brave intellect and a wholeheartedly scientific outlook. Gadamer’s warning to ‘guard against overhastily assimilating the past to our own expectations of meaning’ proved apposite.⁴⁶

Thirdly, the fundamental rule of hermeneutics is to ‘understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole’. Indeed, it is ‘the harmony of all the details with the whole’ that is ‘the criterion of correct understanding’. If we fail to achieve this harmony, we fail to understand. So, understanding is always a movement in a ‘kind of circle’ with repeated returns from the whole to the parts. But we are not doomed to endless circularity. It is broken ‘by a feeling, by an immediate, sympathetic, and congenial understanding’. It is broken by grabbing at the idea before it is fully comprehended, and testing our tentative understanding against the whole—in much the same way as we understand anything. But we must take care here. In our efforts to understand a text, we project a meaning for the whole as soon a meaning emerges for any part. And this ‘initial meaning’ emerges only because we are reading the text ‘with particular expectations [of] meaning’. Further, we will proceed along any ‘wrong track’, gaining momentum, until we are ‘pulled up short’ by the text itself.⁴⁷ Reading Spurgeon I was pulled up short. I had formed a very narrow view of Spurgeon’s thinking. His unrelenting insistence on Calvinist dogma seemed, to me, to exclude the possibility of socially innovative thinking. When he advocated giving women the opportunity for decent paid work outside the home, so

⁴⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282, 415. See also, Mark Bevir, “How to Be an Intentionalist,” *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 210.

⁴⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282. See also Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 168.

⁴⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 316. See also 279–281.

⁴⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 196–197, 279–280, 302.

that abused women could escape their husbands and find a self-reliant respectability, I was pulled up short.⁴⁸ I was forced to adjust my expectations. But we cannot gain any meaning from anything unless we approach it with—or, very early on, garner from it—some expectations as to meaning. So we must approach the text expectantly, and yet remain open to unexpected meanings.⁴⁹

Further, because ‘historical knowledge’ is ‘knowledge of what mind has done in the past’, its object is not something outside of mind—rather, it is ‘an activity of thought’. So, the objects I study, the thoughts of my protagonists, ‘are not spectacles to be watched, but experiences to be lived through in [my] own mind. They are objective, or known to [me], only because they are also subjective, or activities of [my] own’—re-thought (as the thoughts of a historical other) by me, as a historian.⁵⁰ This re-thinking of the thoughts of Victorian individuals is made possible through literature. As Gadamer explains so beautifully:

The written word and what partakes of it—literature—is the intelligibility of mind transferred. ... Nothing is so purely the trace of the mind as writing, but nothing is so dependent on the understanding mind either. ... A written tradition, once deciphered and read, is to such an extent pure mind that it speaks to us as if in the present. That is why the capacity to read, to understand what is written, is like a secret art, even a magic that frees and binds us. In it time and space seem to be superseded. People who can read what has been handed down in writing produce and achieve the sheer presence of the past.⁵¹

But, while this re-thinking through literature is a ‘miracle of understanding’, it is ‘not a mysterious communion of souls’—it is simply a ‘sharing in a common meaning’. We do not ‘try to transpose ourselves into the author’s mind’ rather we ‘try to transpose ourselves into the perspective’ from which the author formed their views and, consequently, can access their thoughts and their beliefs, but not their feelings.⁵²

Finally, this re-thinking of the thoughts of others is not as impossible as it may, at first blush, seem. We are, all of us, always, ‘situated within traditions’ and do not conceive of anything, arising within a tradition in which we participate, as entirely ‘other’ or ‘alien’. These traditions are ‘always part of us’. They are a ‘kind of

⁴⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, vol. 2, compiled by Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrald (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 23.

⁴⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 281.

⁵⁰ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 218–219.

⁵¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 163.

⁵² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 303; Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 296.

cognizance' that is not quite 'knowledge'. A 'most ingenious affinity'.⁵³ And this affinity, this belonging, expresses itself in a 'commonality of fundamental, enabling prejudices' that gives rise to a resonance between the historian and the historical work within a common tradition—in our case, within the modern Western intellectual tradition and, more particularly, within the literary, Christian and philosophical strands of the modern British intellectual tradition.

So, our understanding of a work, *as* a historical work, within a common tradition, is facilitated by 'the polarity of familiarity and strangeness'.⁵⁴ The work is both familiar—because it arises within a common tradition; and strange—because it has arisen at another time. Collingwood has observed that 'sometimes whole generations of historians, find in certain periods of history nothing intelligible, and call them dark ages' because 'they are unable to re-think the thoughts which were fundamental to their life'.⁵⁵ It seems to me that this must happen where, for whatever reason, the historical work and the historian have no familiarity, only strangeness. Where they do not have that 'pre-existing bond' which is necessary for an understanding grounded in a 'divinatory act of congeniality'.⁵⁶ Where they have no common tradition.

But while our situation within a common tradition facilitates our understanding of the historical work, it can, at the same time, limit us. Traditions change. (Indeed, these changes are the intellectual historian's *raison d'être*.) So, while we may share a common tradition with those we study, we share in that tradition as it is, as it has become, after their time. In any event, because 'individuals disagree as well as agree', no society is homogenous. Each society consists of various traditions—sometimes woven, sometimes tangled together. Historians can always 'pick out a plurality of traditions that were present at any given time' in the past.⁵⁷ While some traditions may have changed very subtly between the author's time and our own, other traditions may have changed radically. Further, while some individuals tenaciously retain their grip on some traditions, others blithely discard them, while yet others rediscover them. Adapting Martin Jay's telling imagery of interpretative contexts—there may be 'a dynamic force field of contending

⁵³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 294.

⁵⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306.

⁵⁵ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 218–219.

⁵⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 195.

⁵⁷ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 211.

[traditions] ... that never fully resolves itself into a single meaningful whole with a clear order of influence'.⁵⁸

So, even within a common tradition, a historical work may be 'so singular or different' that it is beyond the realm of anything resembling 'our expectations and our own experiences'. If we are to understand a past that is so different, we must suspend our spontaneous disbelief: "they could not have meant *that!*" and invoke the 'fundamental form of generosity ... required [for] historical understanding'. As Hannah Arendt observed, 'reality has the disconcerting habit of confronting us with the unexpected, for which we were not prepared'. So historians must 'have a sense for the unexpected', an openness to strangeness, if they are to re-think the thoughts of the past.⁵⁹

These hermeneutical principles will ordinarily apply to the apparent meaning of a text but, as Leo Strauss and Walter Benjamin have made clear, in some circumstances, we need to consider other levels of meaning. So, before leaving our consideration of the hermeneutical principles I have borne in mind when interpreting my protagonists' works, I will, for completeness, touch on Leo Strauss's concept of *reading between the lines*, and Walter Benjamin's concept of *reading against the grain* and consider the relevance of these techniques to my research.

Leo Strauss observes that, in times of persecution, people may communicate 'heterodox views' using the 'peculiar technique of writing ... we have in mind when speaking of *writing between the lines*'. For Strauss, 'there is a necessary correlation between persecution and writing between the lines' so that it applies only to texts written 'in an era of persecution, ... when some political or other orthodoxy was enforced by law or custom'—maybe merely by 'social ostracism'. Where a heterodox thinker writes between the lines in exoteric texts, the text will contain two kinds of teachings—a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground, and a heterodox philosophic teaching, which is to be found only by reading between the lines. In any event, Strauss forbids emending any text, 'before one has fully considered all reasonable possibilities of understanding the passage as it stands'—

⁵⁸ Martin Jay, "Historical Explanation and the Event: Reflections on the Limits of Contextualization," *New Literary History* 42 (2011): 561.

⁵⁹ Gert-Jan van der Heiden, "The Voice of the Past in the Present", 442; Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic: Lying in Politics; Civil Disobedience; On Violence; Thoughts on Politics and Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 7.

including the possibility of irony.⁶⁰ None of the literary works I have considered satisfies Strauss's criteria for writing between the lines, nor have I any reason to believe it is necessary to read between the lines to discern the beliefs expressed by my protagonists in the literary works I have considered.

Walter Benjamin observes that, because the documents that record the past are created by its victors, we will be limited to being the 'heirs of those who conquered' before us unless we can see those documents for what they are—the products of a 'cultural heritage' which 'owes its existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents that have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries'. So the historian must read a historical document as both evidence of culture and evidence of barbarism. This is possible only when the historian 'regards it as [their] task to *brush history against the grain*'.⁶¹ To fully understand the import of historical documents, we must interrogate them to discover their implicit answers to our questions, rather than simply accepting their explicit answers to their own questions. We will not discover the implicit truths woven into their texture but not evident, unless that texture is roughed up a little and seen in a critical light. I have asked questions of my protagonists that they did not always explicitly address. And, although they were hardly hubristic chauvinists, many of their works were written purposefully—with the aim of promoting a particular point of view. So, to that extent, I have 'read their works against the grain'.

How do we move from literary works, approached having regard to these hermeneutical principles, to the beliefs of their authors?

There is no mechanical procedure appropriate to the retrieval of past meanings. ... (This should not surprise us ... people possess a linguistic faculty enabling them to generate novel sentences conveying novel meanings in a way we cannot reduce to fixed procedures.) ... Historians always come to understand a work by a creative process in which success can be the result of insight, intuition or good luck. Fortunately, ... the limits of historical method need not worry us ... What matters is the result of their endeavours. Just as we judge mathematical proofs and scientific theories without asking how their exponents hit upon them, so we should evaluate accounts of historical objects without considering the methods used by historians. We

⁶⁰ Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 23–24, 30, 32, 36. Emphasis added.

⁶¹ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257.

should concentrate on the reasonableness of the histories people write, not the reasons they write what they do.⁶²

I have studied the works of my protagonists to recover hermeneutic meanings understood as ‘expressions of beliefs’.⁶³ These beliefs, so recovered, are objects I postulate, but, because I am a historian, I ‘postulate them as having real existence’—extrapolating from the historical works available, to the beliefs my protagonists expressed in the past.⁶⁴ In postulating these beliefs, I have given conceptual priority to ‘*sincerity* over deception’, to ‘*conscious* beliefs over unconscious ones’, and to ‘*rational* beliefs over irrational ones’—defining rational beliefs ‘in terms of *consistency*, not in terms of objectivity or an appropriate means to any subjective end’.⁶⁵ Consequently, I assume my protagonists mean what they say, unless I have evidence to the contrary, and treat their statements as literal statements unless, in the context of the work as a whole, it is apparent that is not intended.⁶⁶ Consistently with the hermeneutic principle of understanding the parts in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the parts, I look to verify my understanding of the beliefs of each of my protagonists by establishing that those beliefs are rational, where ‘rational’ is limited to *internal consistency*.⁶⁷ I do this ‘by knitting them together in consistent webs’. Even so, I do not discard constructed webs of belief as irrational simply because they may display some awkwardness of combination, or unevenness of texture, or, on occasion, gaping holes.⁶⁸ This is because one can be rational when believing one thing in certain contexts and quite another thing, or nothing at all, in different contexts.

When I have found inconsistencies between a protagonist’s expressed beliefs I have tried to account for those inconsistencies by considering whether there may be rogue pro-attitudes distorting the rationality of the protagonist’s beliefs. Broadly, individuals want their beliefs to mirror the world, but they want the world to mirror their pro-attitudes. (It is in this way that pro-attitudes motivate individuals to act to change the world.) But sometimes individuals, being, we may say, too keen to see the

⁶² Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 87.

⁶³ Following Bevir. See Bevir, “How to be an Intentionalist”, 211.

⁶⁴ Bevir, “How to be an Intentionalist”, 215; Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 128.

⁶⁵ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 28.

⁶⁶ See Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 151–157, 168–169.

⁶⁷ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 161.

⁶⁸ See Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 18–20 for a discussion of the need for intellectual historians to accept the gaps, tensions and apparent contradictions (which may be actual contradictions) in historical texts.

world mirror their pro-attitudes, hold beliefs that reflect their pro-attitudes, despite ‘knowing’ that their pro-attitudes do not accurately reflect how the world is.⁶⁹

I have read, as widely as I can, the published texts of my protagonists—both texts that were originally intended for publication (treatises, lectures, sermons, essays, novels and autobiographies) and other texts that were originally intended for purely private purposes (letters and diaries). I have treated these texts as *works* which are expressive of the author’s beliefs, rather than as *texts* which are sites expressive of the beliefs of all comers. My protagonists’ works have proved to be much richer sources for the construction of their webs of belief than I anticipated when I began. Without exception, my protagonists were, in one way or another, in the business of *convincing* their audiences. So, for the most part, they endeavour to make their beliefs accessible by stating them clearly. I have revelled in their clarity of thought and plain expression—in their earnestness. While I have considered other sources, so as to better understand the context in which my protagonists both arrived at their beliefs and expressed them, in this thesis my focus is on their own words—on what they have said for themselves rather than what others have said about them.⁷⁰ In this way, I explore my protagonists’ works and test the explanatory power of their own words—both as evidence of their own beliefs and to throw contextual light on the beliefs of my other protagonists.

The focus of my research is *morality* seen through the lenses of *duty* and *providence*. As a preliminary matter, I need to clarify my usage of four key terms—‘morality’, ‘duty’, ‘providence’ and ‘moral causation’. I take ‘morality’ to mean a particular system or outlook held by an individual for the purpose of determining whether particular characters, thoughts, desires or actions of responsible human beings are to be considered good or bad, right or wrong, good or evil.⁷¹ I aim to use the terms ‘duty’, ‘providence’ and ‘moral causation’ in much the same way as my protagonists. Accordingly, I use ‘duty’ to mean an action, or an act that is due as a matter of moral obligation, so that one is bound to do it, and which may be directly referable to one’s position or station.⁷² I use ‘Providence’ (capitalised) to mean the

⁶⁹ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 265–266, 287.

⁷⁰ See Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 88–89.

⁷¹ See *OED Online*, s.vv. “morality, n.” meaning 5(c) and “moral, adj.” meaning 1(a), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/122093?redirectedFrom=morality>. Both meanings have had a long life—‘morality’ since the 1680s, ‘moral’ since Chaucer’s time, up to and enduring through the nineteenth century and remaining current today.

⁷² See *OED Online*, s.v. “duty, n.” meanings 4(a) and 5(a), <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/58732?redirectedFrom=duty>. Both meanings have

providence of God or divine providence—that is, the foreknowing and protective care of God expressed in divine direction, control, or guidance. I use ‘providence’ (uncapitalised) to mean God or nature exercising prescient and beneficent power. I also use ‘special providence’ to mean an act or instance of divine intervention in the world.⁷³

The concept of ‘moral causation’ is critical for my thesis. I use this term in respect of causation in the moral world in contradistinction to causation in the material world. The concept of the material world is a familiar one—simply, the physical world perceived through the senses. By *moral world* I mean the world of the thoughts, desires and actions of humankind; the world of things that have moral value—which can meaningfully be said to be right or wrong. So that, conceptually, I distinguish between, say, the rain falling—which is part of the *material world*, and cannot be meaningfully said to be the right or the wrong thing for the rain to do; and putting up one’s umbrella—which may meaningfully be said to be either the right or wrong thing for one to do, and consequently, part of the *moral world*.⁷⁴ Strictly, if we understand *causation* to mean the occurrence of antecedents upon which phenomena (effects) are ‘*invariably and unconditionally consequent*’, then the expression ‘moral causation’ is oxymoronic and misses my meaning. As Mark Bevir has observed, ‘*causal explanation* is ... appropriate to the natural sciences ... where the occurrence of one thing makes the occurrence of another necessary because of the operation of physical laws’. In contrast ‘*conditional explanation* is ... appropriate to rational action. It appears in cases where one thing does not necessitate another but merely gives someone reasons to act in a way that brings about another’.⁷⁵ So, when I use the term ‘moral causation’ I mean establishing the conditions under which an individual will have reasons (which may not always be seriously rational reasons) to act in a way that brings about the relevant effect.

had a long life—both since Chaucer’s time, up to and enduring through the nineteenth century and remaining current today.

⁷³ See *OED Online*, s.v. “providence, n.” meanings 2, 6(a) and 5(a) respectively.

<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/153450?rskey=IEuFQ9&result=1&isAdvanced=false> All three meanings have had a long life—since the 1380s, early 1600s and the 1630s respectively, enduring through the nineteenth century and remaining current today.

⁷⁴ This approach reflects Whewell’s terminology. See William Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, The Bridgewater Treatises on the Power and the Wisdom of God as Manifested in Creation 3, 7th ed. (London: William Pickering, 1839), 251–252.

⁷⁵ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. 7, ed. J. M. Robson (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 2006), 562. Emphasis added; Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 11.

Intellectual historians are typically concerned to explain beliefs. Because beliefs are objects of the moral world, we do not look for causes to explain them. Rather we look for *conditions* and resulting *connections*—connections made creatively and deliberately by the believing individual. I endeavour to explain the moral beliefs of my protagonists primarily by showing how my protagonists’ moral beliefs, particularly their beliefs about duty, fit into their larger webs of belief—particularly their world views, especially their beliefs about providence—by drawing out, so far as I can, the connections between them. My focus is on the synchronic connections. I take a deliberately deep dive into the ‘boundless, spherical networks’ that are their webs of belief.⁷⁶ In this way, I aim not only to understand their moral beliefs, but also to identify synchronic tensions which may bespeak a locus for diachronic change.

In this Chapter 1, I have surveyed the various approaches taken by historians of Victorian morality, noting their focus on political and cultural concerns. I have then considered pertinent aspects of the methodologies of three philosophers of history—Collingwood, Gadamer and Bevir. I have also clarified some terms that are critical to my project—‘morality’, ‘duty’, ‘providence’ and ‘moral causation’. In Chapter 2, I introduce three of my protagonists—the novelists George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens. I give an outline biography of each and identify their key values to help give context to their conceptions of providence and duty that follow. Similarly, in Chapter 3, I introduce my three theologians—Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman and Charles Haddon Spurgeon; and, in Chapter 4, my three philosophers—William Whewell, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Hill Green. In Chapter 5, I clarify the distinction between the material world and the moral world and identify the laws of moral causation accepted by my protagonists. In Chapter 6, I examine the more or less traditional conceptions of Providence held by five of my protagonists—Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon. I consider the commonalities in their conceptions of Providence as well as their differences. I also consider their conceptions of prayer, which give valuable insights into their conceptions of Providence. In Chapter 7, I examine the less traditional conceptions of providence of four of my protagonists—Green, Arnold, George Eliot and Mill. I also consider George Eliot’s conception of prayer and how it affords valuable insights into

⁷⁶ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 177, 191, 304.

her conception of providence. In Chapter 8, I examine conceptions of duty held by each of Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon, which correspond to their conceptions of Providence. I identify their various bases for duty and examine their moralities, comprising particular duties and virtues. Similarly, in Chapter 9, I examine the moralities of Green, Arnold, George Eliot and Mill, which reflect their individual conceptions of providence. In Chapter 10, I identify tensions inherent in my protagonists' conceptions of providence, and tensions between their conceptions of providence and their moralities.

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to explain up front my approach to the interpretation and quotation of what we, in our time, consider sexist language. For many centuries before the nineteenth, and right up until the 1960s, it was 'unquestionably acceptable' to use the masculine pronouns 'he', 'him', 'himself' and 'his' with indefinite reference to denote a person of either sex.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, my protagonists do it—constantly. To a modern eye, the use of the masculine pronoun with a gender neutral intention can be alienating—connoting masculinity where humanity is intended, and foregrounding gender in the mind of the reader where gender is not, at least not consciously, in the mind of the writer. Further, as outlined above, for the purpose of recovering my protagonists' intentions, my focus is on the conscious beliefs of my protagonists—rather than their unconscious ones. Accordingly, where I have quoted the words of my protagonists in this thesis, I have neutralised masculine pronouns where it seems to me that the intention is to denote a person of either sex. I accept that the use of the masculine pronoun has, in the past, had great cultural significance, even where that significance has been unconscious. But for the purposes of this thesis, I have bracketed that significance for the sake of focussing more sharply on the issues that more directly concern my project.

⁷⁷ See "he or she". *Fowler's Modern English Usage*, ed. R. W. Burchfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 358. See also *OED Online*, s.v. "he, pron., n.1, and adj." meaning 2(b). <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/84893?rskey=WQK0ZF&result=4&isAdvanced=false>.

Chapter 2: Three novelists

In Middle Tysoe, a village in rural Warwickshire, one can still find, facing Main Street and near Peacock Lane, a pair of stone benches with a little Gothic arch sheltering a drinking fountain between them. This refuge offered more than a physical respite to the weary Victorian. It exhorted them (and us too, for the Victorians carved their exhortations in stone) to: ‘Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently’. It reminded them of the temporality of things physical, and the eternity of things spiritual: ‘Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst’. A little further on, one can find a water trough planted out with crocuses. And here, engraved again in stone, on the wall above, ‘Free to all comers. All beasts of the field drink thereof’.¹ Pondering the little Gothic arch, the stone benches, and the ‘whosoever’s above them, we gain some insight into the world in which our novelists grew up; a world in which some at least, and not so very few, took life seriously; constantly reminding themselves, and others, of the real significance of the human experience: of the ‘mystery beneath the real’.²

Our three novelists—George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens—are contemporaries, each born in the second decade of the nineteenth century.³ They

¹ Psalm 37:7, John 13:14 and Psalm 104:11 respectively. For the Victorian love of Gothic see A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), 185.

² Term used in the title of Peter C. Hodgson of *Theology in the Fiction of George Eliot: The Mystery Beneath the Real* (London: SCM Press, 2001) and by Jenny Uglow in *George Eliot* (London: Virago, 2008), 121.

³ Indeed, each of our novelists had some professional and social contact with the others. See Gaskell to George Eliot, 10 November 1859, in *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, eds. J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 592; Dickens to T. N. Talford, 14 May 1849, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 5, eds. Graham Storey and K. J. Fielding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 539; Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell, 9 January 1850 in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 6, eds. Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgess (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 6–7; Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell, 3 May 1853, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 7, eds. Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Angus Easson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 76; Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell, 21 April 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:320; Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell, 17 June 1854 in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7: 355; Dickens to George Eliot, 18 January 1858 in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 8, eds. Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 506; Dickens to George Eliot, 10 July 1859 in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 9, ed. Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 29–93; Dickens to George Lewes, 4 November 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:151; Dickens to George Lewes, 14 March 1863 in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 10, ed. Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 224; George Eliot to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray, 5 May 1852 in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 2, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 23; Dickens to George Eliot, 18 January 1858 in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:423; Elizabeth Gaskell to George Eliot in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 3, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 74; Dickens to George Eliot, 10 July 1859 in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:114; George Henry Lewes to his sons, 10 November 1859 in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:195; George Eliot to Mrs. William Gaskell, 11 November 1859 in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:198–199; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 7 March 1870 in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 5, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 81–82; George Eliot’s Journal, 25–28 May 1870 in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:99–100.

shared not only their times, but also a commitment to a common purpose—to evoke the sympathies of others through their writing and, by so doing, enable their readers to live fuller, more sympathetic, lives. In this chapter we will consider the individual lives of each of our novelists, so as to better understand the experiences that shaped their values and grounded their beliefs. We will then consider those values, drawing out, where we can, commonalities and differences between them.

George Eliot

Mary Anne Evans was born on 22 November 1819 at South Farm on the Arbury estate in the north of Warwickshire, the third child of Robert Evans and Christiana Pearson.⁴ Robert Evans was the manager of the estates of the Newdigate family of Arbury Hall. The family moved to Griff—on the road between Nuneaton and Coventry—shortly after Mary Anne was born. Nevertheless, the young Mary Anne was granted access to the library at Arbury Hall. At five Mary Anne was sent, with her sister Chrissey, to board at a succession of schools nearby. She excelled at French, English composition and piano playing and felt, very keenly, the influence of her evangelical teachers, particularly Maria Lewis.⁵ Mary Anne's first experiences of Christianity were of a low church Anglican variety but, having an acute moral earnestness and a keen sensitivity to her own moral failings, she gladly followed, even surpassed, her school teachers into its most Evangelical form—believing that true spirituality required repentance, renunciation and good works.⁶ And she berated her

⁴ In this thesis I refer to George Eliot (1819–1880) by the name by which she was known at the relevant time. However, all references to letters in Haight's edition of *The George Eliot Letters* are cited with Haight's nomenclature, that is, as from and to 'George Eliot', regardless of the name she used at the time. George Eliot was christened Mary Anne Evans, but changed the spelling to Mary Ann on becoming Miss Evans on the marriage of her sister, Chrissey, in May 1837. She refined her name still further, to Marian Evans, on moving to London in 1851. From February 1856 she was known as Mrs. Marian Lewes (taking the name of her de facto husband George Henry Lewes), and from February 1857 she published under the name of George Eliot. She also used the name Mary Ann Evans Lewes (a formality to effect the legal transfer of property on the death of Lewes) and finally took the name of Mary Ann Cross from 1880 following her marriage to John Cross. See George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 26 February 1856, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:230–231; George Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, 22 March 1856, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:231–232; George Eliot to William Blackwood, 4 February 1857 in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:292; George Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, 24 September 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:384–385; Kathryn Hughes, *George Eliot: The Last Victorian* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 1, 39, 142, 463; Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), preface.

⁵ See George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 6–8 November 1838, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 1, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 10–13; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 30 October 1839, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:31–32; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 17 September 1840, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:66; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 8 March 1841 in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:82.

⁶ Uglow, *George Eliot*, 30; Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 30–33. See also George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 26 May 1838, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:5; George Eliot to Martha Jackson, 4 September 1838, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:9; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 7 October 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:174–175. For a literary description of such repentance and renunciation in a young life see Maggie Tulliver. George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. A. S. Byatt (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 298–300, 302–303, 310, 318, 338.

own soul for her ‘besetting sin ... a desire insatiable for the esteem of my fellow creatures’—the ‘great stumbling block on my path Zion-ward’.⁷

Following her mother’s death and Chrissey’s marriage, at age sixteen Mary Anne (now Mary Ann) became the family housekeeper. But she continued to learn—reading widely and taking lessons in Italian and German. Mary Ann devoured serious books greedily. Her teenage reading centred on the Bible and Evangelical theological texts, but, from her twentieth year, she began reading more widely. As her inquiring mind probed the veracity of her religious creed, she feared her ‘back-sliding’. But her religious and moral earnestness, and her unerring belief in the mystery beneath the real, expressed itself not only in intellectual curiosity but also moral courage.⁸ It was not long before she confessed to her evangelical confidante, Maria Lewis:

My whole soul has been engrossed in the most interesting of all enquiries for the last few days, and to what result my thoughts may lead I know not—possibly to one that will startle you, but my only desire is to know the truth, my only fear is to cling to error.⁹

When Mary Ann’s brother, Isaac, married in 1841, Griff became his new family’s home and Mary Ann and her father moved to Foleshill, on the outskirts of Coventry.¹⁰

Mary Ann fell in with Charles Bray and the Rose Hill Set—a group of ‘radical, avant-garde and truth-seeking’ dissenters with a Unitarian outlook and a zeal for social reform. She refocused on theology and her own basis for belief, reading Charles Hennell’s *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838). By January 1842, she found herself unable to attend church with integrity, but soon resumed doing so, for her father’s sake.¹¹ Mary Ann’s twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth years were taken up with translating Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu* from the German (over

⁷ George Eliot to Mrs. Samuel Evans, 5 March 1839, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:19. For evidences of early moral and religious seriousness see also George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 18 August 1838, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:6; George Eliot to Samuel Evans, 26 February 1840, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:40; George Eliot to Samuel Evans, 5 December 1840, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:73.

⁸ George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 6–8 November 1838, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:11; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 22 November 1839, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:34; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 1 October 1840 in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:69; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 4 October 1841, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:114; Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 44–45, 53. See George Eliot to Mrs. Abijah Hill Pears, 28 January 1842, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:125. For a letter heavy with biblical references see George Eliot to Samuel Evans, 10 August 1840 in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:61. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 18 April 1849, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:280.

⁹ George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 13 November 1841, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:120–121.

¹⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Evans, Marian [pseud. George Eliot] (1819–1880)” (by Rosemary Ashton), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6794>, accessed 30 May 2017.

¹¹ Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 68, 75, 82–111; Uglow, *George Eliot*, 46–47; *ODNB*, s.v. “Evans, Marian”. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 9 October 1843, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:162–163.

1,500 pages in all). She found the task oppressive. The challenge to give up much of the Gospels, held dear for so long, especially ‘his dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion’—made her physically ill. Mary Ann made it through her Slough of Despond, with a cast of Thorwaldsen’s risen Christ on her desk.¹² She did not abandon her creed, nor its assurances, gleefully.¹³ Even so, as Mary Ann let go of her belief in the veracity of the facts of the Gospels, she held on to their beautiful insights; to their universal truths. She told her friend Sara:

I have been thinking of that beautiful passage in Luke’s gospel—the appearance of Jesus to the disciples at Damascus. How universal its significance! The soul that has hopefully followed its form—its impersonation of the highest and best—all in despondency—its thoughts all refuted, its dreams all dissipated. Then comes another Jesus—another, but the same—the same highest and best, only chastened, crucified instead of triumphant—and the soul learns that this is the true way to conquest and glory—And then there is the burning in the heart which assures that “This was the Lord!” that this is the inspiration from above—the true Comforter that leads to truth.¹⁴

Her doubts as to the veracity of the religious statements of fact did not throw her into scepticism.¹⁵

Mary Ann nursed her, at times very difficult, father through a long illness, which ended in his death in May 1849. The two thousand pounds trust he left for Mary Ann was not quite enough to live on. The Brays kindly took her to Italy and Switzerland, leaving her in Geneva for some months, lodging with François D’Albert Durade and his wife, to rest and plan her future. On returning to England, she left Warwickshire for London, adopting the name Marian. Charles Bray introduced her to the literary circle of radical politics, free thinking religion and critical journalism, centred on John Chapman’s publishing house cum family home cum lodging establishment at 142 Strand. Chapman lived there with his wife, their children, and the children’s governess who doubled as Chapman’s mistress. Marian initially became entangled in this domestic triangle, but, in time, settled into a valued

¹² Mrs. Charles Bray to Sara Sophia Hennell, 14 February 1846, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:206; Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 98–99; Uglow, *George Eliot*, 51–53. For George Eliot’s reflections on translating Strauss, see George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 31 October 1844, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:182. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 6 April 1845, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:185–186; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 1845, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:203.

¹³ George Eliot to Francis Watt, 11 April 1842, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:136.

¹⁴ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 26 November 1846, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:228.

¹⁵ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 9 October 1843, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:162–163.

professional relationship with Chapman.¹⁶ George Eliot expected much of herself, and attributed much of the melancholy she suffered in her younger years and middle life to a ‘strong egoism ... traceable simply to a fastidious yet hungry ambition’.¹⁷ She was plagued by debilitating headache and prone to despondency, oftentimes despairing of ‘ever being equal to the demands of life’.¹⁸ Even as an established writer, George Eliot was disinclined to believe in her own worth and success and often worked in defiance of crippling anxiety, self-doubt and despair which, more often than not, brought headache in its wake.¹⁹ Writing was very difficult for her—an oftentimes wrenching trial to be endured.²⁰ When John Chapman bought the *Westminster Review* in 1851, Marian became a key reviewer and its shadow editor. She met all sorts through Chapman, including Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes.²¹ In 1853, Marian embarked on a translation (again, from German) of Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity*.²² She was an enthusiast, convinced not only of the veracity of Feuerbach’s ‘Homo homini duos est’, but also Feuerbach’s primacy of feeling—‘Feeling is sympathy; feeling arises only in the love of [one individual] to [another]. Sensations [an individual] has in isolation; feeling only in community’.²³

Marian escaped to Weimar in 1854 with George Lewes, who had first courted her in 1852.²⁴ They stayed until 1856. Their sojourn in Weimar began a de

¹⁶ ODNB, s.v. “Evans, Marian”; Uglow, *George Eliot*, 58–59, 62–65; Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 117–120; Ashton, *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London* (London: Vintage Books, 2008) 87–90, 96–97; Fionnuala Dillane, *Before George Eliot: Marian Evans and the Periodic Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 21–23, 25–32.

¹⁷ George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 2 December 1870, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:125.

¹⁸ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 13 November 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:359. Indeed, George Eliot and George Lewes often took it in turns ‘to be ailing and nurse each other’. George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 21 May 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:70. See, for example, George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 26 May 1838, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:5; George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 27 November 1851, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:376; George Eliot to Mrs. Peter Alfred Taylor, 19 August 1852, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:52; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 21 May 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:70; George Eliot’s Journal, 25 November–15 December 1864, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 4, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 169; George Eliot to Alexander Main, 29 March 1872, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:261; George Eliot’s Journal, 1 January 1874, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 6, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 3. Regarding despondency see, for example, George Henry Lewes to John Blackwood, 12 January 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:5; George Eliot to Mary Finlay Cross, 11 May 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:48. Regarding despair see, for example, George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 3 October 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:170.

¹⁹ George Henry Lewes to John Blackwood, 8 March 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:31. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 8 August 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:76.

²⁰ George Eliot to Alexander Main, 4 November 1872, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:324. See also, George Eliot’s Journal, 22–23 July 1865, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:197; George Eliot to William Blackwood, 7 May 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:256; George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, 15 August 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:301; George Eliot’s Journal, 25 December 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:201; George Eliot to François D’Albert-Durade, 2 September 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:277.

²¹ ODNB, s.v. “Evans, Marian”.

²² Uglow, *George Eliot*, 71.

²³ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 29 April 1854, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:153; Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marian Evans (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1855), 341, 353.

²⁴ George Eliot to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray, 22 November 1852, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:68.

facto marriage which would last nearly twenty-five years, ending only with Lewes's death. Despite the disapproval of Marian's brother, and of society at large, it was to be a strong and mutually supportive marriage in which they enjoyed a deep intellectual sympathy and mutual respect—spending much time reading, writing, walking, talking and travelling together.²⁵ Marian was to find her courage to write in Lewes.²⁶

While in Weimer Marian worked with Lewes on a translation (from Latin) of Spinoza's *Ethics*.²⁷ She had a keen interest in Spinoza, whose thinking had influenced Strauss, Feuerbach and Goethe.²⁸ We will see that her own thought reflected, in some measure, Spinoza's belief in the fundamental nature of human sympathy and his conception of human freedom—and the link between empowerment, freedom and joy.²⁹ Marian and Lewes returned to the Continent many times over the years. There Marian enjoyed what she valued in Christianity—a community of feeling, often expressed in art and music—'music that stirs all one's devout emotions blends everything into harmony, makes one feel part of one whole, which one loves all alike, losing the sense of a separate self'—free of the dogmatic sermonising which she found philosophically offensive.³⁰

²⁵ Their marriage was not a legal one, though both regarded it 'as a sacred bond'. Lewes was unable to contract a legal marriage because, though long separated from his wife by her decision, he was not legally divorced. See George Eliot to Vincent Holbeche, 13 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:349; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 5 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:342. As Gertrude Himmelfarb observes, to read George Eliot's de facto marriage as a rejection of legal marriage is to misread it altogether. Its informality was, for George Eliot, a regrettable necessity. Himmelfarb, *Moral Imagination*, 17. See George Eliot to John Chapman, 30 August 1854, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:173; George Eliot to Charles Bray, 17 June 1855, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:202–203; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 13 November 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:359.

²⁶ Lewes was 'not only sympathetic, but so sagacious in criticism'. George Eliot to Alexander Main, 11 September 1871, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:185. See, for example, George Henry Lewes to John Blackwood, 12 January 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:5. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 25 March 1879, in *The George Eliot Letters*, vol. 7, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 122; John Blackwood to George Eliot, 1 April 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:125; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 5 April 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:126. George Eliot avoided criticism of her work; trusting only Lewes and Blackwood to comment on manuscripts. George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, 15 August 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:300. Reviews were filtered by Lewes, and she saw only such excerpts as he thought sufficiently encouraging. George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 16 December 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:18. See also George Eliot to David Kaufmann, 31 May 1877, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:378–379.

²⁷ Uglow, *George Eliot*, 74.

²⁸ Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 226.

²⁹ See Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics* in *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 94, 120–127, 144, 167–170, 176–179, 218, 236–238, 254. George Eliot explores this concept of human freedom in the *Middlemarch* character of Dr Tertius Lydgate, a doctor of medicine with noble ambitions who finds himself trapped in 'insipid doing and shabby achievement'. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 832.

³⁰ George Eliot's Journal, 14 April 1858, in *The Journals of George Eliot*, eds. Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 308.

George Eliot treasured Lewes, and was devastated by his death in November 1878.³¹ But on 6 May 1880, after some hesitation, she married John Walter Cross, taking the name Mary Ann Cross. Cross was a long time friend of the Leweses, and their financial adviser. George Eliot hesitated over the awkwardness of the marriage—the short interval after Lewes’s death and the age gap (he was some twenty years her junior) but decided the marriage was the right thing for her as she felt, in her solitude, at risk of losing her ‘loving sympathy’.³² It was less than eight months later, on 22 December 1880, that Mary Ann Cross died, quite unexpectedly, of illness.³³

We will approach George Eliot’s thinking primarily through her novels, supplemented by her published essays and correspondence. The novels we consider include *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858), *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1863), *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

Elizabeth Gaskell

Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell was born Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson on 29 September 1810 in Chelsea, London. She was the younger of two children of William Stevenson and Elizabeth Holland. William Stevenson had initially trained as a Unitarian minister but later turned to various occupations, finally as a public servant in the Treasury. Elizabeth Holland died when her baby daughter was just thirteen months old. The young Elizabeth went to live with her mother’s sister, Mrs Hannah Lumb, in Cheshire. There she was part of the extended Holland family, Unitarians connected by both marriage and friendship to other leading Unitarian families—the Wedgwoods and Darwins among them.³⁴ Elizabeth was educated at home until age eleven when she went away to school. She left school in June 1826, living for a short time with her father and stepmother in Chelsea prior to her father’s death in 1829, but

³¹ See George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 5 March 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:113; George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 10 April 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:133; George Eliot to François D’Albert-Durade, 9 March 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:115; George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 7 January 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:93; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 13 January 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:93.

³² George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 10 June 1880, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:296. See also George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 5 May 1880, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:268; George Eliot to Charles Lee Lewis, 21 May 1880, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:283; George Eliot to Isaac Pearson Evans, 26 May 1880, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:287; George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 29 May–1 June 1880, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:291; George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 4–15 September 1880, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:323.

³³ *ODNB*, s.v. “Evans, Marian”.

³⁴ Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 7–8.

otherwise, in a succession of homes within the extended Holland family—in England and Wales.³⁵

Elizabeth met William Gaskell in Manchester in 1831. He was an assistant minister at the Unitarian Cross Street Chapel. They married in August the following year. William's work as a minister drew Elizabeth into direct contact with the poor.³⁶ Gaskell's first child was stillborn. Her daughters Marianne and Margaret (or 'Meta'), were born in 1834 and 1837 respectively. Between 1838 and 1840 Manchester saw political and industrial strife, bringing grievous hardship to many of the working poor. William Gaskell sought to enrich the lives of 'the very poorest of the weavers' by lecturing on "The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life". Elizabeth was both pleased and proud that William's lectures were well attended.³⁷ Elizabeth lost a new little baby son before giving birth to another daughter, Florence, in 1842.³⁸ Two years later Gaskell gave birth to a son, William, who died just ten months later, of scarlet fever—an enduring grief for Gaskell. It was in response to Gaskell's desperate grief for Willie, that her husband encouraged her to write a novel—later published as *Mary Barton*.³⁹ Gaskell's youngest child, Julia was born in September 1846, and William was appointed professor of history, literature, and logic at Manchester New College the same year.⁴⁰

Gaskell died on 12 November 1865. She was just fifty-five. *Wives and Daughters* was very nearly completed (the last instalment in *Cornhill Magazine* was written by its editor, Frederic Greenwood) and the Lawn, near Alton in Hampshire (a longed-for escape from Manchester purchased by Elizabeth without William's knowledge) was very nearly ready for her first round of house guests. It was her heart that gave out.⁴¹

We will approach Gaskell's thinking primarily through her novels, supplemented by her published correspondence. We will consider *Mary Barton* (1848), *Ruth* (1853), *North and South* (1854–1855), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), and *Wives*

³⁵ Elizabeth's father later remarried, but Elizabeth's relationship with her father and step-mother was always awkward, if not strained. Gaskell to Mary Howitt, undated, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 797–798; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Elizabeth Cleghorn (1810–1865)" (by Jenny Uglow), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10434>, accessed 16 July 2017.

³⁶ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 70, 87, 89–90.

³⁷ Gaskell to Mary Howitt, 18 August 1838, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 33.

³⁸ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 126–127.

³⁹ 'The tale was formed, and the greater part of the first volume was written when I was obliged to lie constantly on the sofa, and when I took refuge in the invention to exclude the memory of painful scenes which would force themselves upon my remembrance.' Gaskell to Mrs. Greg, 1849, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 74.

⁴⁰ Manchester New College was then a Unitarian academy. Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 129, 155–156.

⁴¹ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 566, 609–610.

and *Daughters* (1866), as well as Gaskell's one biography—*The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857).⁴²

Charles Dickens

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on 7 February 1812 in Portsmouth, the second of eight children of John Dickens and Elizabeth Barrow. John Dickens was an easy-going, fun loving, spendthrift—of gentlemanly habits, if not means. Elizabeth was likewise irrepressibly optimistic—an unfortunate combination for their children.⁴³ The young Charles showed promise at school but, as John Dickens's finances deteriorated, Charles was taken out of school and the family moved to London. In London and out of school, Charles took to walking the streets. John Dickens entered the Marshalsea debtor's prison in 1824 (taking his wife and younger children with him) and Charles was put to work in a factory. Dickens felt his humiliation keenly.⁴⁴ As his father's fortunes improved, Charles returned to school, and as they deteriorated, he was again withdrawn. At fifteen, Charles began work as a solicitor's clerk but, finding clerking tedious, took up journalism then freelance court reporting. At eighteen he was smitten with twenty year old Maria Beadnell and ran after her for three years, working very hard, now as a parliamentary reporter, but failing to make himself worthy of her hand.⁴⁵ At twenty-two he secured a permanent appointment as a reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* and began his 'street sketches' of everyday London life, later published as *Sketches by Boz*. Dickens became engaged to Catherine Hogarth in the summer of 1835. The first number of *The Pickwick Papers* followed at the end of March 1836 and Dickens and Catherine were married just days later. *The Pickwick Papers* enjoyed phenomenal success, and Dickens left the *Morning Chronicle* to write on his own account.⁴⁶

Catherine's younger sister, Mary Hogarth, joined the Dickens household before little Charley was born in January 1837. Mary died suddenly in May 1837—in

⁴² I also considered *Cranford* (1853) and several of Gaskell's short stories in the preparation of this thesis, but they did not yield any significant additional material.

⁴³ Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), xxiii–xxiv, 5–6; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Dickens, Charles John Huffam (1812–1870)" (by Michael Slater), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7599>, accessed 22 May 2017.

⁴⁴ *ODNB*, s.v. "Dickens, Charles John Huffam"; Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 9–16; John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 33.

⁴⁵ Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 42–45.

⁴⁶ Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 54–58, 65, 67–69; *ODNB*, s.v. "Dickens, Charles John Huffam".

Dickens's arms, and just seventeen years old.⁴⁷ Dickens remembered her without 'a single fault', as 'an essential part of [his] being, and ... as inseparable from [his] existence as the beating of [his] heart', telling Forster, some five years later, 'I don't think there ever was love like that I bear her, that it will never diminish'.⁴⁸ Charley was to be the first of ten children, each of whom Dickens greeted with diminishing enthusiasm—increasingly complaining of their arrival, especially the boys, as the years and births rolled on.⁴⁹ Georgina, another of Catherine's sisters, joined the Dickens household in 1849 to assist Catherine, then thirty-three years old and mother to eight children.⁵⁰ Dickens was concerned for the education of his sons, and did what he could to secure appropriate employment for them, but he was sorely disappointed by their lack of outstanding ability, once remarking he was 'the parent of an Idiot race'.⁵¹ In his late twenties and thirties, still well before he was clear of his own financial difficulties, Dickens found himself maintaining the credit of not only his father, but also his brothers and more distant relations.⁵²

Following *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens built a formidable literary career, publishing a succession of wildly successful novels in monthly numbers. He and Catherine took a six month tour of America from January to June in 1842—an endless

⁴⁷ Dickens to Unknown, 8 June 1837, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1, eds. Madeline House and Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 268. See also Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 78–79.

⁴⁸ Dickens to Richard Johns, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:263; Dickens to Mrs. George Hogarth, 8 May 1843, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 3, eds. Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 484; Dickens to John Forster, 25 October 1841, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 2, eds. Madeline House and Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 410.

⁴⁹ See Dickens to W. H. Prescott, 10 November 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:597; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 16 March 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:627; Dickens to W. F. De Cerjat, 8 May 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:670; Dickens to Mrs. Lehmann, 8 March 1865, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 11, ed. Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 26; Dickens to Lord Lytton, 16 July 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:224.

⁵⁰ Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 108.

⁵¹ Dickens to Cecil Beadon, 2 December 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:319; Dickens to Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Fields, 9 April 1869, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 12, ed. Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 329. For Dickens's concern about, and poor regard for, his sons see Dickens to W. H. Wills, 10 May 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:94; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 6 June 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:375–377; Dickens to Frederic Ouvry, 23 August 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:170–171; Dickens to Alfred Dickens, 20 May 1870, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:530.

⁵² Regarding Dickens's own financial difficulties see, for example, Dickens to J. P. Hullah, 12 January 1837, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:222; Dickens to Thomas Beard, 14 October 1835, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:76; Dickens to John Forster, 11 February 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:42. Regarding his family see, for example, Dickens to Frederick Dickens, 12 December 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:236; Dickens to W. B. Hodge, 25 October 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:197–198; Dickens to J. A. Widger, 3 January 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:255–256; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 18 January 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:263. Dickens's extremely unreliable father was a constant source of financial worry. See Dickens to John Overs, 8 August 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:355. See also Dickens to Thomas Mitton, 28 September 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:575–576. Regarding more distant relations see, for example, Dickens to John Wilson, 24 November 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:601; Dickens to Mrs. Frances Dickinson, 19 August 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:287. Dickens's sons were, likewise, financially unreliable. See, for example, Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 25 June 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:138; Dickens to Messrs Banton & Mackerell, 19 September 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:183; Dickens to George Dolby, 25 September 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:187.

round of receptions and banquets and very public engagements.⁵³ The first number of Dickens's own long-meditated weekly journal, *Household Words*, appeared in March 1850.⁵⁴ But, while his professional life went from strength to strength, Dickens's family life became more difficult. After the birth of Edward, in 1852, Dickens's dissatisfaction with his life—and with Catherine—started to surface. He confessed a 'sense ... of one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made'.⁵⁵ With impeccable timing, Maria Beadnell (now Mrs Winter) contacted Dickens and, with heart aflutter, he arranged to meet her. But the rotund reality of middle-aged Maria sorely disappointed Dickens.⁵⁶ The following August he was smitten by Ellen Lawless Ternan—eighteen years old and an actress.⁵⁷ In 1858, Dickens and Catherine 'took [their] separate courses'.⁵⁸ It was a very messy and very public separation in which only Dickens's most loyal fans could imagine he behaved anything but very badly. Oddly, Georgina Hogarth chose to stay with Dickens while her sister Catherine, with only Charley and an income of £600 a year for company, moved to a house in north-west London.⁵⁹

Dickens's domestic life separated into two spheres: one centred at Gad's Hill, his country home near Rochester—with Georgina Hogarth and his two daughters as his housekeepers cum domestic companions; and another centred on Ellen—his when-he-can-get-there lover.⁶⁰ Dickens's expenses ratcheted up as he kept his own household, maintained Catherine in hers and kept Ellen, both at home and abroad.⁶¹ Financial commitments goaded Dickens into a frenzy of writing and public readings. Casting about for yet more income, he left for a reading tour of America in 1867,

⁵³ Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 127–142.

⁵⁴ *ODNB*, s.v. "Dickens, Charles John Huffam".

⁵⁵ Dickens to John Forster, 3 February 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:523.

⁵⁶ Dickens to Mrs. Winter, 22 February 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:545; Dickens to Mrs. Winter, 10 March 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:561; Dickens to Mrs. Winter, 29 March 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:579; Dickens to The Duke of Devonshire, 5 July 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:149.

⁵⁷ Dickens to The Hon. Mrs. Richard Watson, 7 December 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:488.

⁵⁸ Dickens to The Rev. Joseph Hindle, 28 October 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:305.

⁵⁹ *ODNB*, s.v. "Dickens, Charles John Huffam". Georgina apparently accepted Dickens's relationship with Ellen—later, if not immediately. See Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 20 May 1869, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:358. Georgina was to become, and remain always, his 'dearest and best friend'. See Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 30 September 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:441; Charles Dickens's Last Will and Codicil, 12 May 1869 and 2 June 1870, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:730–733.

⁶⁰ Dickens to F. C. Beard, 14 February 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:27. If his passion for Ellen was not yet consummated, Dickens was apparently seeking sexual companionship elsewhere. See Dickens to F. C. Beard, 25 June 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:84; Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 315–316.

⁶¹ Dickens to W. H. Wills, 6 June 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:375–377. Regarding Ellen see various communications from Dickens to W. H. Wills during November and December 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:475–528. See also Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 322–323.

returning to more readings at home. His health never fully recovered. His last novel was never completed. He died on 9 June 1870, after suffering a stroke.⁶²

We will approach Dickens's thinking primarily through his novels, supplemented by his published correspondence. We will consider *The Pickwick Papers* (April 1836 to November 1837); *Oliver Twist* (February 1837 to April 1839); *Nicholas Nickleby* (April 1838 to October 1839); *The Old Curiosity Shop* (April 1840 to February 1841); *Barnaby Rudge* (February 1841 to November 1841); *American Notes* (October 1842); *Martin Chuzzlewit* (January 1843 to July 1844); *Dombey and Son* (October 1846 to April 1848); *David Copperfield* (May 1849 to November 1850); *Bleak House* (March 1852 to September 1853); *Hard Times* (April 1854 to August 1854); *Little Dorrit* (December 1855 to June 1857); *A Tale of Two Cities* (April 1859 to November 1859); *Great Expectations* (December 1860 to August 1861); *Our Mutual Friend* (May 1864 to November 1865); and the partially completed *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (April 1870 to September 1870).

Beliefs and values

One value shared by each of our novelists is their commitment to *purposeful writing*. In their writing they seek not only to entertain the reader with an imagined world, but also to explore the moral world, and lead the reader to sympathise with their fellows—both imagined and real.⁶³

The young Mary Ann Evans declared—‘It is necessary to me, not simply to *be* but to *utter*’.⁶⁴ And for George Eliot, writing is an exploration and expression of self. Her books are ‘deeply serious’ things—born of the ‘painful discipline’ and ‘hardly-learnt lessons’ of her young life.⁶⁵ She writes only what she feels to be ‘true and good’.⁶⁶ George Eliot sees her works as ‘experiments in life—an endeavour to

⁶² Dickens to W. H. Wills, 6 June 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:375–377; Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 10 May 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:366; *ODNB*, s.v. “Dickens, Charles John Huffam”. See also Dickens to Charles Kent, 18 January 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:140. Dickens began publishing a new weekly periodical, *All the Year Round*, in April 1859, winding up *Household Words*. Dickens continued to write incessantly—at times fearing the pressure of ‘work and worry’ would overcome him. Dickens to John Forster, May 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:48.

⁶³ Robert Westbrook observes that both John Dewey and Richard Rorty have more recently affirmed that ‘the empathy essential to moral imagination’ is best served by ‘the narrative arts ... especially the novel’. Robert B. Westbrook, “History and Moral Inquiry,” *Modern Intellectual History* 9 (2012): 389.

⁶⁴ George Eliot to John Sibree, Jr., 8 March 1848, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:255.

⁶⁵ George Eliot to François D’Albert-Durade, 18 October 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:187. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 17 August 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:133; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 7 October 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:176.

⁶⁶ George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 5 December 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:226–227. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 2 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:335–336.

see what our thought and emotion may be capable of—what stores of motive, actual or hinted as possible, give promise of a better after which we may strive’.⁶⁷ Her books are driven by her ‘deepest belief’.⁶⁸ Indeed, the best self of her books—as imagined in heroines such as Romola—was, at times, a ‘reproof’, even a ‘scourge’, to her more familiar self.⁶⁹ And her gentle humour bespeaks an endearing identity with her less virtuous characters.⁷⁰ Writing is George Eliot’s purpose. It is her religion. It gives her life value.⁷¹ George Eliot takes seriously the responsibility of a writer as an ‘influencer of the public mind’.⁷² Her overarching aim is always to ‘touch the hearts’ of her readers and evoke in them that feeling for others (others whose assumptions, beliefs and manners are unfamiliar to the reader) that is the ground of sympathy.⁷³ For George Eliot, it is in this way that the artist can ‘in some small nibbling way ... reduce the sum of ignorance, degradation, and misery on the face of this beautiful earth’.⁷⁴ She does not attack any particular class, or religion, or political view.⁷⁵ It is her intention always, and her great strength as a writer, to get inside her conflicting characters and see ‘the right on both sides’.⁷⁶ So, while her works are sprinkled with

⁶⁷ George Eliot to Dr. Joseph Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:216–217. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 24 February 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:382–383; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 14 July 1863, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:49; George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 17 September 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:437.

⁶⁸ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 13 April 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:405. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 14 November 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:202; George Eliot to Joseph Munt Langford, 27 March 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:393. George Eliot despised writers who produced drivel to pay bills, holding them socially and morally culpable. George Eliot, “Leaves From a Note-Book,” in *The Essays of George Eliot* (Boston: Colonial Press Publishers, 1883), 237; George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 17 June 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:367. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 3 January 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:241; George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 18 March 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:388; George Eliot to Thomas Clifford Allbutt, 1 November 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:451; George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 10 January 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:113; George Eliot’s Journal, 13 January 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:116.

⁶⁹ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 23 August 1863, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:103–104.

⁷⁰ See George Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young,” in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 36–37. As Theophrastus Such, George Eliot declares, ‘Dear blunderers, I am one of you.’ George Eliot, “The Impressions of Theophrastus Such,” in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 255.

⁷¹ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 19 August 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:377; George Eliot’s Journal, 2 January 1858, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:416. See also George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 5 May, 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:293; George Eliot to Charles Lee Lewes, 27 October 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:217.

⁷² George Eliot, “Leaves From a Note-Book”, 235–236. See also Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction*, 139–140.

⁷³ George Eliot Journal, 2 January 1858, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:416. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 18 February 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:299; George Eliot to Charles Bray, 5 July 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:111; George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 16 December 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:318.

⁷⁴ George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 5 May, 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:293.

⁷⁵ Importantly, the novels illustrate various forms of religious practice, rather than elaborating any theology, and treat religion as a ‘historical phenomenon that changes over time’. See Sean Gaston, “George Eliot and the Anglican Reader,” *Literature & Theology* 2016:3, <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/10.1093/litthe/frw026>, accessed 24 May 2017.

⁷⁶ George Eliot to John Blackwood, 4 April 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:397. *Felix Holt* demonstrates George Eliot’s amazing ability to write sympathetically from different points of view. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 11 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:348.

aphorisms, her aim is always to give the reader pause for thought, rather than convince them. She explains—

My function is that of an *aesthetic*, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of nobler emotions, which make [humankind] desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge. It is one thing to feel keenly for one’s fellow human beings; another to say, “This step, and this alone, will be the best to take for the removal of particular calamities”.⁷⁷

Gaskell likewise believes in her mission as a writer. She is a serious novelist and her purpose is a serious one—to challenge moral complacency by confronting the reader with difficult moral questions—moral questions from which the reader has habitually averted their gaze.⁷⁸ And Gaskell is very aware of her own moral failings. Contrasting herself with Charlotte Brontë, who ‘puts all her naughtiness in her books’, Gaskell confesses she puts all her goodness into her books—‘my books are so far better than I am that I often feel ashamed of having written them and as if I were a hypocrite’.⁷⁹

And Dickens, too, is made to write.⁸⁰ Writing gives his life its meaning.⁸¹ For Dickens, writing is one of the ‘highest gifts of the Creator’. It is Dickens’s providential purpose to identify ‘social grievances’ and through his writing ‘help to set them right’.⁸² But Dickens is not swept along in an inspired flow.⁸³ To write he needs much ‘steadiness, patience, seclusion, regularity, hard work’ and ‘courage to

⁷⁷ George Eliot to Mrs. Peter Alfred Taylor, 18 July 1878, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:44. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 12 November 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:459.

⁷⁸ Gaskell to Mary Ewart, late 1848, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 67.

⁷⁹ Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 7 April 1853, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 228. See also Gaskell to Agnes Sandars, 11 February 1852, in *Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, eds. John Chapple and Alan Shelston (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 63.

⁸⁰ Dickens to Jules Benedict, 20 July 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:373. See also Dickens to Samuel Morley, 11 June 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:647.

⁸¹ Dickens to The Hon. Mrs. Edward Cropper, 20 December 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:828. See also Dickens to Mrs. Procter, 15 February 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:17. Dickens often takes time out to encourage (or gently discourage) would-be writers. See, for example, Dickens to R. S. Horrell, 25 November 1840, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:154–157.

⁸² Dickens to Henry Carey, 24 August 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:405; Speech to Administrative Reform Association, 27 June 1855, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 201. See also Speech at banquet in his honour at Hartford, 7 February 1842, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 24. For examples of specific intentions see Dickens to Mrs. Mary Hurnall, 21 July 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:336; Dickens to Hugh Sibbald, 17 May 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:241; Dickens to Henry Austin, 12 May 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:99; Dickens to Peter Cunningham, 11 March 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:291. Regarding advantages of fiction for this purpose, see Dickens to George Beadnell, July 1837, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:289. Regarding Dickens building characters from real life and attendant risks, see Dickens to Mrs. Jane Seymour Hill, 18 December 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:674–675; Dickens to Leigh Hunt, November 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:460.

⁸³ Dickens to John Forster, 31 October 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:422.

reject what comes uppermost, and to try for something better below it'.⁸⁴ Sometimes Dickens experienced depressive lows. He found his relief in walking. He had a passion for movement; for air; for the streets, and walked relentlessly. Every day—seven, ten, sometimes twenty-miles.⁸⁵ Dickens's novels are often emotional, even sentimental. This is no accident. He rejects 'the coxcombical idea of writing down to the popular intelligence'. Instead he aims to get alongside, to move, 'to touch', the reader. Dickens gloried in the 'power' of his books 'to touch'—relishing both his power to reduce his audience to tears and the public gratitude this surfeit of feeling brought in its wake.⁸⁶

What we might call *moral sympathy* is a key value for our novelists—especially for George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. For George Eliot, the conquest of individual egotism through sympathy of feeling, is the foundation of true morality.⁸⁷ Indeed, making the effort to comprehend and value the thoughts and feelings of others is the only measure of true moral and intellectual culture.⁸⁸ Likewise, Gaskell values moral sympathy. Gaskell is unafraid. She brings the reader alongside characters who do bad things and helps the reader to see the world through their eyes. The first, and most extreme example, is found in *Mary Barton*. John Barton is a good man who

⁸⁴ Dickens to The Hon. Mrs. Edward Cropper, 20 December 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:828; Dickens to George Lille Craik, 2 June 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:689. See also Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 20 August 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:608; Dickens to Thomas Mitton, 25 September 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:623–624; Dickens to John Forster, early February 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:494; Dickens to John Forster, late September 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:501.

⁸⁵ Dickens to John Forster, 30 November 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:670; Dickens to Mrs. Dickens, 5 May 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:108. See also Dickens to The Rev. George M. Musgrave, 15 October 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:521; Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 25–26 November 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:489. Regarding walking to escape, see Dickens to John Forster, 29 September 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:428–429; Dickens to Wilkie Collins, 29 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:423. Regarding walking as adventuring into London's darker world, see Dickens to Daniel Maclise, 20 November 1840, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:152. See also Dickens to Basil Hall, 16 March 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:234; Dickens to John Forster, 13 or 14 June 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:560. Regarding inspections of public institutions see, for example, Dickens to Daniel Maclise, 19 September 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:173; Dickens to John Forster, 6 December 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:677.

⁸⁶ Speech at Banquet to Literature and Art in Birmingham, 6 January 1853, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 158; Dickens to The Hon. Robert Lytton, 17 April 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:354; Dickens to Mrs. Charles Dickens, 2 December 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:235. See also Dickens to W. C Macready, 6 January 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:180; Dickens to Lewis Gaylord Clark, 28 September 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:394; Dickens to George Cattermole, 14 January 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:184; Dickens to The Rev. H. F. Harrison, 28 January 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:31; Dickens to John Forster, 29 January 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:34; Dickens to Charles Mackay, 19 December 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:610; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 25 August 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:745; Dickens to F. M. Evans, 16 March 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:533; Dickens to John Forster, 11 September 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:656; Dickens to R. M. Ross, 19 February 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:159; Dickens to George Holme, 14 March 1870, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:491.

⁸⁷ George Eliot, "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness", 47, 49–50. For a discussion of George Eliot's preference for 'ego' versus 'sympathy' rather than the Comtean 'ego' versus 'altruism' see Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008), 101–113.

⁸⁸ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 24 February 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:301. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 18 April 1849, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:280.

murders, and is consequently destroyed by a relentless conscience. For Gaskell, the ‘prevailing thought’ behind *Mary Barton* is ‘the seeming injustice of the inequalities of fortune’ that might bewilder a man such as John Barton and lead to actions which may, for a time, appear to him to be right, but violate the ‘eternal laws of God’ and bring their own punishment—‘an avenging conscience far more difficult to bear than any worldly privation’. For Gaskell, John Barton is the hero with whom her sympathies go; he is a hero ‘groping ... after the causes of suffering’.⁸⁹

Practical compassion is a key value for both Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell. Dickens has an acute social conscience.⁹⁰ He had very little faith in Parliament’s ability to effect the changes the poor so desperately needed and was the ‘leading spirit’ of the Administrative Reform Association, founded in 1855 in an effort to redress ‘aristocratic mismanagement and jobbery’ in the civil service.⁹¹ Dickens was directly involved in many formal and informal efforts to improve the conditions for the poor—especially for their children.⁹² He was actively engaged in sanitary reform, working closely with both his brother-in-law Henry Austin and Dr. Thomas Southwood Smith to bring about the reforms required to improve housing for the poor and, consequently, reduce their vulnerability to fevers which Southwood Smith believed attributable to ‘overcrowding, insufficient ventilation, and, most importantly, an abundance of decaying animal and vegetable matter’.⁹³ Dickens

⁸⁹ Gaskell to Mrs. Greg, early 1849, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 74.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Dickens to Lord Ashley, 23 November 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:214–215.

⁹¹ Olive Anderson, “The Janus Face of Mid-Nineteenth-Century English Radicalism: The Administrative Reform Association of 1855,” *Victorian Studies* 8 (1965): 231–242. See Dickens to Samuel Morley, 11 June 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:646–647; Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 6 February 1850, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 106; Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 10 May 1851, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 129. Regarding Parliament, see Dickens to Sir Roderick Murchinson, 4 March 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:675; Dickens to Dr Southwood Smith, 1 February 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:436; Speech to Administrative Reform Association, 27 June 1855, Dickens, *Speeches*, 202; Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, eds. Stephen Wall and Helen Small (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 120, 153. Regarding disillusionment with Parliament and rejected invitations to stand see, Dickens to Sir Joseph Paxton, 1 March 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:292; Dickens to George Lovejoy, 31 May 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:288; Dickens to D. M. Corkindale, 15 May 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:128; Dickens to John Gladding, 9 June 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:692; Dickens to C. de la Pryme, 8 January 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:3. Regarding advancing the cause of the poor, see Dickens to J. V. Staples, 3 April 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:95. Regarding criticism of misdirected philanthropic zeal, see Dickens to The Editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, 25 July 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:279–280. Regarding opposition to Poor Law reforms, see Dickens to J. C. Parkinson, February 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:314–315; Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ed. Philip Horne (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 13–14, 53–54; Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, ed. Adrian Poole (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 199–200, 498. Regarding working conditions see, Dickens to Dr Southwood Smith, 15 December 1840, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:164–166; Dickens to Dr Southwood Smith, 1 February 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:435–436; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 29 September 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:428.

⁹² Dickens to George Russell, 14 December 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:283.

⁹³ Socrates Litsios, “Charles Dickens and the Movement for Sanitary Reform,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 46 (2003): 187–189. Regarding sanitary reform, see Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 6 February 1850, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 107; Dickens to Dr Southwood Smith, 20 November 1849, in *Letters of*

visited prisons, hospitals and institutions for the disabled.⁹⁴ He actively promoted the work of provident, educational and cultural institutions for working people and helped them to raise funds.⁹⁵ Dickens dealt with a near continuous stream of ‘begging letters’, from needy individuals, and charities begging on their behalf—often taking time to investigate individual cases before providing assistance to the deserving.⁹⁶ Dickens gave much time and effort over many years to Urania Cottage—a home ‘for the reclamation of certain young women’, which was funded by Miss Burdett Coutts and was, for Dickens, a ‘great work [of] salvation’ and ‘sacred duty’.⁹⁷ He was also committed to the work of the Ragged Schools established between 1840 to 1870 in an effort to rescue from irreparable degradation, and the very real risk of a life of crime, the children of those either too poor or too uncaring ‘to pay even a penny a week for schooling’.⁹⁸ Gaskell, likewise, valued practical compassion. Even while her own daughters were still quite young—and Gaskell was snatching moments from her domestic whirl to write—she frequently took time out to help others, particularly those in moral danger.⁹⁹

Charles Dickens, 5:656; Dickens to The Rev. G. F. Galaher, 17–19 January 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:13.

⁹⁴ Regarding prison visits and reform, see Dickens to John Forster, 6 March 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:102; Dickens to Thomas Beard, 18 November 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:376; Dickens to Captain Alexander Maconochie, 21 March 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:523–524; Dickens to C. E. Cotterell, 23 March 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:524; Dickens to William Hepworth Smith, 31 December 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:686. Regarding other institutions, see Dickens, *American Notes*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 38, 63; Dickens to John Forster, 12 July 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:583–585; Dickens to Mrs. J. T. Fields, 25 May 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:120; Dickens to John Forster, 15 or 16 November 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:657.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Dickens to Edward W. Cole, 22 May 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:103; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 27 August 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:133. For a discussion of provident, educational and cultural institutions for working people more broadly see Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), 62–83.

⁹⁶ See Dickens to Frederick Dickens, 16 June 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:563; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 29 April 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:654; W. H. Wills, 14 January 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:24; Dickens to Edmund Yates, 28 April 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:553; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 11 March 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:391.

⁹⁷ Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 3 November 1847, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:181–188. Regarding Urania Cottage, see, for example, Dickens to John Hullah, 12 December 1847, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:208; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 5 October 1848, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:416; Dickens to W. J. Broderip, 26 July 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:136; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 30 July 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:139; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 21 March 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:323; Dickens to Charles de la Pryme, 12 May 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:328; Dickens to Mrs. Morson, 14 July 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:625. For the story of Urania Cottage see Jenny Hartley, *Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women* (London: Methuen, 2009).

⁹⁸ H. W. Schupf, “Education for the Neglected: Ragged Schools in Nineteenth Century England,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 12 (1972): 162–163. For Dickens’s involvement in Ragged Schools see Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 16 September 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:562–564; Dickens to John Forster, 24 September 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:572–573; Dickens to S. R. Starey, 24 September 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:573–574; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 17 October 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:583; Dickens to S. R. Starey, 17 October 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:584; Dickens to S. R. Starey, 1 February 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:37; Dickens to John Leech, 1 November 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:635.

⁹⁹ For examples of aiding women in moral danger, see Gaskell to Dickens, 8 January 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 98; Gaskell to Miss Kay, 7 March 1854, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 270. For examples of other charitable

Religious tolerance is a key value shared by our novelists.¹⁰⁰ George Eliot abhors both scepticism and dogmatism. She holds that those who ‘see everything ... clearly and with ... little trouble’ pay the ‘price of sad self-mutilation’.¹⁰¹ Further, the truths individuals live by are so interlaced with inherited errors that, for most people, the errors cannot be ‘wrench[ed] away’ without destroying the vitality of their most worthy beliefs.¹⁰² For George Eliot, the fundamental ‘worthiness’ of our existence is a mystery—indeed, a ‘Divine Mystery’, and any theism that attempts to rationalise that mystery misses the point.¹⁰³ Although, at least after her twentieth year, George Eliot had no use for the ‘pretended comforts’ of dogmatic religion, once she had moved beyond the acrimony of renunciation, she felt no antagonism towards ‘any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity’ find expression.¹⁰⁴ For herself, she felt bound to ‘accept no formula’ which her whole soul—her ‘intellect as well as [her] emotions’—could not ‘embrace with entire reverence’.¹⁰⁵ Yet, even in her later years, George Eliot continued reading the Bible and, with limited success, seeking Sunday ‘edification’ from ‘the pulpit’.¹⁰⁶ More importantly, she continued to feel the need of the spiritual community of church or chapel—‘a place where human beings do not ramble apart but meet with common impulse’.¹⁰⁷

work, see Gaskell to Charles Bosanquet, 10 October 1863, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 715; Gaskell to Abigail B. Adams, 7 July 1864, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 735–736.

¹⁰⁰ Many Anglicans and Dissenters pared back or modified their religious beliefs to accommodate the challenges of biblical criticism and were, in the main, tolerant of the evolving religious beliefs of others. But many responded to the challenges of biblical criticism with emphatic dogmatism—Evangelicals upholding Biblicism, and members of the High Church party retreating to an orthodoxy centred on the Apostolic tradition of the Established Church. Unsurprisingly, the dogmatism of the Evangelicals and the High Church party often gave rise to partisanship, intolerance, even bigotry. So, while tolerance was de rigueur in some circles, it was not, at least in religious circles, the norm. See Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 97, 124–160; James C. Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: Challenges and Reconceptions* (London: Continuum, 2006), 7–20; Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Watts and Wesley to Martineau: 1690–1900* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 3:243–282, 4:3–7, 114–169.

¹⁰¹ George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 25 May 1845, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:192. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, May 1846, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:216.

¹⁰² George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 9 October 1843, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:162.

¹⁰³ George Eliot disclaimed theological expertise. George Eliot to Charles Bray, 15 November 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:403.

¹⁰⁴ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 14 September 1865, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:201. For her period of antagonism toward dogmatism, see George Eliot to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray, 15 February 1850, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:330–331; George Eliot to François D’Albert-Durade, 6 December 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:230–231. The sympathy with which she depicted dissenters in her novels led some to assume George Eliot was herself a dissenter. Although she ‘had close acquaintance with many dissenters of various sects from Calvinists and Baptists to Unitarians’ she had never joined a dissenting sect. See George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Lee Lewes, 21 December 1865, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:213–214; George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 13 August 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:163. See also George Eliot to Charles Bray, 5 July 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:111; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 16 October 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:185;

¹⁰⁵ George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 29 December 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:366.

¹⁰⁶ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 26 December 1862, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:72; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 30 July 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:442.

¹⁰⁷ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 18 September 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:452.

Gaskell grew up and moved in a Unitarian world, and perceived the broader world through a Unitarian lens.¹⁰⁸ But, as Webb has observed, that Unitarian lens was evolving—moving away, at least for some, from the hard rationalism of ‘metaphysical systems of divinity’ that had once defined it, to ‘a loving, believing spirit of Christianity ... speaking to the inmost heart’; the spirit that was ‘realized and embodied ... in the life and character of the pure and blessed Jesus’.¹⁰⁹ And Gaskell’s faith (‘more I suppose what would be called Arian than Humanitarian’) is neither exclusive nor dogmatic.¹¹⁰ She shares a sense of communion with Christians holding various theologies and values ‘really spiritual devotional preaching’ to ‘controversy about doctrines,—about [which] I am more [and] more certain we can never be certain in this world’.¹¹¹ Gaskell loathed the dry intellectualism of some of the Unitarians that formed part of her set. Indeed, she dreaded ‘all the James Martineaus’ joining her family on holidays as they were inclined to ‘[talk] sense by the yard’.¹¹² She owns ‘one antipathy’—to ‘the Calvinistic or Low Church’. But she also shares her husband’s decisive aversion to Roman Catholicism.¹¹³

Dickens’s religious faith is uncomplicated, undogmatic and, mostly, private. He is no proselytiser.¹¹⁴ Dickens is guided by the Divine Teacher of ‘the beautiful New Testament’, and prays alone every morning and night.¹¹⁵ He accepts the good in his life as the blessing of God, and is thankful.¹¹⁶ Dickens favours a broad church. He sees dogmatic disputation as evidence of a lack of attention to the plain teachings of Jesus. He was particularly appalled by the ‘bluster and balderdash’ that erupted on

¹⁰⁸ Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 23–24.

¹⁰⁹ R. K. Webb, “The Faith of Nineteenth-Century Unitarians: A Curious Incident,” in *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Religious Belief*, eds. Richard J. Helmstadter, Bernard Lightman (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 140.

¹¹⁰ Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton, 16 April 1861, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 648. Arianism holds that Jesus is created by God rather than God. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Arianism”.

¹¹¹ Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton, 9 March 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 537.

¹¹² Gaskell to Marianne Gaskell, 5 July 1853, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 239.

¹¹³ Gaskell to Marianne Gaskell, 19 October 1858, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 520; Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton, 16 April 1861, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 648. They were both very concerned at Marianne’s interest in Dr. Manning and Rome. Gaskell to Marianne Gaskell, early 1862, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 921; Gaskell to W. W. Story, 9 May 1862, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 687; Gaskell to Charles Eliot Norton, 22 April 1862, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 682–683. Although Gaskell understood the appeal a more ritualistic faith, for her, a Trinitarian faith necessarily clouds the individual’s perception of the true nature of God. Gaskell to Marianne Gaskell, May–June 1854, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 860.

¹¹⁴ Regarding the simplicity of faith, see Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, ed. John Bowen (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 609. Regarding privacy and reluctance to proselytise, see Dickens to John Forster, 28 June 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:573; Charles Dickens, *The Life of Our Lord* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1999); Dickens to Alfred Dickens, 28 May 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:48; Dickens to Mrs. Charles Smithson, 18 April 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:108.

¹¹⁵ Speech to Institutional Association of Lancashire and Cheshire in Manchester, 3 December 1858, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 284; Dickens to Alfred Dickens, 28 May 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:48.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Dickens’s Journal, 7 February 1839, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:640.

the publication of *Essays and Reviews*, which exposed the liberal biblical hermeneutics of Oxford to the scrutiny of the wider world.¹¹⁷ For Dickens, it is sheer folly, for anyone at anytime, to speak of any ‘matter of religious doctrine and dogma’ as if ‘settled by ... Heaven’ when ‘we know they were, a matter of temporary accommodation and adjustment among disputing mortals as fallible as you or I’.¹¹⁸

And while our novelists, to varying degrees, share these key values—a commitment to purposeful writing, moral sympathy and compassion, and religious tolerance—there are significant differences between them. George Eliot is the more self-consciously critical thinker of the three, with both intellectual and moral seriousness evident in her work. She is an open, yet critical, thinker. The mature George Eliot boldly declared herself ‘open to conviction on all points except dinner and debts’.¹¹⁹ But she did not simply adopt ideas she encountered. She explains:

The writers who have most profoundly influenced me ... are not in the least oracles to me. ... [Their] genius has sent that electric thrill through my intellectual and moral frame which has awakened in me new perceptions, which has made [humanity] and nature a fresh world of thought and feeling to me—and this is not by teaching me any new belief. It is simply that the rushing mighty wind of [their] inspiration has so quickened my faculties that I have been able to shape more definitely for myself ideas which had previously dwelt as dim ‘ahnungen’ in my soul—[fusing] together old thoughts and prejudices that I have been able to make new combinations.¹²⁰

George Eliot is convinced of the need for rational intellectual rigour, but she distrusts a purely intellectual approach. George Eliot takes a keen interest in the philosophy of Auguste Comte. This is unsurprising—given her intellectual curiosity; her relationship with Lewes, a Comte enthusiast; and their friendship with Richard and Maria Congreve, both committed Positivists. She embraces positivist science; the search for an objectively sure footing for practical religion; and Comte’s assertion of the need to balance resignation and activity.¹²¹ But, as Fleishmann makes clear,

¹¹⁷ Dickens to W. W. F. de Cerjat, 25 October 1864, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:444; Dickens to Mrs. Nash, 5 March 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:389; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 4:181–183.

¹¹⁸ Dickens to W. W. F. de Cerjat, 28 May 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:253. See also Dickens to George Moore, 10 March 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:221.

¹¹⁹ Holding that ‘the one must be eaten and the other paid’. George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 20 October 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:388. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 26 November 1846, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:228.

¹²⁰ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 9 February 1849, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:277.

¹²¹ See George Eliot’s Journal, 5 May 1867, in *Journals of George Eliot*, 129; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 25 November 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:127; George Eliot to Mrs. Henry Horton, December 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:134; George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 16 January 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*,

George Eliot is no ‘Positivist’. She rejects Comte’s unfeelingly rationalised morality along with his synthetically ritualised Religion of Humanity, both of which rely on complete submission to authority. George Eliot refuses to trust herself solely to the intellect. For her, the ‘truth of feeling’ is the ‘only universal bond’.¹²² George Eliot also values moral earnestness. She is deeply committed to understanding what constitutes a truly moral life, and to living in accordance with that understanding. She is unconcerned by the supposed ‘folly’ of taking oneself too seriously—‘that bugbear of circles in which the lack of grave emotion passes for wit’—and constantly strives for ‘a higher life’.¹²³

Taking the oeuvre of each of our novelists as whole, we can see differing emphases in the themes that characterise their work.

Realism characterises George Eliot’s work.¹²⁴ For her, emotion necessarily ‘links itself with particulars’, and ‘only in a faint and secondary manner with abstractions’. So that, to carry one far, ideas must be encountered sympathetically ‘clothed ... in some human figure’ and firmly grounded in ‘concrete incidents’. Because encountering people in their actuality is the only solid foundation of sympathy, George Eliot aims to give the reader an understanding not of ‘the motives and influences which the moralist thinks *ought* to act on [individuals]’, but of ‘the motives and influences which *do* act on [them]’. She tells her readers that they must accept her characters as they are—they can neither ‘straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions’—because it is the less than beautiful, the less than brilliant and the less than perfectly amiable whom we must pass our lives

4:333; George Henry Lewes’s Journal, 5–7 May, 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:360; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 13 May 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:363; George Eliot to Mrs. Peter Taylor, 30 May 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:366;. Indeed, George Eliot spoke of *The Spanish Gypsy* as a ‘mass of Positivism’. George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 16 December 1868, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:496. Her poem ‘O may I join the choir invisible’ was adopted by Richard Congreve for use in the Positivist liturgy. See George Eliot, *The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Company, 1874), 231–233. For discussion of George Eliot’s relationship with Positivism more broadly, see Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism*, 102–113.

¹²² Avrom Fleishman, *George Eliot’s Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 59–68, 232–233; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 9 October 1843, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:162–163; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 7 December 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:316. See also George Eliot and George Henry Lewes to John Blackwood, 23 June 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:306; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 2 July 1860, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:310.

¹²³ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Barbara Hardy (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1967), 567; George Eliot’s Journal, 22 November 1868, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:490.

¹²⁴ George Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness”, 47. See also George Eliot to Dr. Joseph Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:216–217; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 430–431; George Eliot, “Leaves From a Note-Book”, 244–245.

among and, if we are to live well, we must learn to tolerate, pity, and love the ugly, the dull and the ill-disposed.¹²⁵

It is with some irony that George Eliot confesses her conservatism. In *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), she owns that she ‘lingers with a certain fondness over the days of nasal clerks and top-booted parsons, and has a sigh for the departed shades of vulgar errors’.¹²⁶ And both the fondness and the irony are still there in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879)—owning ‘this England of my affections’ to be ‘a dream in which things are connected according to my ... mood, and not at all by the multitudinous links of graver, sadder fact’. Nevertheless, she trusts that ‘the illusions that began for us when we were less acquainted with evil [do] not lose their value when we discern them to be illusions’. Rather, ‘they feed the ideal Better’.¹²⁷ For all her apparent unconventionality—her rigorous education; her irregular marriage; her progressive, even radical, theology; her moral and intellectual seriousness—both socially and politically, George Eliot is a conservative at heart.¹²⁸ Her conservative turn of mind is grounded, more or less, in personal memories—memories of human sympathy that hang upon her, as they hang upon Romola, ‘like the weight of broken wings that could never be lifted’.¹²⁹ George Eliot looks to the ties of the past for ‘something more sure than shifting theory’. For her, as for *Deronda*, ‘to delight in doing things because our fathers did them is good if it shuts out nothing better; it enlarges the range of affection—and affection is the broadest basis of good in life’.¹³⁰

Another, perhaps surprising, characteristic of George Eliot’s oeuvre is the romance of childhood. She held that the ‘very commonplace, even ugly, ... furniture’ of our young lives lastingly entwines our affections, not because, as it sometimes seems, life was so much better then; but because all our childish joys ‘were vivid’.

¹²⁵ George Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life,” in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 161; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1980), 222–223, 229. See also George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. Jennifer Gribble (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 43, 59; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 207.

¹²⁶ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 7. See also George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 557.

¹²⁷ George Eliot, “Theophrastus Such”, 278.

¹²⁸ Regarding social conservatism, see George Eliot to Charles Edward Appleton, 24 December 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:473–474. Regarding political conservatism, see George Eliot, *Felix Holt: The Radical*, ed. Lynda Mugglestone (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 49–50, 292–293; George Eliot, “Address to Working-Men, by Felix Holt,” in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 214–215, 220–221, 223; George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 9 February 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:14. See also George Eliot to John Sibree, Jr., 11 February 1848, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:246; George Eliot to the Brays and the Hennells, 8 June 1848, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:267; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 14 March 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:387; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 20 February 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:21–22.

¹²⁹ George Eliot, *Romola*, ed. Andrew Sanders (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1980), 590. See also George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, ed. David Carroll (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 126.

¹³⁰ George Eliot to Dr. Joseph Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:216–217; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 470. See also 412–413. See George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. Rosemary Ashton (London: Penguin Books, 1994) 539; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 514–515.

Indeed, for George Eliot, it is the gentle echoes of childhood that bring felt meaning to our adult lives. However, for the young Mary Ann, as for Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, childhood was a time ‘of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad’; a time of thirsting ‘for all knowledge’; of ‘straining after ... music that ... would not come near’; of ‘a blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it’.¹³¹ In her novels George Eliot shows the bonds of childhood to give rise to one’s first duties; to be the surest guard of one’s better self; and the source of one’s deepest sympathies.¹³²

As we have seen, Gaskell seeks to challenge moral complacency by confronting the reader with difficult moral questions. In both *Mary Barton* and *Ruth* this purpose is transparent—she points directly at ‘evils’, real evils, because ‘evils being once recognised are half way towards their remedy’.¹³³ This is also her purpose in her later novels, but there the moral questions are more subtle and closer to home. Gaskell’s early novels draw the reader into sympathetic contact with a murderer and a fallen woman—challenging the reader’s assumptions about people who do bad things. Gaskell’s later novels draw the reader into conscientious contact with secrets, lies, and double standards—challenging the reader’s assumptions about themselves. In each of *Ruth*, *North and South*, *Sylvia’s Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*, Gaskell explores moral obligations regarding truthfulness—primarily through secrets and lies. The noble lie is key to the plot in *Ruth* and gives rise to many opportunities for didactic asides on the part of the author, and soul searching on the part of the reader. A noble lie is a key sub-plot in *North and South* and the lie must be owned before the story resolves. In *Sylvia’s Lovers* the lie is told for mean and selfish ends and reconciliation costs the liar his life. In *Wives and Daughters* the secrets and lies are many and varied. Cynthia ducks and weaves through half-truths, outright deceptions, broken hearts and gossiping tongues to land herself an adoring husband with an impressive income and London address. But the anxiety of Osborne Hamley’s deception costs him his life.¹³⁴

¹³¹ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 45–46, 160, 247–248.

¹³² See, for example, George Eliot, *Romola*, 650; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 90, 427.

¹³³ Gaskell to Eliza Fox, 29 May 1849, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 82; Gaskell to Edward Holland, 13 January 1849, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 827. For her experience of the response to *Mary Barton* and *Ruth* in Manchester, see Gaskell to Edward Chapman, 1 January 1949, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 68; Gaskell to Eliza Fox, pre-14 February 1853, in *Further Letters*, 81.

¹³⁴ See Gaskell to Mrs. Emily Shean, 27 October 1854, in *Further Letters*, 117.

In Dickens's oeuvre we can identify three recurring themes, each echoing experiences in his own life—the contingency of social status, the 'angel', and early death. Many of Dickens's novels are stories of the high brought low, and the low raised high, illustrating the contingency of social status by what we may call 'snakes and ladders' plots. Mr Plornish explains:

in his philosophical but not lucid manner, that there was ups you see, and there was downs. It was in vain to ask why ups, why downs; there they was, you know. He had heerd it given for a truth that accordin' as the world went round, which round it did revolve undoubted, even the best of gentlemen must take his turn of standing with his ed upside down and all his air a flying the wrong way into what you might call Space. Wery well then. What Mr Plornish said was, wery well then. That gentleman's ed would come up-ards when his turn come, that gentleman's air would be a pleasure to look upon being all smooth again, and wery well then!¹³⁵

The snakes and ladders plot dominates *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Little Dorrit*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Great Expectations*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Bleak House* and the archetypal *Our Mutual Friend*. Invariably, the character brought low is a born gentleman (or a not-so-gentle man with genteel antecedents) with dependent ladies, and he and they are often, but not always, rescued by an unearned fortune—inheritance.¹³⁶

Dickens's work is characterised by a curious attitude to young women. His ideal women (invariably young) are 'angels'—Agnes in *David Copperfield*; Lucie in *A Tale of Two Cities*; Kate in *Nicholas Nickleby*; Miss Rose in *Oliver Twist*; Amy in *Little Dorrit*; Florence in *Dombey and Son*; Lizzie Hexam in *Our Mutual Friend*; Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*.¹³⁷ As a young man, Dickens himself saw

¹³⁵ Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 764–765.

¹³⁶ See Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 431; Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, ed. by Norman Page (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 504, 552–553; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 24, 759, 782, 789. See also Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 346; Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, ed. Mark Ford (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 775; Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 193. But there is tension here. Dickens frequently criticises those who rely on their expectations rather than their own hard work. See, for example, Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Nicola Bradbury (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 371, 448, 599.

¹³⁷ Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell, 13 April 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:62; Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, ed. Jeremy Tambling (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 844. See also 284, 373–375, 573, 776, 822, 848; Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. Richard Maxwell (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 221; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 680; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 235; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 72–104, 245–249, 575–581, 789–790; Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, ed. Andrew Sanders (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 243; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 36–40, 77–82, 732–735; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 41, 693. Some of the statements regarding Dickens and his angels included here have appeared previously at Di Sylvester, "The Lamentable Lessons of a Litter of Angels, 8 March 2015," <http://misfitimaginings.wordpress.com/2015/03/08/the-lamentable-lessons-of-a-litter-of-angels/>.

Catherine as his would-be angel, who would afford him ‘much delight’ when he could turn to her at their fireside when his work was done, and ‘seek in [her] kind looks and gentle manner the recreation and happiness which the moping solitude of chambers can never afford’.¹³⁸ But not all of Dickens’s young women are angels. Some—like Pet Meagles in *Little Dorrit*, Dora in *David Copperfield*, Dolly Varden in *Barnaby Rudge*, and Bella Wilfer in *Our Mutual Friend*—are very attractive to the authorial eye, but thoroughly spoiled by doting fathers, and far too self-indulgent to be angels. Another—Estella in *Great Expectations*—is again very attractive to the authorial eye, but thoroughly corrupted, having ‘been brought up’ by the much maligned Miss Havisham solely ‘to wreak revenge on all the male sex’.¹³⁹ Some—like Nancy in *Oliver Twist*—have ‘squandered’ their lives but retain something of their original nature, so that they feel their shame.¹⁴⁰ Still others have ‘every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out’ of them, leaving nothing but a ‘loathsome blank of profligacy and crime’.¹⁴¹

Dickens is convinced that the good really do die young and we see this conviction both in his life and his novels.¹⁴² He speaks of childhood as ‘an age when death is an easy transit to a better World’ because the innocence of ‘such young and untried creatures (half Angels here)’ affords them greater ‘certainty of a bright and happy world beyond the Grave’.¹⁴³ For Dickens, death transforms the young into angels, guardian angels—‘with you ... always’. He declares that ‘the air about us [is] ... thick with guardian angels’. He ‘believe[s] it, in [his] soul’.¹⁴⁴ Some of Dickens’s young characters hold life very lightly. Little Dick in *Oliver Twist*, the young Paul Dombey in *Dombey and Son*, Nell in *Old Curiosity Shop* and Smike in *Nicholas*

¹³⁸ Dickens to Miss Catherine Hogarth, 19 November 1835, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:95.

¹³⁹ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. Charlotte Mitchell (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 177. See also 362.

¹⁴⁰ Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 332. For Nancy’s intended relationship to Miss Rose, see Dickens to John Forster, 3 November 1837, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:328.

¹⁴¹ Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 207.

¹⁴² Mary Hogarth’s death left Dickens with a persistent conviction that ‘when the young, the beautiful, and good, are visited with sickness, their pure spirits insensibly turn towards their bright home of lasting rest.’ Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 287. See editor’s note Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 287, 515; Dickens to T. J. Thompson, 28 February 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:55.

¹⁴³ Dickens to John Macrone, 18 November 1835, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:94; Dickens to William Bradbury, 3 March 1839, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:515. See also Dickens to Mark Lemon, 26 April 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:599.

¹⁴⁴ Dickens to George Beadnell, 19 December 1839, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:620. See also Dickens to Basil Hall, 26 May 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:285; Dickens to Mrs. George Hogarth, 24 October 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:408; Dickens to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 29 December 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:409. Regarding the ‘bright and happy existence’ of ‘those who die young’, see Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 199. See also 393; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 57, 287; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 717; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 279; Charles Dickens, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, ed. Mark Wormald (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 387.

Nickleby, all live their lives ‘in the moonlight . . . upon the margin of the unknown sea’.¹⁴⁵ For Dickens, the ‘benefactor Death’ releases the oppressed from the trials of this life and, for the young, death is an escape from the moral dangers of the world.¹⁴⁶

We have seen that our novelists shared more than their times. They shared a serious commitment to purposeful writing. They also shared the key values of moral sympathy and religious tolerance. We have seen, too, that there are differences between them. A key difference is George Eliot’s intellectual and moral seriousness. Another is Dickens’s somewhat sentimental take on womanhood and early death.

Our understanding of our novelists’ conceptions of providence and duty, and of their moralities, will be gleaned from their novels supplemented by the insights gained, in some senses more directly, from their extant letters. This emphasis on fiction has its own risks. We need to bear in mind that, in writing their novels, our novelists are writing fiction, and not philosophy or theology. We have seen that they have a social and moral purpose when they write. Even so, they seek to effect this purpose by entertaining rather than lecturing; by awakening the imagination rather than the intellect; by stirring religious sympathies rather than through theological debate. In their novels, our novelists seek to enrich their reader’s understanding—to clarify moral obligations, to develop sympathy for those treading very different paths in life, and to foster compassion for those who find themselves in moral danger. They do this in various ways. George Eliot takes the reader inside the minds of her very different, often conflicting, characters.¹⁴⁷ In this way she seeks to ‘touch the hearts’ of her readers and evoke in them that feeling for others—others whose assumptions, beliefs and manners are unfamiliar to the reader—that is the ground of sympathy.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 637. See also Little Dick in Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 139; Paul Dombey in Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 253; Nell in Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 409, 418; Smike in Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 716.

¹⁴⁶ Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 124. See also 115. Regarding death as release from trials, see Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 540; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 89; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 733–734; Dickens to Henry Burdett, 31 January 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:482; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 2 February 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:488; Dickens to John Leech, 9 March 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:506. For death as escape from moral danger, see Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 48, 121; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 463; Charles Dickens, “The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain,” in *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 224–225.

¹⁴⁷ George Eliot to John Blackwood, 4 April 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:397. *Felix Holt* demonstrates beautifully George Eliot’s amazing ability to write sympathetically from different points of view. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 11 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:348.

¹⁴⁸ George Eliot’s Journal, 2 January 1858, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:416; George Eliot to Charles Bray, 5 July 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:111. See also George Eliot to William Blackwood, 18 February 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:299.

Elizabeth Gaskell challenges the reader's assumptions—by bringing the reader into sympathetic contact with good people who do bad things. Charles Dickens's approach is deliberately emotional—seeking to stir the reader to compassion by touching their hearts rather than their minds.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Dickens to The Hon. Robert Lytton, 17 April 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:354.

Chapter 3: Three theologians

The Victorian educated classes found their religious beliefs challenged on two fronts. Firstly, empiricist positivism, by staking out the boundaries of legitimate knowledge, declared much of what gave Victorian lives their meaning to be beyond the pale; unknowable and, consequently, futile. At the same time, empiricist positivism discredited many traditionally held religious beliefs on the basis that they were, indeed, within the bounds of legitimate knowledge and directly contradicted by its inviolable laws. Divine intervention was an unreasonable impossibility. The prayerfully pious were given to understand that they, as much as the profanely wicked, were all alone in a material world. Secondly, biblical criticism discredited the literal historicity of the scriptures, so that, as an authoritative source of both the historical Jesus and the doctrines of Christianity, they were no longer credible. As Asa Briggs has observed, Victorians who experienced religion simply, as a ritual practice, rather than seriously, as theological belief, were largely unmoved by these challenges.¹ But serious believers had either to give up their reasoning, or give up their faith, or find another reasonable basis for their faith—which must inevitably take a somewhat modified form. Victorians responded to the challenges to faith arising from biblical criticism and empiricist positivism in diverse ways. Some, taking a High Church view, retreated from a Protestantism that nurtured reliance on the Bible and critical independence of thought, to a Catholicism which relied on an extra-scriptural ecclesiastic tradition which may yet prove resilient. Some armed themselves with dogmatism and clung to their Biblicism with an obstinacy which, they trusted, would prove to be their salvation. Some, taking a Broad Church view or within a Unitarian framework, abandoned literalism and dogmatism and fell back on the principles of faith which, while they were discernable in the scriptures, were not dependent on them. Others valued reason too highly to retreat, and were determined to follow wherever it may lead.²

¹ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement: 1783–1867*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 244–245.

² See Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 97, 124–160; Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, 7–20; Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3:243–282, 4:3–7, 114–169. ‘Every foot of ground that Scripture lost was gained by one or other of the three substitutes: Church-authority, the Spirit, or Reason.’ Mark Pattison, ‘Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688–1750,’ in *Essays and Reviews: the 1860 Text and its Reading*, eds. Victor Shea and William Whitla (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 429.

Our three theologians—Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman and Charles Haddon Spurgeon—all died within four years of each other, around 1890. But they were not contemporaries. Newman was Arnold’s senior by some twenty years. He and Arnold had an odd, long-distance, ‘master-disciple relationship’—a mix of ‘affection, respect, flattering mutual interest, and a kind of awed and wary incomprehension’.³ Newman had reached his thirty third year before Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born. Spurgeon was of Dissenting stock and moved in very different circles to Newman and Arnold. Each of our theologians was convinced of their mission, but otherwise they differed much. Matthew Arnold takes a Broad Church approach; John Henry Newman seeks security in the traditions of Catholic Christianity; and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, like some Evangelicals within the Established Church and many Dissenters outside of it, holds on to the faith of his fathers, with a dogmatic Biblicism that values salvation over rationality.

Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold was born on 24 December 1822, the eldest son of Reverend Thomas Arnold and Mary Penrose. Thomas Arnold, a schoolmaster, was appointed headmaster of Rugby School in 1828. He was made regius professor of modern history at Oxford in 1841 but died of a heart attack soon afterwards, at only forty-six years of age.⁴

Matthew Arnold began at Rugby School just before his fifteenth birthday, but he was no star performer. He grew up with a sensibility attuned to beauty—especially beauty in literature and nature. For Arnold, the ‘aim of all literature ... is ... a criticism of life’, but, in poetry, that criticism ‘has to be made conformably to the laws of *poetic truth* and *poetic beauty*’.⁵ Arnold’s poetic sense awakened early. He won prizes for his poems at Rugby and later at Oxford, and published three volumes

³ David J. Delaura, “Matthew Arnold and John Henry Newman: The ‘Oxford Sentiment’ and the Religion of the Future,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 6 (1965): 574. See also Arnold to John Henry Newman, 20 January 1868, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 3, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 222; Arnold to John Henry Newman, 29 November 1871, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 4, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 70; Arnold to John Henry Newman, 15 February 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:96; Arnold to John Henry Newman, 28 May 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:123; Arnold to John Henry Newman, 10 January 1976, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:301.

⁴ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Arnold, Matthew (1822–1888)” (by Stefan Collini), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/679>, accessed 22 March 2017.

⁵ Matthew Arnold, “Byron,” in *English Literature and Irish Politics*, *The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 9, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 228.

of poetry from 1849 to 1853, but wrote little new poetry afterwards.⁶ For Arnold, poetry gives ‘refreshment and high pleasure’. Its power is interpretative and its influence is spiritual.⁷ He explains:

the grand power of poetry is ... not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them.⁸

For Arnold, both poetry and prose have their power. He tells of having ‘learnt habits, methods, ruling ideas, which are constantly with me’ from four people—Goethe, Wordsworth, Sainte Beuve and John Henry Newman. He also owned a ‘strong influence’ from George Sand.⁹ Arnold *needs* literature—it is a balm for both the banality and irrationality of life’s routines.¹⁰ To engage in literature is, for Arnold, to engage in ‘the pursuit of the eternal and unseizable shadow, beauty’.¹¹

In 1841, Arnold won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. But, as he later owned, he had a ‘quality, now rare, of being unambitious’ and achieved only a second-class degree in *literae humaniores*.¹² In 1847 Arnold became personal secretary to Lord Lansdowne, a leading whig politician and, in 1850, he met Frances Lucy (Flu) Wightman whom he married the following year.¹³

Arnold aspired to stoicism. He greatly admired Marcus Aurelius—‘perhaps the most beautiful figure in history’—and self-consciously developed his own, ‘inward spring ... to resist outward shocks, if they must come, however rough’.¹⁴ It

⁶ Arnold to William Delafield and Susan Arnold, 10 July 1836, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 1, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 21. *The Strayed Reveller, and other Poems* was published in 1849. *Empedocles on Aetna, and Other Poems* and *Poems. A New Edition* were published in 1852 and 1853 respectively. The poems included in *New Poems*, published in 1867, were ‘almost certainly’ written before 1853. Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25.

⁷ Arnold to Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton Earl of Lytton, 20 January 1880, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 5, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 76; Matthew Arnold, “Maurice De Guérin,” in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold, vol. 3, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 12; Arnold to Aubrey de Vere, 23 October 1879, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:62.

⁸ Arnold, “Maurice De Guérin”, 12–13.

⁹ Arnold to John Henry Newman, 28 May 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:123. Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 16 October 1869, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:370.

¹⁰ Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 17 December 1862, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 2, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 171. See also Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold Forster, 17 February 1856, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:330.

¹¹ Speech at Royal Academy Dinner, 30 April 1881, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:145.

¹² Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, 14 April 1848, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:103.

¹³ *ODNB*, s.v. “Arnold, Matthew”.

¹⁴ Matthew Arnold, “Marcus Aurelius,” in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, 140; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 24 December 1863, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:257. For Arnold’s practical stoicism in the everyday, see Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 29 February 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:316. See also Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold, May 1849, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:151; Arnold to Mary Penrose

was with unerring stoicism that he was to endure the loss of three of his four sons.¹⁵ The ‘departure of youth, cares of many kinds’, and ‘an almost painful anxiety about public matters’, spurred Arnold to ‘live ... to the will of God’ which, for him, despite any differences in ‘the interpretation we put on much of the facts and history of Christianity’, is the ‘call, which is true for all [Christians]’.¹⁶

Lord Lansdowne had arranged Arnold’s appointment as an inspector of schools in 1851, thereby giving him the income he needed to marry Flu. Arnold was for ‘thirty five years tied and bound’ to school inspecting.¹⁷ While Kate Campbell has identified various ways in which Arnold’s work as an inspector of schools afforded him opportunities for the political expression of his cultural criticism, Arnold himself never really reconciled himself to the ‘daily grind’—for which, he somewhat petulantly observed, he ‘after all ... was not born’.¹⁸ Arnold, like so many, found himself torn between the practical realities of needing to provide for his family and a desire to ‘produce my best—all that I have in me, whatever that may be’. He observed that, ‘to attain or approach perfection in the region of thought and feeling’ demands that one ‘devote one’s whole life’ to the task.¹⁹ This, Arnold was never able to do. He found his world ‘comfortable for the mass’ but rather ‘more uncomfortable for those of any natural gift or distinction’. Arnold’s disquiet at times approaches melancholy.²⁰

Arnold’s perception that he is wasting both time and talent earning his daily bread; his almost overwhelming admiration of his father’s ‘immense superiority’, coupled with a continuing anxiety that he could never measure up; and his expectation

Arnold, 1 August 1863, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:227–228; Arnold to Thomas Arnold, 1 December 1863, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:250.

¹⁵ See Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold Forster, 4 January 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:211; Arnold to Thomas Arnold, 24 November 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:294; Arnold to Wyndham Slade, 21 February 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:99. See also Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 18 February 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:98; Arnold to Julia Marshall, 6 September 1874, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:215.

¹⁶ Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold Forster, 4 January 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:211. See 1 Peter 4:1–3.

¹⁷ *ODNB*, s.v. “Arnold, Matthew”; Arnold to Richard Garnett, 11 March 1886, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 6, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2001), 130.

¹⁸ Kate Campbell, “Culture and Politics Revisited: The Government Inspector, Disinterestedness and ‘The Function of Criticism’,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18 (2013): 232; Arnold to Algernon Charles Swinburne, 26 July 1882, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:219; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 14 March 1862, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:127. See also Arnold to William Delafield Arnold, 31 March 1856, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:332; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 16 February 1859, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:414.

¹⁹ Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold, 6 September 1858, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:402.

²⁰ Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, 7 January 1852, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:233. See, for example, “Dover Beach”, “Empedocles on Aetna”, “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,” and “The Scholar Gipsy,” in *Matthew Arnold: Selected Poetry*, ed. Keith Silver (London: Carcanet, 1994), 66–103, 105–106, 120–126, 152–160. See also Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 29 April 1856, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:337; Arnold to Thomas Henry Huxley, 17 October 1880, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:117; Arnold to Thomas Henry Huxley, 9 February 1882, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:191.

of his own life being shortened by the same malady that had struck down both his father and grandfather; combined to give Arnold an acute apprehension that he may, at anytime, find himself at his end—frustrated; out of time.²¹ Arnold felt keenly his mission as a religious critic, and was satisfied with *Literature and Dogma*, published in 1873—confident that, in the longer term, the ideas in it would take effect.²² By 1877 Arnold had achieved what he set out to do as a religious critic and turned his focus to ‘literature, more strictly so-called’.²³ Arnold was keen to be done with school inspecting and throw himself into this literature, but by the time he retired, at sixty-three, his critical focus had softened somewhat. Arnold was satisfied that his critical work was effective—bringing into broad circulation phrases, and key critical concepts, ‘such as Philistinism, sweetness [and] light, and all that’. He recognised that its effect would be, at least in the short term, limited, but the cost of achieving any real effect ‘on the great public’ was too great. He was not willing to ‘give [him]self to it entirely, recoil from no strife and no invective, pass [his] life in abusing and being abused, abandon a number of things [he] sincerely like[d]’ where he was, after all, ‘very likely [to] do no real good.’ He was content ‘simply to try to be of use by keeping people’s eyes fixed on main issues’.²⁴ Matthew Arnold was struck down by heart disease, as he foresaw. He died in April 1888, in his sixty-sixth year.²⁵

²¹ The ‘malady’ was heart disease. Arnold to Florence Earle Coates, 29 January 1887, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:256. See Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 30 July 1861, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:86; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 20 February 1869, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:317. See also Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 18 June 1855, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:319; Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold, 21 January 1859, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:411; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 15 June 1861, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:74; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 15 August 1861, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:90; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 20 December 1864, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:358; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 25 December 1867, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:207; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 13 June 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:259; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 24 December 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:305. Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 25 December 1869, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:397; Arnold to Richard Holt Hutton, 26 March 1870, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:406; Arnold to George Smith, 3 July 1873, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:169.

²² Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 20 July 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:334–335. See also Arnold to George Smith, 9 March 1873, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:149.

²³ Matthew Arnold, “Preface to Last Essays,” in *Essays Religious and Mixed*, The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold, vol. 8, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 148. See also Arnold to Frederic William Farrar, 14 November 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:346; Arnold to Louisa Lady de Rothschild, 3 December 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:352; Arnold to Frederic William Farrar, 21 October 1879, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:61.

²⁴ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 21 February 1881, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:135; Arnold to Susanna Elizabeth Lydia Arnold Cropper, 27 December 1879, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:72–73. See also Arnold to John Morley, 24 October 1882, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:233; Arnold to Charles Eliot Norton, 31 August 1887, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:304. It was Arnold’s debts that kept him in harness. See Arnold to James Russell Lowell, 11 August 1882, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:224. See also Arnold to Anthony John Mundella, 26 November 1886, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:226; Arnold to Lucy Charlotte Arnold Whitridge, 27 November 1886, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:228.

²⁵ *ODNB*, s.v. “Arnold, Matthew”.

We will approach Arnold's thinking primarily through his essays, including *Essays in Criticism: First Series* (1865), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), "St Paul and Protestantism" (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1875), *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877), and *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (1889), supplemented by his published correspondence.

John Henry Newman

John Henry Newman was born on 21 February 1801 in the City of London, the eldest of six children of John Newman and Jemima Fourdrinier. Newman was sent off to a private boarding school just a month after his seventh birthday. As he grew, so did his 'studious turn'. At fifteen, Newman suffered two critical blows—one a severe illness and the other his father's financial downfall. During these crises, Newman, influenced by the evangelical and dogmatic Reverend Walter Mayers, found the sure support he needed in Christianity. It was at this time he read Joseph Milner's *Church History*, sowing the seeds of his enduring interest in the Church Fathers.²⁶

Newman entered Trinity College, Oxford in 1817, aged sixteen. He exhausted himself with overwork and his final examinations in 1820 were a disaster. But he persisted and, in April 1822, he was elected to a fellowship at Oriel where he fell under the sway of Oriel Noetics—including Richard Whately and John Keble.²⁷ Despite their reputation for unrelenting reasoning and criticism of authority, Newman saw in Keble a habit of forming judgments 'not by processes of reason, by inquiry or by argument, but, to use the word in a broad sense, by *authority*'. Further, he learned that the conscience; the Bible; the Church; Antiquity; the 'words of the wise'; 'historical memories'; proverbs; 'sentiments'; 'presages'; and 'prepossessions' are all authorities to be heeded.²⁸

Newman took Holy Orders and, in 1825, was appointed curate at St Clement's, a working-class parish in Oxford. While at St Clement's Newman moved from the doctrine of imputed righteousness (the hallmark of Evangelicalism) to that of

²⁶ Ian Turnbull Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2–5.

²⁷ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 6–10; John Henry Newman, "Autobiographical Memoir," in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman During His Life in the English Church*, vol. 1, ed. Anne Mozley (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903), 100–101. Regarding the Oriel Noetics, see *The Cambridge history of English and American literature in eighteen volumes*, s.v. "The Growth of Liberal Theology. §5. The noetics" (by F. E. Hutchinson) <http://www.bartleby.com/222/1305.html>, accessed 14 June 2017.

²⁸ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Ian Ker (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 256.

baptismal regeneration. Newman was appointed as a tutor at Oriel in 1826 and, under its influence, quietly discarded evangelicalism.²⁹ But his dogmatism held. For Newman, dogma would always be ‘*the* fundamental principle of [his] religion’.³⁰

Newman was drawn to liberalism at Oriel, but again personal crises sent him searching for the firm ground of certain authority. This he found in the Church Fathers, adopting the ‘great theological principle ... the quasi-Catholic doctrine of Tradition, as a main element in ascertaining and teaching the truths of Christianity’.³¹ In March 1828 Newman was appointed as Vicar of St Mary’s, where his parishioners were of the educated elite rather than the working classes. Later that year he embarked on a systematic reading of the Church Fathers.³² In 1833 Newman travelled to Rome, where he found himself both fascinated and appalled—fascinated by its Church history but appalled by the ‘superstitions’ of the faithful, by ‘sale of indulgences’ that had built the beautiful churches that so impressed him, and by the ‘two chief practical delusions of Romanism—Mass and Purgatory’. For the still Anglican Newman, the ‘idolatrous worship’ of Rome ‘dissuades a man of Catholic feelings from her communion’ in much the same way as the ‘schismatical spirit’ of the Anglican communion bids him depart. A middle course—a *via media*—was needed.³³ As H. C. G. Matthew has noted, Newman’s conception of a *via media* was to stimulate ecumenical thinking among Anglicans more broadly, by envisaging the Established Church as a ‘balancing point’ and potential broker between Roman Catholicism and Dissent.³⁴ Back in Oxford, Newman joined forces with Richard Hurrell Froude and Keble to begin what became the Oxford Movement.³⁵ But,

²⁹ Newman had always felt he did not quite fit as an Evangelical. He had never known ‘those special Evangelical experiences which, like the grip of the hand or other prescribed signs of a secret society, are the sure token of a member’. So while he had nominally adopted the rationale of the ‘Evangelical process of conversion’ he had done so ‘with great diffidence’ adopting a ‘language’ very different from his ‘own feelings’. Newman, “Autobiographical Memoir”, 106, 108–109.

³⁰ Newman, *Apologia*, 61.

³¹ Newman, “Autobiographical Memoir”, 107, 111. The personal crises being his own illness and the death of his sister. Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 30.

³² The Sermons published in six volumes as *Parochial Sermons* (1834–1843) were delivered by Newman as Vicar of St Mary’s 1828–1843. John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), xvii; Newman, “Autobiographical Memoir”, 112.

³³ Newman to J. F. Christie, 7 March 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:325; Newman to his sister Jemima, 20 March 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:331; John Henry Newman, “Private Judgment,” *British Critic*, and *Quarterly Theological Review*, 30 (1841): 132.

³⁴ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1809–1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 262.

³⁵ Newman saw Richard Hurrell Froude (1803–1836) and John Keble (1792–1866), both Church of England clergymen, as ‘the philosophers’ of the Oxford Movement and himself as its ‘rhetorician’. Newman didn’t hesitate to argue his point, in whatever manner his opponents adopted, ‘giving them tit for tat.’ Newman to Rev. R. H. Froude, 17 January 1836, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman During His Life in the English Church*, vol. 2, ed. Anne Mozley (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1903), 139; Newman, *Apologia*, 97.

despite talk of *via media*, for Newman at least, the project of the Oxford Movement was fundamentally reactionary. He told Froude:

The abandonment of State prosecutions for blasphemy, &c. ... and the disordered state of the Christian Knowledge Society ... render it desirable that there should be some really working Court of heresy and false doctrine. ... The whole Church would be kept in order. Further, it would give rise to a school of theology, the science of divinity, councils, &c.; the theological law of the Church must be revived and ecclesiastical law, moreover.³⁶

The Oxford Movement brought charges of popery raining down on Newman, Froude and Keble, and their fellow travellers. Newman refuted such charges as an insult not only to his faith but also to his intelligence.³⁷ But his position gradually became less tenable and, with time, less credible. In *Tract 90—Remarks on Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles* Newman argues for awkward technical constructions of the Thirty Nine Articles—constructions that bend the words ‘drawn up by Protestants, and intended for the establishment of Protestantism’ to accommodate Catholicism. Rather more cleverly than convincingly, Newman argues that the Anglican has a ‘duty ... to take our reformed confessions in the most Catholic sense they will admit’—even if that means stretching the words beyond the clear intention of the framers of the Articles.³⁸ For Newman, as a convinced Catholic and a conscientious Anglican, the *via media* proved untenable in the longer term. Liberals of all shades became the enemy. Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Arnold, political economists, geologists—‘all these and many more spirits seem uniting and forming into something shocking’. Newman was dismayed at the ‘do-nothing perplexity’ of the Anglican Church, and became convinced that no church but the Roman Church could withstand the ‘league of evil’.³⁹

As vicar of St Mary’s, Newman found himself feeling vulnerable, even hypocritical. He was convinced there were ‘but two alternatives, the way to Rome, and the way to Atheism: Anglicanism [being] the halfway house on the one side, and

³⁶ Newman to Rev. R. H. Froude, 18 January 1835, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:77.

³⁷ Newman to Mrs. John Mozley, 25 April 1837, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:206.

³⁸ John Henry Newman, *On certain Passages of the Thirty-nine Articles*, in *Tract 90: On Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles with Historical Preface* by Rev. E. B. Pusey (Oxford: John Henry & James Parker, 1865), 83.

³⁹ Newman, *Apologia*, 47; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 25 February 1840, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:268.

Liberalism [being] the halfway house on the other'.⁴⁰ He felt himself a 'schismatic', unworthy of the trust placed in him, yet unable to conscientiously toe the line. In September 1843 he resigned, convinced that 'the Church of Rome was the only true church' and in October 1845, as the culmination of a transition over many years, Newman was received into the Catholic Church.⁴¹ As a member of the Catholic Church, Newman engaged in controversies with Anglo-Catholics—'urging, often to great satirical effect, that common sense shows that Anglo-Catholicism is inconsistent and unreal'.⁴² He embraced the 'practical delusions of Romanism' that had previously irked him, and delighted in the dogmatic authority of the Catholic Church.⁴³

Newman was ordained as a priest on 30 May 1847, and confirmed as superior of the Birmingham Oratory on 1 February 1848. Newman was a member of the committee formed to establish the Catholic University of Ireland, and he was appointed as Rector of the University when it opened in November 1854. But differences of opinion and a dearth of students, saw him resign in 1858. As editor of the *Rambler* (March–July 1859) Newman engaged in the first of many running battles with the ultramontanes. By the end of the 1850s, Newman's conversion honeymoon was well over. The new decade found him exhausted and depressed.⁴⁴

In January 1864 *Macmillan's Magazine* published a review by the Reverend Charles Kingsley in which Kingsley declared—'Truth for its own sake has never been a virtue of the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us that it need not, and on the whole ought not, to be'. Kingsley's jibe proved to be the first salvo in what appears, from this distance at least, to have been a less-than-gentlemanly war of words

⁴⁰ Newman, *Apologia*, 186; Newman to Rev. S. Rickards, 7 March, 1843, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:365–366. See also Newman to Rev. S. Rickards, 1 December 1841, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:332–333.

⁴¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 148; Newman to Rev. J. B. Mozley, 24 November 1843, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:384–385; Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 279–280, 316. Newman has a fundamental abhorrence of schism. See Newman, "Private Judgment", 121.

⁴² *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Newman, John Henry (1801–1890)" (by Ian Ker), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20023>, accessed 22 March 2017.

⁴³ Newman, *Apologia*, 224. Regarding previous attitude to those delusions, see Newman to his sister Jemima, 20 March, 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:330–331. Regarding authority of Apostolic Succession, see John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6th ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 5, 23.

⁴⁴ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 316, 331, 337, 376–378, 400, 409, 412, 462–489; 651–654. *ODNB*, s.v. "Newman, John Henry". The *Rambler* was a Catholic periodical opposing the extreme ultramontanistism of W. G. Ward and Manning, and which eventually led to increasing friction with the leading members of the newly established English hierarchy. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The Rambler" (by Herbert Thurston) <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12637b.htm>, accessed 22 March 2017.

between the Catholic Newman and the Anglican Kingsley.⁴⁵ That war of words effectively ended with the publication in 1864 of *Apologia pro vita sua*—Newman’s deeply personal account of his conversion, in which he underlines the continuity of his adherence to the values in which both his persisting in Anglicanism and his conversion to Catholicism were grounded. *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, which explores the possibility of certainty for rational religious belief, followed in 1870. In 1879, Newman was made a cardinal by the new, more liberal, Pope Leo XIII and, despite his long running battles with ultramontanes, affirmed his ‘lifelong opposition to that liberalism which rejects dogma and the objectivity of religious truth’.⁴⁶

Newman’s health began its decline in 1886. On 11 August 1890, he died of pneumonia at the Birmingham Oratory, in his eighty-ninth year.⁴⁷

We approach Newman through his published essays and sermons, including *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1832–1869), *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1846), *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864), *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) and *The Idea of a University* (1852), with reference to some of his letters. Our sources span both Newman’s Anglican phase (from his birth to his conversion in October 1845) and his Catholic phase (from his conversion until his death). But there is surprisingly little difference between Newman’s thinking in these phases and the sources, even when mixed as to time and phase, give us a coherent picture of Newman’s thinking. It seems that Newman’s conversion was very much driven by the character of his thinking and had little effect upon it, other than satisfying his long expressed need for certain authority.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on 19 June 1834 at Kelvedon, Essex. He was the eldest child of John Spurgeon and Eliza Jarvis. As a tot of just eighteen months of age, Charles joined the household of his grandparents James and Sarah Spurgeon. He lived with his grandparents until his seventh year, and afterwards

⁴⁵ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 533–537; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Kingsley, Charles (1819–1875)” (by Norman Vance), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15617>, accessed 22 March 2017.

⁴⁶ *ODNB*, s.v. “Newman, John Henry”.

⁴⁷ Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 400.

frequently returned to holiday with them. James Spurgeon was the minister of the Stambourne Independent Chapel. The Spurgeons were of Puritan stock—and their faith was Calvinistic. Even as a young boy, Charles showed a keen interest in religious matters. He later recalled his ‘horror’ when as ‘a very small boy’ his grandfather graphically described a doomed soul ‘falling perpetually’ into ‘the bottomless pit’. At seven, Spurgeon rejoined his family and attended school. It was in his grandfather’s library—all very gloomy, with the windows boarded up to avoid the window tax—that Spurgeon ‘first struck up acquaintance with the martyrs, ... with Bunyan and ... the great masters of Scriptural theology’. Spurgeon became an avid reader—reading at speed and with a remarkably retentive memory. Spurgeon spent 1848 at Anglican College Agricultural School, Maidstone and, in the following year, became an articulated pupil at John Swindell’s school in Newmarket, studying French and Greek.⁴⁸

Spurgeon was convinced of his own sinfulness when still a young lad—feeling ‘with much sorrow the evil of sin’; dreaming at night of ‘the bottomless pit’; offering up prayers in his chamber ‘without a hope and without a refuge’.⁴⁹ In January 1850, still fifteen years of age, Spurgeon found himself in a Primitive Methodist Chapel. The text was ‘Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth’. It appears the preaching was next to incompetent, the minister being ‘snowed up’ and a ‘shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort’ taking his place. But the simple message—‘Look to Christ’—struck home. Spurgeon appropriated these words and responded to them. He later recalled—‘there and then the cloud was gone, the darkness ... rolled away, and ... I saw the sun’.⁵⁰ Spurgeon rejected utterly the idea

⁴⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon (1834–1892)” (by Rosemary Chadwick), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26187>, accessed 22 March 2017. C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, vol. 1, eds. Susannah Spurgeon and Joseph Harrald (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), 6, 7, 11. See also Spurgeon to The Rev. John Spurgeon, 30 January 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, ed. Iain H. Murray (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 19. As a ten year old, while holidaying with his grandfather, the young Charles so impressed the missionary Richard Knill that he predicted Spurgeon he would one day be a great preacher. Spurgeon never forgot. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:28–31. His passion for books, especially theological books, never abated. Spurgeon was to possess some 12,000 volumes at the time of his death. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:333, 338, 345. Calvinism has 5 key tenets—total depravity (the doctrine that as a result of original sin human beings exist in a state of apostasy from God, such that apart from the grace of the Holy Spirit, they are utterly unable to will or do anything either to turn to God or to transform their own sinfulness); unconditional election (the doctrine that salvation is the consequence of God’s eternal election of particular individuals); limited atonement (the doctrine that Christ did not die for all people but only for those whom God had eternally elected to salvation); irresistible grace (the doctrine that where God acts to convert a person to faith, it is not in the power of that individual to decide whether or not to be converted; and the perseverance of the saints (the doctrine that the saints, by virtue of the irrevocable character of God’s eternal decree of election, cannot fall away from the faith). See *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, s.vv. “Irresistible Grace”, “Limited Atonement”, “Perseverance”, “Reformed Theology”, “Total Depravity”, “Unconditional Election”.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:58.

⁵⁰ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:59, 61, 87–89.

that he could have done ‘a single thing towards [his] own salvation’. The exhilarating certainty of being one of God’s elect was to shape Spurgeon’s life. There was to be some self-doubting, but Spurgeon found an almost thrilling reassurance in his desperate dependency and his ‘utter inability to do anything in and of myself’. Spurgeon was convinced of his need for baptism as a mark of his conversion and was duly baptised on 3 May 1850 in the River Lark at Isleham Ferry, by the minister of Pound Lane Baptist Church.⁵¹

Spurgeon could not get enough of his Bible, and yet he dreaded not being spiritual enough; not being earnest enough. All at age fifteen. Spurgeon began teaching Sunday school classes and delivering tracts. There were soon seventy people whom he regularly visited on Saturdays, never leaving a tract with anyone without sitting down to ‘endeavour to draw their attention to spiritual realities’.⁵² In August 1850, Spurgeon moved to Cambridge and, in return for tuition, took on the role of a teaching assistant at Edwin Leeding’s school. He joined St Andrew’s Street Baptist Church and, at sixteen, began preaching regularly in villages around Cambridge—with great effect. In December 1853 he was invited to preach at New Park Street, Southwark and, after a trial period and aged just nineteen, Spurgeon was appointed as pastor in April 1854. Spurgeon’s preaching won him ever increasing congregations. He courted Susannah Thompson, only daughter of a prosperous ribbon manufacturer, telling her—‘I loved you once, but feared you might not be an heir of Heaven;—God in His mercy showed me that you were indeed [one of the] *elect*’. He married Susannah on 8 January 1856. Their twin sons, Charles and Thomas were born in September that year.⁵³

Spurgeon’s preaching style reflected his message. As *The Times* observed—‘Nobody shouts out an axiom in mathematics; nobody balances probabilities in thunder’. But ‘the doctrine of sudden conversion or of irresistible grace can be shouted’. Spurgeon sympathised with, and appealed to, the lower-middle classes and

⁵¹ Spurgeon to The Rev. John Spurgeon, 6 April 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 23–24; Spurgeon to Mrs. Eliza Spurgeon, 19 February 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 22; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:131.

⁵² Spurgeon to The Rev. John Spurgeon, 30 January 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 20; Spurgeon to Mrs. Eliza Spurgeon, 11 June 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 27.

⁵³ *ODNB*, s.v. “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon”; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:185, 359. C. H. Spurgeon to Mr. James S. Watt, 23 March 1855, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 57; Spurgeon to Miss Susannah Thompson, 11 January 1855, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 55. See also “Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit,” in *British Quarterly Review* 26 (July 1857):210. Regarding Spurgeon’s inability to enter university, see Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:185, 264.

the respectable ‘artisan classes’—those he called the “common man”.⁵⁴ He also appealed to the not-so-respectable working classes—and was more than happy to do so. But his admirers also included men of great influence—John Ruskin, William Ewart Gladstone and Lord Shaftesbury among them. Within a few years, ‘it was no uncommon experience’ for Spurgeon to ‘preach twelve or thirteen times a week, and to travel hundreds of miles by road or rail’ in doing so.⁵⁵ Spurgeon’s sermons, delivered extempore, were recorded in shorthand, revised by Spurgeon, and published in weekly penny editions with circulations of between twenty and thirty thousand. He also published many devotional books, tracts and pamphlets, a yearly Almanack and, from 1865, his own monthly, *The Sword and the Trowel*.⁵⁶

Spurgeon was convinced of the timelessness of his theology and scoffed at his critics.⁵⁷ He was unafraid of controversy. His black and white world view left him ‘incapable of moderation’ on some issues—notably, baptismal regeneration, ritualism, Rome and biblical criticism.⁵⁸ Spurgeon was appalled by what he saw as ‘an epidemic’ of ‘amazing’ scepticism among young men, and, in March 1887, he initiated what was to become known as the Down-Grade Controversy by publishing two articles in *The Sword and the Trowel*. The first, “The Down Grade”, traced evangelicalism from the Puritan age to Spurgeon’s time and noted that every revival of evangelical faith had been followed by a drift which left behind the ‘old Puritan godliness of life, and the old Calvinistic form of doctrine’ and became ‘less earnest and less simple in ... preaching, more speculative and less spiritual in ... discourses,

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:463; Peter J. Morden, “The Bible for The Masses: The Popular Preaching of C. H. Spurgeon,” in *Text Message: The Centrality of Scripture in Preaching*, eds. Ian Stackhouse and Oliver D. Crisp (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2014), 105–106, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1cgdx8s.13>, accessed 3 April 2017.

⁵⁵ “Society, like the private individual, has its, grievances ...” *The Times* [London, England] 13 April 1857:6; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:454; Spurgeon to Mr. J. S. Watts, 23 February 1856, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 62. Following further stints at Exeter Hall and the Surrey Gardens Music Hall as his congregation continued to grow, and in March 1861, Spurgeon and his congregation moved to the Metropolitan Tabernacle at London’s Elephant and Castle, with accommodation for between 5000 and 6000. Spurgeon served as pastor there until his death in 1892. Spurgeon toured widely—to the north of England, to Scotland and to Paris. He often preached out of doors—once drawing a crowd of 12,000 in a field in Hackney. His biggest audience, numbering 23,654, was at the Crystal Palace on 7 October 1857, when he preached there as part of the observance of the ‘solemn fast, humiliation, and prayer before Almighty God’ for the ‘pardon of our sins, and ... restoration of tranquillity in India’ appointed by proclamation. *ODNB*, s.v. “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon”; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:533.

⁵⁶ Spurgeon’s sermons were published in Britain, telegraphed to America (their popularity in America falling sharply when Spurgeon condemned slavery) and translated into nearly forty languages—selling in all over 100 million copies. His sermon outlines were eagerly taken up by many preachers for their own use. *ODNB*, s.v. “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon”; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:399. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:143, 145.

⁵⁷ Spurgeon to The Rev. Alexander Whyte, 13 September 1884 in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 91.

⁵⁸ Patricia Stallings Kruppa, “The Life & Times of Charles H. Spurgeon,” *Christian History* 29:11, <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/issue/charles-spurgeon-englands-prince-of-preachers>, accessed 22 March 2017; *ODNB*, s.v. “Spurgeon, Charles Haddon”.

and dwelt more on the moral teachings of the New Testament, than on the great central truths of revelation'. This drifting was likened to a downhill slope—to a 'down-grade'.⁵⁹ In the August 1887 number of the *Sword and Trowel*, Spurgeon reinforced the message:

A new religion has been initiated, which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion ... palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into fiction, and the resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren, and maintain a confederacy with them!⁶⁰

From August 1887 to February 1892, scarcely any number of the *Sword and the Trowel* appeared without some reference to the Down-Grade Controversy. By November 1887 Spurgeon had left the Baptist Union, frustrated by its failure to respond to the issues raised. He had lost the support of some very dear friends, and felt betrayed.⁶¹

Spurgeon was only thirty-five when his health began to suffer from his gruelling schedule. In his later years, he spent up to one third of his time away from the pulpit. Spurgeon avoided the worst of the London winter by annual visits to the French Riviera—most often to Menton. He died on 31 January 1892 at the Hotel Beau Rivage, Menton, of uraemic poisoning (Bright's disease) aggravated by gout. He was fifty-seven.⁶²

We will approach Spurgeon's thinking primarily through a selection of his sermons, supplemented by his autobiography and extant letters. This emphasis on his sermons has risks. We must be careful to bear in mind that, when preaching, Spurgeon is motivated, primarily if not exclusively, by his desire to persuade his audience of their need for salvation. He is preaching, not lecturing. His focus is on compelling the heart, not convincing the mind. So we will not find his theology, let alone his morality, spelt out comprehensively in his sermons. Nevertheless, given that

⁵⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:471; [Robert Shindler], "The Down Grade," *Sword and Trowel* (March 1887), http://archive.spurgeon.org/s_and_t/dg01.php, accessed 29 June 2017;

⁶⁰ Spurgeon, "Another Word Concerning the Down-Grade," *Sword and Trowel* (August 1887), http://archive.spurgeon.org/s_and_t/dg03.php, accessed 22 March 2017.

⁶¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:469–470; 2:473; Spurgeon to Dr. Culross, 26 November 1887, in Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:479.

⁶² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:193–194; *ODNB*, s.v. "Spurgeon, Charles Haddon".

the need for salvation dominates, even subsumes, Spurgeon's world view, the beliefs and values that characterise his thinking can be found there.

Three missions

Each of our theologians is on a mission of sorts. Each is concerned that the practice of the Christian faith has become compromised. But each has a very different conception of how that has happened and what the solution might be.

Arnold's mission, as a religious critic, is to work for the preservation of religion.⁶³ He seeks to do this by first awakening those who sincerely trust to the God of popular religion and to 'the natural truth of Christianity'—a truth which can withstand 'the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural'; and then by helping them with the resulting transition 'which cannot well be accomplished without confusion and distress'.⁶⁴ For Arnold, on the firm basis of its natural, essentially moral, truth—that God is 'the Eternal which makes for righteousness', a righteousness achieved through the 'method' and 'sweet reasonableness' of Jesus—'Christianity is immortal; it has eternal truth, inexhaustible value, [and] a boundless future'.⁶⁵

Arnold's broader purpose is to offer a critique of Victorian society as he finds it.⁶⁶ Arnold apprehends a 'break-up of traditional and conventional notions respecting our life, its conduct, and its sanctions'.⁶⁷ He sees England as comprising 'three distinct and unfused bodies'—Barbarians, Philistines and Populace—and reforming itself in a decidedly undirected manner with no 'great, seriously [or] truly conceived end' in view other than, in the words of the inimitable Von Thunder-Ten-

⁶³ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 2 October 1874, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:221. See also Arnold to Percy William Bunting, 4 April 1885, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:30; Arnold to Alexander Macmillan, 6 March 1873, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:147–148.

⁶⁴ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, in *Dissent and Dogma*, The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold, vol. 6, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 143; Arnold, "Preface to Last Essays", 153; Matthew Arnold, *God and the Bible*, The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold, vol. 7, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1970), 398. See also Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 15 November 1874, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4: 233.

⁶⁵ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 145, 201; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 146. 'Sweet reasonableness' is Arnold's translation of the Greek word 'epieikeia'. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 219.

⁶⁶ Stefan Collini has identified three broad areas of Arnold's critical work: literary criticism (including Arnold's *Essays in Criticism: First Series* (1865) and *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (1888)); social criticism (including *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and the 'exuberantly farcical' satire *Friendship's Garland* (1871)); and religious criticism (including *St Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma: an Essay towards the Better Apprehension of the Bible* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1875) and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877)). *ODNB*, s.v. "Arnold, Matthew". In this thesis I focus on his social and religious criticism.

⁶⁷ Matthew Arnold, "Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist," in *Essays Religious and Mixed*, 48.

Tronckh, ‘the beatification of a whole people through clap-trap’.⁶⁸ Arnold believes ‘there is a real ... danger of England losing immeasurably ... for want of ... ideas’. This belief—depressing, overwhelming, and dreadful at times—energises Arnold’s social criticism.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Arnold is confident that ‘the English spirit’ will ‘undergo a great transformation’, and he is determined to do what he can to bring that transformation on.⁷⁰ For Arnold, that transformation can be effected only by ‘culture’—that is, by deep thinking; deep disinterested thinking; thinking with no axe to grind; thinking that leads where it will.⁷¹ This culture loosens and floats ‘our stock habits of thinking and acting’ and prevents ‘petrification’.⁷² Arnold promotes this conception of culture to those in greatest need of it—the Philistines. As Mark Francis has observed, Arnold’s conception of culture differs markedly from the anthropological conception of culture espoused by his contemporary Edward B. Tylor, who answered Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*, published in 1869, with his own *Primitive Culture* in 1871. Tylor views culture through an empiricist lens, and sees it developing more or less inevitably—‘stage by stage, in a probable order of evolution’.⁷³ Arnold is unimpressed.⁷⁴

While, for Arnold, religion cannot answer all of the individual’s spiritual needs, religion is essential for full spiritual expression and is the indispensable support of a truly moral life.⁷⁵ Arnold himself holds Christianity dearly. He calls himself ‘a Liberal Anglican’ and is diligent in his Christian practice—reading a chapter of the Bible daily, leading his family in prayers; taking his children to church on Sundays and then, back at home, attending to their reading of the psalms and lessons. However, Arnold rejects not only the Biblicism of Protestant Dissent and the miraculous generally, but also some key doctrines of the Established Church—

⁶⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Friendship’s Garland*, 2nd ed. (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1897), 15–16, 79–80, 82, 85.

⁶⁹ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 11 November 1865, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:472.

⁷⁰ Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold Foster, 14 November 1863, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:243–244. See also Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 25 June 1870, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:426.

⁷¹ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, *The Complete Prose Work of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 5, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1965), 88–89, 204, 220. See also Matthew Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” in *Essays in Criticism: First Series* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1935), 16, 27.

⁷² Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 220.

⁷³ Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen, 2007), 79; Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 161.

⁷⁴ Arnold is ‘not very sanguine’ as to effecting cultural change in the shorter term. He is content to look to the longer term. Arnold to Alexander Macmillan, 6 May 1864, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:303–304. Arnold’s patience takes heart when he hears the word ‘Philistines’ used ‘at least 100 times’ during a parliamentary dinner. Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 29 June 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:264.

⁷⁵ To answer all of the individual’s spiritual needs, art too, and science are both needful. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 149.

including the concept of ‘a personal God’.⁷⁶ For Arnold, Christianity is no ‘untrue thing ... we all should agree to profess ... for the sake of encouraging “an amiable habit of mind”’, rather it is ‘a true and wonderful remedy for the great plain faults of human nature’.⁷⁷ Arnold speaks from experience of ‘those who, won by the modern spirit to habits of intellectual seriousness, cannot receive what sets those habits at nought, and will not try to force themselves to do so’ but who have nevertheless, ‘stood near enough to the Christian religion to feel the attraction which a thing so very great ... cannot but exercise’.⁷⁸

For Arnold, the Christian religion is a national treasure, but the ‘popular religion’ of ‘the serious and steady middle class’ is under threat. He bemoans the ‘want of intellectual seriousness’ in the defenders of popular religion, who look to miracles and Biblicism to support their faith.⁷⁹ But Arnold’s criticism of the miraculous targeted not only middle class Dissent. It was part of the broader debate triggered by J. B. Mozley’s 1864 Bampton Lectures. Mozley was a High Churchman who promoted the miraculous as the essential marker of divine revelation. But, as Livingston has observed, Mozley’s lectures proved to be the nadir of apologetic efforts to establish Christianity’s credentials by pointing to the miraculous. In the event, they opened up ongoing debate concerning miracles—what they were, the doubtful nature of the supporting evidence, and their questionable value to Christian faith.⁸⁰ For Arnold, the supports of miracles and Biblicism must both fail in time, because both a belief in miracles, when ‘*miracles do not happen*’, and the literal interpretation of a Bible held to be faultlessly divine, are inherently unsustainable.⁸¹

When, in 1877, Arnold declared to the world that he had set out what he aimed to achieve as a religious critic, he also pointed to the incompleteness of any work that focuses only on religion.

⁷⁶ Arnold to Charles Edward Appleton, 12 September 1873, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:174; Arnold to Lionel Tollemache, 1888, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:334. See also Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 5 March 1864, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:288; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 12 March 1871, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:23; Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 15 December 1877, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:387.

⁷⁷ Arnold to Harriet Martineau, 28 December 1870, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:463.

⁷⁸ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 392.

⁷⁹ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 384–385, 388.

⁸⁰ Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, 114.

⁸¹ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 146, 249. For Arnold, the language of the Bible is to be treated as ‘the language of letters, not science, language approximative and full of figure, not language exact’. ‘The more we conceive Jesus as almost as much over the heads of his disciples and reporters then, as he is over the heads of the mass of so-called Christians now ... all the more do we make room ... for Jesus to be ... immensely great and wonderful.’ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 170, 201; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 260–261. See also Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 385–386; Arnold to James Thomas Knowles, 26 October 1874, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:226.

The thing which I proposed to myself to do has, so far as my powers enabled me to do it, been done. What I wished to say has been said. And in returning to devote to literature, more strictly so-called, what remains to me of life and strength and leisure, I am returning, after all, to a field where work of the most important kind has now to be done, though indirectly, for religion. I am persuaded that the transformation of religion, which is essential for its perpetuance, can be accomplished only by carrying the qualities of flexibility, perceptiveness, and judgment, which are the best fruits of letters, to whole classes of the community which now know next to nothing of them, and by procuring the application of those qualities to matters where they are never applied now.⁸²

For Arnold, religious practice is but one aspect of the spiritual life of the individual and the community. Without literature, that life must always be misshapen and retarded.

Newman's mission was to bring his *via media*—essentially the three tenets of 'dogma, the sacramental system, and anti-Romanism'—to the Church in England.⁸³ For Newman, this *via media* could achieve an accommodation between the need for authority (grounded in the tradition of the Catholic Church), and the need for a thinking faith (rejecting the unthinking 'superstitions' of the Church of Rome).⁸⁴ Newman sought to 'rouse the clergy, to inculcate the Apostolical Succession, and to defend the Liturgy' through the Oxford Movement, and so restore 'that ancient religion [that] had well-nigh faded away'. As we have seen, Newman failed in this mission and, frustrated by the Anglican Church, joined the Church of Rome.⁸⁵

Spurgeon had one continuing and urgent mission—to preach salvation so as to effect 'the conversion of his fellow[s]'. To this end he adopted a preaching style that was 'plain, simple [and] pointed'. His sermons, and their delivery, put beyond doubt his unqualified conviction of the doctrines he preached.⁸⁶

⁸² Arnold, "Preface to Last Essays", 148. See also Arnold to Frederic William Farrar, 14 November 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:346; Arnold to Louisa Lady de Rothschild, 31 December 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:352; Arnold to Frederic William Farrar, 21 October 1879, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:61.

⁸³ Newman, *Apologia*, 49, 77.

⁸⁴ Newman to J. F. Christie, 7 March 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:325; Newman to his sister Jemima, 20 March 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:331; Newman, "Private Judgment", 132.

⁸⁵ Newman to J. W. Bowden, 31 August 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:394; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 25 February 1840, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:268; Newman, *Apologia*, 47, 57. See also Newman to J. W. Bowden, 10 August 1834, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:55; Newman, *Apologia*, 56, 103.

⁸⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:477, 536. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:150, 249.

Beliefs and values

Arnold's thinking, as a religious critic, is marked by some key beliefs and values including his role as a critic; the critical importance of the institution of the Established Church; and the need for culture.

Arnold sees his role as that of a critic. For Arnold, the critic's skill, is 'to see the object as in itself it really is'. And, because the 'mass of [humankind]' is simply not interested in 'seeing things as they are', it lies with but 'a very small circle' to clarify and develop ideas, and to keep their fellows from 'a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarizing'. It is the critic's business to 'know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by ... making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas'.⁸⁷

Arnold holds that the Established Church, made credible by its strong links to the past, is essential for both individual piety and effective community. And for Arnold, the Established Church must be a broad church—one that achieves both 'comprehension and union'.⁸⁸ Further, for Arnold, this broad church cannot be realised so long as individuals insist on treating the poetry of the Bible—those words 'thrown out, so to speak, at a not fully grasped object of the speaker's consciousness'—as statements of fact.⁸⁹ For Arnold, to realise the 'real power' of religion, the Established Church must accommodate the religious needs of 'all reasonable people', including the 'working classes' who are understandably unimpressed by the Established Church's perpetuation of a class privilege which is foreign to 'the authentic tradition of the Church of England'.⁹⁰

Arnold has three key reasons for supporting one Established Church. Firstly, the Established Church is the 'great national society for the promotion of what is commonly called goodness' and promotes that goodness 'through the most effectual means possible ... the Christian religion and ... the Bible'.⁹¹ Secondly, the 'fixed and noble' forms of the Established Church, 'consecrated by use and sentiment', are suited to all manner of Christian belief. The language of the Prayer Book is poetry—so each individual can feel its meaning, even if they no longer take its words literally;

⁸⁷ Arnold, "Function of Criticism at the Present Time", 6, 19, 21, 25–26.

⁸⁸ Matthew Arnold, "The Church of England," in *Essays Religious and Mixed*, 86; Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 21 June 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:330.

⁸⁹ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 171. See also 212–213; Matthew Arnold, "A Psychological Parallel," in *Essays Religious and Mixed*, 129.

⁹⁰ Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 4 February 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:95; Arnold to George de Bunsen, 8 January 1888, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:336; Arnold, "The Church of England", 75.

⁹¹ Arnold, "The Church of England", 65–67.

and, as approximations to a profound truth, can use them. In sharp contrast, Arnold holds the usages of Protestant Dissent—the ‘speech-making and prayer-making ex tempore’; the ‘Hymns, ... bad music and bad poetry’—to be ‘mischievous and deteriorating.’⁹² Thirdly, it is only within the community of the Established Church that Dissent can fully participate in the wider community; can participate in ‘a larger existence’ and take its full share of ‘public responsibility’.⁹³ The fact that Christians differ on matters concerning the ‘thought and speculation’ of religion need not get in the way of their ongoing fellowship. These matters of mind are, for Arnold, essentially private and individual. On the other hand ‘worship and devotion is eminently a collective matter’. Indeed, for Arnold, it is better for many of the clergy to stick solely to ‘worship and devotion’ as they are simply not up to the rigour required for constructive ‘thought and speculation’.⁹⁴ For Arnold, as for Tertullian, ‘the God of all of us is the God that we all belong to whether we will or no’. Further, the God of all of us is the God of ‘the Bible and Christianity’—‘the Eternal that makes for righteousness’.⁹⁵

For Arnold, culture is ‘an endeavour to come at reason and the will of God’—that is, at spiritual perfection—by ‘reading, observing, and thinking’ in ways that are both ‘disinterested and active’. Neither freedom nor prosperity guarantees culture. Indeed, of the wealthy

Culture says—‘Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it’.⁹⁶

Arnold famously identifies three classes in Victorian society—the Barbarians, the Philistines, and the Populace. Briefly, the Barbarians are the aristocratic class with their love of ‘staunch individualism’ and a ‘passion for doing as

⁹² Matthew Arnold, “A Last Word on the Burials Bill,” in *Essays Religious and Mixed*, 104; Arnold, “A Psychological Parallel”, 135–136. Regarding need for form in religion, see Arnold, “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist”, 20.

⁹³ Arnold to William Ewart Gladstone, 26 March 1869, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:328; Arnold to George de Bunsen, 8 January 1888, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:336.

⁹⁴ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 197; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 17 December 1862, in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:172. See also Arnold, “A Psychological Parallel”, 146.

⁹⁵ Arnold, “Preface to Last Essays”, 159; Arnold, “A Psychological Parallel”, 134.

⁹⁶ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 97–98, 104, 123, 129, 132, 204.

one likes'; a 'passion for field-sports'; a sensitive turn for 'good looks, choice manners, and distinguished bearing'; and a careful 'politeness'. For Arnold, theirs is very much an 'exterior culture'—in need of 'a shade more soul'.⁹⁷ The Philistines are the middle-class, 'who not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who prefer to them that sort of machinery that 'makes up [their] dismal and illiberal life'—'business, chapels, tea meetings' and the addresses of ministers whose 'seriousness is ... too mixed with ... mundane strife and hatred to be called a religious feeling' and whose reasoning is mere rigidity, without even 'a trace of delicacy of perception, or of philosophic thinking'.⁹⁸ The Populace is the 'vast residuum'; the working-class which, 'raw and half-developed', has 'long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor' but 'is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as [it] likes ... marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes'. But Arnold qualifies this three-fold division in two important ways. He asserts that all three classes share 'a common basis of human nature' and, consequently, at least potentially, the 'same tendencies and passions'. Further, within each class there are 'a certain number of aliens ... who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit'.⁹⁹

For Arnold, each of the Barbarians, Philistines and Populace is sorely in need of culture, but he focuses on the need of the Philistines because they control both the government and the economy and, consequently, the salvation of English society as a whole is in their hands.¹⁰⁰ Arnold identifies two cultural drivers of human perfection: Hellenism—'thinking clearly, seeing things in their essence and beauty', the governing idea of which is 'spontaneity of consciousness'; and Hebraism—'becoming conscious of sin' and 'awakening to a sense of sin' the governing idea of which is 'strictness of conscience'. For Arnold, each individual, and society as a whole, needs Hellenism and Hebraism—as they both 'arise out of the wants of human nature'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 140–144.

⁹⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 140; Matthew Arnold, "St Paul and Protestantism," in *Dissent and Dogma*, 14. Regarding the narrowness of the lives of the Philistines, see also Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 17 October 1871, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:55; Arnold, *Friendship's Garland*, 18.

⁹⁹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 143. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 145–146. For discussion of the centrality of conceptions of political liberty to Victorian political discourse, and developing liberal conceptions of political liberty as properly circumscribed by the legitimate authority of the state, see J. P. Parry, "Liberalism and Liberty," in *Liberty and Authority in Victorian England*, ed. Peter Mandler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 71–100.

¹⁰⁰ Arminius observes: 'The Barbarians administer, the Philistines govern; between them ... policy is made. One class contributes its want of ideas, the other its want of dignity; an unlucky mixture'. Arnold, *Friendship's Garland*, 94. See also Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold Forster, 17 February 1856, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:330.

¹⁰¹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 165–168.

For Arnold, the Philistines are drenched in Hebraism. Their want of intellectual seriousness is all too evident in the narrowness of their minds which throws aside ‘poetry, philosophy, science, and spiritual effort of all kind other than the gospel’ and boasts of knowing nothing but their Bible. Further, ‘to understand that the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific, is the first step towards a right understanding of the Bible’. For this, ‘some experience of how [individuals] have thought and expressed themselves, and some flexibility of spirit, are necessary; and this is culture.’ So that ‘no [one], who knows nothing else, knows even [their] Bible.’¹⁰² Their disregard for beauty is writ large in the gaudy ‘poetry’ of their hymns and the ugliness of their chapels. Hence their immediate need of a generous dose of Hellenism; a generous dose of culture.¹⁰³

Newman’s thinking is marked by some key beliefs and values including dogmatism, authority, severity and religiosity.

Newman is dogmatic. Not only is Newman unashamedly dogmatic, he doubts the sincerity of anyone who is not. And his is a detailed dogmatism. Newman not only holds his principles dogmatically, he holds his details dogmatically. His faith is in ‘certain definite religious teaching’ resting on ‘sacraments and rites ... on Scripture, on the Anglican Prayer Book, and on St. Ignatius’s Epistles’.¹⁰⁴ For Newman, true religion is not ‘sentiment’; it is not a ‘sensitivity’; it is not ‘imagination’; it is not ‘poetry’; it is not ‘purely personal’; it is not a ‘philosophical view’; and it is ‘not a special morality’. Religion is ‘a union of doctrines, of precepts, of promises’; ‘one doctrine, discipline, and devotion’—dogmatically held.¹⁰⁵ For Newman, what one believes, the *content* of one’s belief, *really does matter*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Arnold to Thomas Henry Huxley, 10 May 1870, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:412; See also Arnold to Charles Kingsley, November 1870, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:449; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 152; Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 184.

¹⁰³ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 182, 255.

¹⁰⁴ Newman, *Apologia*, 61–62. Newman sought the details of doctrine not only in scripture and in the Prayer Book but also in the writings of the Church Fathers—among them ‘Athanasius, Cyril Alexandrinus, Epiphanius, Gregory Nyssen, Origen, Basil, Ambrose, and Irenæus’. Newman to His Mother, 24 October 1831, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:221.

¹⁰⁵ Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 50; John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 382. See also Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 325. As Suzy Anger explains, Newman’s defence of ‘church dogma’, and his opposition to ‘the subjectivism’ of Broad Church thinking that that defence requires, presents unavoidable tensions. Because church dogma irrefutably evolves over time, Newman’s scriptural hermeneutic must accommodate, at the very least, the diachronic development of scriptural interpretation and, consequently, the acceptance of a relativism which contradicts the ‘dogmatic principle’ he aims to defend. Suzy Anger, *Victorian Interpretation* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 29.

¹⁰⁶ Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 21.

Further, Newman's world is black and white. There are no shades of grey. For Newman, 'there [is] no medium ... between Atheism and Catholicity'; a 'perfectly consistent mind ... must embrace either the one or the other'.¹⁰⁷

Newman privileges authority. For Newman, the mind—even a 'perfectly consistent mind'—cannot be trusted. There must be 'some supreme power to control the mind and to compel agreement'.¹⁰⁸ Right up to the time of his conversion, Newman struggled for certainty; asking how he can *know* that he is not deceived, what 'inward test' he can apply. The intellectualism by which he sought to gain his object, precluded the very certainty he was after and yet, in 1844, we find him writing an essay on doctrinal development in an effort to argue his way into a position where he can accept the notion of infallibility.¹⁰⁹ The irony is immense, but Newman's conversion can be read as his achievement of that unlikely goal. Nevertheless, as Eamon Duffy observes, Newman would always be awake to the tension—observing, as late as 1877, that while the Church of Rome, 'is at once, first a devotion, secondly a philosophy, [and] thirdly a polity, ... the devotional sentiment and the political' often 'embarrass the philosophical instinct'.¹¹⁰

Newman is severe, even judgmental. Newman deplores the liberal, broad church view that takes 'the brighter side of the Gospel, its tidings of comfort, its precepts of love' and overlooks the 'darker, deeper views of [humankind's] condition and prospects'. He denounces the tolerance, the 'sense of propriety' that characterises vice as 'unseemly' rather than evil. He decries the liberalism that explains away the authority of conscience and takes 'benevolence [as] the chief virtue' while judging 'intolerance, bigotry [and] excess of zeal' to be sins.¹¹¹ Newman prefers a society

¹⁰⁷ Newman, *Apologia*, 182.

¹⁰⁸ Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 90. See also Newman, *Apologia*, 254.

¹⁰⁹ Newman, *Apologia*, 205–206. Given that, for Newman, it is the content of one's beliefs (rather than their intent or their effects) that really matters—if, as a matter of fact, the authoritative revelation of the Divine is contested or incomplete, or beyond the grasp of the often less-than-intellectual minds in need of its redemptive power, the revelation will be rendered ineffective. Newman observes that the Catholic Church 'makes it imperative on every one, priest and layman, to profess as revealed truth all the canons of the Councils, and innumerable decisions of Popes, propositions so various, so notional, that but few can know them, and fewer can understand them ... even in translation'. This 'difficulty is removed by the dogma of the Church's infallibility, and of the consequent duty of "implicit faith" in her word'. By accepting the infallibility of 'the "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" ... all [individuals] ... can easily master and accept [the authoritative revelation of the Divine] with a real and operative assent.' For Newman, the doctrine of infallibility stands in the place of 'all abstruse propositions' and to believe in the infallibility of the church 'is virtually to believe in them all'. The faithful 'commit ... by anticipation to believe truths which at present [they] do not believe, because they have never come before [them]' and 'limit ... our private judgment in prospect by the conditions, whatever they are, of [the] dogma' of the church. Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 141–142, 146–147. See also Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 79–80.

¹¹⁰ Eamon Duffy, "'That Was Then, This Is Now': Some Comments on Newman's 1877 Preface to the 'Via Media' and the Modern Church," *New Blackfriars*, 92, no. 1038 (2011): 171.

¹¹¹ John Henry Newman, "The Religion of the Day", in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 199–200. See also Newman to a lady who in imagination had strong leanings to a monastic life, 1841, in *Letters and Correspondence of*

‘more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion’ than the ‘cold, self-sufficient, self-wise’ society in which he finds himself. For Newman, it is the ‘fear of God’ that is ‘the beginning of wisdom’; it is apprehending that He is ‘a consuming fire’; it is ‘approach[ing] Him with reverence and godly fear’, that brings individuals to the ‘strait gate’. And, for Newman, even then, ‘fear and love must go together; always fear, always love, to your dying day’.¹¹² Further, Newman is religious, even religiose. For Newman, religion is not only about faith—about finding deeper meaning; about embracing the divine. For Newman, religion is also about form—about words, and candles, and altars, and buildings.¹¹³

Spurgeon’s thinking is as dogmatic as Newman’s. He is also resistant to change. Spurgeon takes great pride in the fact that his beliefs never change—not at all. From when he began preaching, at just fifteen, until his death some forty-two years later, he kept the faith of his forefathers holding it ‘none the less dear’ because ‘the advanced school’ despised it. He boasts that the doctrine he preaches ‘is that of the Puritans: it is the doctrine of Calvin, the doctrine of Augustine, the doctrine of Paul, the doctrine of the Holy Ghost’.¹¹⁴ But his thinking is marked by two key beliefs that differentiate him from both Newman and Arnold—the tenets of Calvinism and Biblicism.

Spurgeon is a Protestant Christian in the Reformed Tradition—holding to the Calvinism of the Puritans. Spurgeon has a very firm hold on the five tenets of Calvinism—total depravity; unconditional election; limited atonement; irresistible grace; and the perseverance of the saints. For Spurgeon, the need for Atonement follows necessarily from the ‘horrible abomination’ that sin is—God’s holy nature precluding the possibility of God ‘pass[ing] by human sin without a substitutionary Sacrifice’ because only ‘the blood of Christ’ can cleanse the individual ‘from all sin’.¹¹⁵ Spurgeon puts great weight on the concept of election. For Spurgeon, ‘God’s

Newman, 2:311; Newman to Rev. W. Mayer, Trinity Sunday 1819, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:33; John Henry Newman, “Christian Manhood,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 219; John Henry Newman, “Tolerance of Religious Error,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 405.

¹¹² Newman, “The Religion of the Day”, 205–206. See also Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 36.

¹¹³ After his conversion, Newman reflects—‘I looked at [the Catholic Church];—at her rites, her ceremonial, and her precepts; and I said, “This is a religion;” and . . . the poor Anglican Church . . . seemed . . . the veriest of nonentities.’ Newman, *Apologia*, 302.

¹¹⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:295, 364, 393.

¹¹⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:80; C. H. Spurgeon, “The Guilt and the Cleansing: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 8 January 1865,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/3056-The-Guilt-And-The-Cleansing.pdf>, accessed 29 March 2017.

plan of salvation excludes all our works' including a free-willed individual reaching out for salvation.¹¹⁶ Spurgeon is also a Biblicist—fiercely so. For Spurgeon, the Bible 'is the writing of the living God—each letter ... penned with an Almighty finger. Each ... sentence ... dictated by the Holy Spirit'. If the Bible teaches concepts that appear to be 'inconsistent and contradictory ... they are not. The fault is in our weak judgment'.¹¹⁷

So, each of our theologians was concerned with the practice of the Christian faith in Victorian England, believing it to be losing its bearings. But each has a very different conception of what the solution might be. Arnold looks to the transformation of popular religion from a Christianity that relies on the dubious foundations of miracles and Biblicism to a Christianity firmly grounded in its eternal truths. Newman looks to the authoritative traditions of the Catholic Church. And Spurgeon, holds on doggedly to the faith of his fathers, preaching salvation to the elect.

¹¹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, "Justification by Faith: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 28 April 1867," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/3392-Justification-By-Faith.htm>, accessed 30 March 2017. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:75; 2:241.

¹¹⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Bible: a sermon delivered at Exeter Hall, Strand, 18 March 1855," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0015-The-Bible.htm>, accessed 30 March 2017; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:174.

Chapter 4: Three philosophers

It is in the nature of philosophy to unravel and clarify thinking underpinning beliefs. Two of our philosophers—William Whewell and John Stuart Mill were philosophical contemporaries, with just twelve years between them. Nevertheless, they had very different experiences of life and very different philosophies—disagreeing most markedly over ‘the nature of inductive reasoning in science, moral philosophy, and political economy’.¹ Our third philosopher, Thomas Hill Green, was of a later generation, being some forty years Whewell’s junior. Unlike both Whewell and Mill, Green was a philosophical idealist—for the most part, unconcerned with matters of science and concerning himself instead with the mystery beneath the real. Each of our philosophers engaged, at least some of the time, in moral philosophy—clarifying the reasoning underpinning their moralities and communicating their reasoning to others.

William Whewell

William Whewell was born on 24 May 1794 in Lancaster, the eldest of seven children of John Whewell and Elizabeth Bennison. John Whewell was a master carpenter. The Reverend Joseph Rowley spotted the young William’s able mind and (on the promise of no expense for the teaching or the books) persuaded John to allow William to pursue book learning instead of carpentry. Young William was a ‘tall, ungainly youth’ whose initial ignorance and rapid success at Lancaster grammar school brought the energetic remonstrances of his schoolfellows. But Whewell was never one to be intimidated. When it was agreed that no more than two be ‘at him at once’, young Whewell dispensed with the first pair, and none could be found to replace them. In 1810 Whewell transferred to Heversham grammar school to compete for a scholarship to Trinity College. He met with success and began at Cambridge in October 1812.²

¹ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “William Whewell” (by Laura J. Snyder), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/whewell>, accessed 30 March 2017. For a detailed discussion of this debate see Laura J. Snyder, *Reforming Philosophy: A Victorian Debate on Science and Society* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

² Professor Owen to Janet Mary Douglas, [undated], in Mrs. Stair Douglas, *The Life and Selections from the Correspondence of William Whewell* (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co, 1881), 3–5; *Oxford Dictionary of National*

Whewell's Lancastrian speech and tight budget distinguished him from many of his peers at Cambridge, but he made many firm friends, with Richard Sheepshanks (also from the north), John Herschel and Charles Babbage among them.³ Whewell attended lectures on algebra, Euclid, trigonometry, oration and divinity, while independently pursuing his own reading. He took to writing poetry and taking prizes—chiding his father not to overrate his achievements 'as that would only tend to make us ridiculous'; scraping together funds for purchases; and passing the time with friends—'evoking metaphysics together'. Whewell passed his summers shooting, bathing, sailing, dancing, playing billiards, riding—and making rockets. He participated eagerly in university debates and all manner of scientific societies. Whewell took his Bachelor of Arts degree in January 1816 and was elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1817, securing, as he told his sisters, 'a comfortable establishment for life at least so long as my life is a simple one'. Whewell loved Cambridge, treasuring 'the opportunity of mingling with and enjoying the friendship of the greatest men and the most lofty intellects of my time'. But while Whewell made Trinity his home, he was not bounded by it. He frequently escaped to the continent to '[clamber] over ... glaciers and ... divers horns and culms with much gratification'.⁴ He actively participated in the British and European scientific and intellectual communities. But alongside, and often intertwined with, Whewell's keen scientific interest ran an acute aesthetic sense. He had a lasting love of both architecture and poetry, including what may strike one as an oddly passionate commitment to the hexameter, which was popular in Germany but, outside the Latin lessons of the public schoolroom, had not caught on in England.⁵ Whewell published widely on mechanics; dynamics; calculus and geometry; the architecture of German churches—both their aesthetics and engineering; astronomy; general physics; natural theology; logic; mineralogy; chemistry; education; morality and tides. He also published various lectures—including two series on morals, and various sermons.

Biography, online ed., s.v. "Whewell, William (1794–1866)" (by Richard Yeo), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29200>, accessed 3 April 2017.

³ *ODNB*, s.v. "Whewell, William".

⁴ Whewell to his Father, 17 February 1813, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 9–10; Whewell to his Father, 18 January 1814, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 11; Whewell to his Father, 26 June 1814, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 12; Whewell to Mr. Morland, 17 November 1814, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 13; Whewell to Rev. G. Gwatkin, 10 August 1815, in I. Todhunter, *William Whewell: An Account of His Writings, with Selections from His Literary and Scientific Correspondence*, vol. 1. (London: MacMillan & Co, 1876), 8–9; Whewell to Archdeacon Hare, 13 March 1842, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 268; Whewell to Rev. James Rose, 18 August 1829, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 133; *ODNB*, s.v. "Whewell, William".

⁵ Harvey W. Becher, "William Whewell's Odyssey: From Mathematics to Moral Philosophy," in Menachem Fisch and Simon Schaffer (ed.), *William Whewell: A Composite Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 23–24.

Whewell's opus magnum (being for him, two parts of one work) was *History of the Inductive Sciences* (published in three volumes in 1837) and *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (published in two volumes in 1840). These lengthy works (which 'sold remarkably well' given their 'size, price and subject') aim to give a comprehensive picture of the development of western scientific knowledge.⁶ They demonstrate the debt of the present to the past and clarify the nature of scientific knowledge. Most importantly, they demonstrate the duality of the nature of scientific knowledge—being necessarily dependent on both thoughts and things; the product of the interaction between the imagined and the material. As Menachem Fisch has observed, Whewell, at times, struggled to reconcile these two aspects of scientific knowledge—knowledge that is, not only in mathematics but also in the physical sciences—at once, both imagined universal necessary truths and material empirical facts.⁷

In 1841, at age 47, Whewell married Cordelia Marshall, daughter of John Marshall, who brought with her a generous dowry. Whewell accepted the Mastership of Trinity in the same year. Whewell and Cordelia enjoyed a warm and affectionate marriage.⁸ Cordelia died, after a long illness, in 1855 and Whewell married Everina Frances, a widow, some three years later. Everina died in 1865. Whewell fell from his horse while riding outside Cambridge, in the following year. He died from his injuries, still Master of Trinity, on 6 March 1866.⁹

John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill was born in London on 20 May 1806, the eldest child of James Mill and Harriet Burrow. The young James Mill's precocious intellect had won him patronage and education. He was licensed to preach by the Scottish Church but, dissatisfied with its doctrines and with tutoring the offspring of nobles, he moved to London in 1802. His publication of *The History of British India* (1818) won him a permanent appointment in India House.¹⁰

⁶ Whewell to his sister Anne, 18 November 1837, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 189.

⁷ Menachem Fisch, "A Philosopher's Coming of Age: A Study in Erotetic Intellectual History," in Fisch, *William Whewell: A Composite Portrait*, 63–64.

⁸ Becher, "William Whewell's Odyssey", 24; Whewell to Mrs. F. Meyers, 23 December 1855, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 448.

⁹ ODNB, s.v. "Whewell, William".

¹⁰ John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Penguin Books: 1989), 26; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Mill, James (1773–1836)" (by Terence Ball), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18709>, accessed 3 April 2017.

James Mill was gregarious, eloquent, and incapable of rest. He directed much of his prodigious energy to the relentless education of his children.¹¹ John Stuart Mill's education began at age three with Greek and arithmetic. He read widely, mostly histories, and was lectured by his father on 'civilization, government, morality and mental cultivation'.¹² He embarked on Latin at age eight; then poetry, literature, and experimental science (sans experiments). At twelve, he was introduced to logic, in which he was 'most perseveringly drilled' by his father.¹³ Mill learned that 'all mental and moral feelings and qualities', both good and bad, resulted from association; and that association opened the door to the 'unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education'—an education that bound 'pleasure' to 'all things beneficial to the great whole', and 'pain' to 'all things hurtful to it'.¹⁴ He also learned from his father the incongruence of a creator 'combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness' and 'a world so full of evil'.¹⁵

At age fifteen, Mill spent the winter reading Roman law with John Austin. Bentham's *Traité de législation* was a 'turning point'. The familiar 'greatest happiness' principle 'burst' upon him with 'all the force of novelty'. Mill found his object in life—'to be a reformer of the world'. And he set to—reading, discussing, writing, publishing reviews and essays, and debating—all in the Utilitarian cause.¹⁶ But, in the autumn of 1826, at just twenty years of age, Mill, in a very low mood, discovered that, even if fully realised, his reformist projects could not bring him 'great joy and happiness'. His life's foundation fell away into a despair that was to persist for two dreadful years. It was poetry that saved him. In the autumn of 1828 he discovered Wordsworth and the 'real, permanent happiness [of] tranquil contemplation'; he discovered that happiness does not depend on the reform of society but on the individual—on the development of their 'passive susceptibilities'

¹¹ ODNB, s.v. "Mill, James"; Mill, *Autobiography*, 26.

¹² Mill, *Autobiography*, 27–30; Nicholas Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20.

¹³ Mill, *Autobiography*, 37. See also 105.

¹⁴ Mill, *Autobiography*, 95, 113–114.

¹⁵ Mill, *Autobiography*, 50. See also Mill to Edwin Arnold, 13 May 1872, in *The Later Letters of John Stuart Mill 1849–1873*, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. 17, eds. Francis E. Mineka and Dwight N. Lindley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 1893–1894; Mill to Arthur W. Green, 16 December 1861, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:754; John Stuart Mill, "Nature," in *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. 10, ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 388–389; Mill, *Autobiography*, 204.

¹⁶ Mill, *Autobiography*, 66–68, 111.

and the cultivation of their feelings.¹⁷ From this time, while continuing to defend the associationist and Utilitarian principles inherited from his father and Bentham, Mill became more critical of Bentham and more accepting of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.¹⁸ In 1830, still just twenty-four, Mill discovered another happiness in Mrs. Harriet Taylor who, at just twenty-three, had come to regret her early marriage to the somewhat older, somewhat blander, but exceedingly tolerant and generous, John Taylor. Mill and Harriet Taylor rapidly established an enduring intimacy of sorts, eventually marrying in 1851, almost two years after John Taylor's death.¹⁹ As Himmelfarb has convincingly argued, Mill's idolatry of the intellectually arrogant Harriet, distorted the expression of his thinking right up to the time of her death in 1858.²⁰

Thomas Hill Green

Thomas Hill Green was born on 7 April 1836 in Birkin, a rural village of some one hundred and sixty five souls, in Yorkshire's West Riding. He was the youngest of four children of Reverend Valentine Green and Anna Barbara Vaughan. Birkin's boast is St Mary's, a beautiful Norman church dating from about 1150, and it was at St Mary's that Green's father served as rector. Anna died when the young Thomas was just one year old. The children were brought up by their father, 'with plenty of open air and freedom ... never questioning and scarcely feeling [his] authority'.²¹ The rectory was some one hundred yards from St Mary's and, Birkin having changed little, one can even now imagine the young Thomas following his much-loved father along the leafy lane to the ancient church and, with his young eyes, gazing up at the cheeky, almost spider monkey, gargoyles peering down from the tower. Indeed, if one enters the ancient church, one can even now catch something of the spirit in which one must imagine Green spent his younger days in Birkin—guided

¹⁷ Mill, *Autobiography*, 112–121.

¹⁸ See Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, 23, 55; Mill to John Pringle Nichol, 15 April 1834, in *The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill 1812-1848*, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. 12, ed. Francis E. Mineka (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 221. See also Mill, *Autobiography*, 124; John Stuart Mill, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, intro. F. R. Leavis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 94, 114, 117, 121–124.

¹⁹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed.' s.v. "Mill, Harriet (1807–1858)" (by Ann P. Robson), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38051>, accessed 10 April, 2017.

²⁰ Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The Other John Stuart Mill," in *Victorian Minds: A Study of Intellectuals in Crisis and Ideologies in Transition* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee Inc., 1968), 130–153. See also Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 10–11.

²¹ R. L. Nettleship, "Memoir," in T. H. Green, *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, vol. 3, ed. R. L. Nettleship (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1888), xi–xii.

by ‘an unargumentative and unrhetorical Christian minister’ who appealed to his people (his young son among them) to ‘cleans[e] their hearts and to help each other as sons of God in Christ’.²² In Birkin, Green grew up with what, for him, was ‘best called faith’—‘a prevailing conviction of our presence to God and his to us, ... the source of whatever [is] best in us’.²³

The young Green was not at all precocious. His early life in Birkin fostered sensitivity of soul, rather than quickness of mind. (Indeed, Green’s adult writings evidence a mind attuned to plumbing depths rather than covering ground; a mind unafraid of mystery.) At fourteen Green left Birkin for Rugby, where he made ‘an odd, shy, and home-bred boy’. Even so, his moral earnestness impressed his schoolfellows.²⁴ In any event, Green settled down to his new life well enough, although he never became ‘a thorough schoolboy, either of the athletic or of the intellectual type’. He was not motivated by the competitive impulse and, consequently, impervious to much of the enthusiasm surrounding him and devoid of the ambition expected of him. He had no interest in the ordinary, was impatient of research and averse to diffuse reading—protesting ‘if I cram myself with the ideas of others, my own all vanish’.²⁵

Green entered Balliol College, Oxford in October 1855. Here, again, his fellows noted his moral earnestness—which evoked, in at least one of them, ‘a slight sense of awe or alarm’ but resonated with the better selves of others. Green’s intellectual pursuits also marked him out as earnest. From his school days, he had grappled with the problems of metaphysics and theology. Fortunately for Green, and for his fellows, all this earnestness and originality was infused by a sense of humour which was ‘not only abundant but genial and sympathetic’, and while he had not quite fitted at Rugby, he became a ‘broad and genial man’ at Balliol. He demonstrated a remarkable ‘interest in, and the strongest sympathy for, the humbler classes’, gladly meeting ‘farmers and tradespeople’ without any apparent condescension, keen to hear

²² T. H. Green, “Faith,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:259; Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and His Age* (London: Thoemmes Press, 1996), 39. In 1829 Birkin’s population stood at 164 and in 2011 it was 141. Richard Gilbert, *The Clerical Guide or Ecclesiastical Directory* (London: C. J. G. & F. Rivington, 1829), 47; UK Office for National Statistics, Neighbourhood Statistics. <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadKeyFigures.do?a=7&b=11120747&c=LS25+5NB&d=16&e=62&g=6455580&i=1001x1003x1032x1004&m=0&r=0&s=1491358854037&enc=1&nsjs=true&nsck=false&nssvg=false&nswid=1440>, accessed 5 April 2017.

²³ Green, “Faith”, 3:258–259.

²⁴ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xii. At thirteen he condemned a fellow because ‘his rudeness, greediness, impudence, and ingratitude [were] unparalleled.’

²⁵ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xii-xiii, xix.

their views. Green was active in the Oxford Union, but his debating skills (and his radical politics) spectacularly failed to impress.²⁶

During the Easter Term in 1858, Green joined the Old Mortality which met weekly to read ‘either extracts from some of our standard authors, or some original essay’ and to discourse for ‘an hour or two’ to develop ‘more definite ... opinions on some of those vexed questions ... of Art or ... Social Science, which are continually recurring’. Topics ranged—from Plato to Cicero to Gibbon to Hume, from Fichte to Carlyle, from Bede to Browning. The Old Mortality was, for the most part, Balliol students who had come from Rugby, and brought from there ideas of social radicalism. Others had come farther, as Snell Exhibitioners from the University of Glasgow, and brought from there ideas of German idealism and earnestness. This mix gave Balliol, and the Old Mortality, a commitment to ‘social amelioration, liberty of thought, and the ultimate validity of human reason in things secular and sacred’.²⁷ Green also attended Sunday meetings of a group that convened at Balliol for Bible reading and prayer. Some in this group were ‘narrowish Evangelicals’ others ‘High Churchmen’, but all were ‘earnest men’. Green startled some by ‘the breadth of thought which he ... brought to the criticism of the New Testament’. Fortunately for Green, they were reassured by his ‘reverence and manifest earnestness’.²⁸

It was not only to his fellows that Green looked for learning. He spent many undergraduate summers in John Conington’s reading parties and greatly respected his tutor, Benjamin Jowett.²⁹ Green spent his first two years at Balliol in ‘comparative idleness interrupted by spasmodic effort’ and failed to impress the examiners. Realising Green was not motivated by the ‘glittering prize’, Jowett appealed to his sense of duty—‘If you do not get your First, Green, I shall have a good deal to answer

²⁶ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xix; Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 47, 72–73, 80; A. L. Grenfell to Mrs. Green, 18 October 1882, cited in Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 73; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Green, Thomas Hill (1836–1882)” (by Andrew Vincent), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11404>, accessed 5 April 2017.

²⁷ Gerald C. Monsman, “Old Mortality at Oxford,” *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970): 359. See also 359–360, 364–366. When Green joined the Old Mortality, it had some dozen members, among them Albert Venn Dicey, Balliol (later, jurist); Algernon Charles Swinburne, Balliol (later, poet and literary reviewer); and James Bryce, Trinity (later, jurist, historian and politician).

²⁸ A. L. Grenfell to Mrs. Green, 18 October 1882, cited in Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 83–84.

²⁹ Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 77. Conington was a professor of Latin who led a reading party for undergraduates each summer. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Conington, John (1825–1869)” (by Richard Smail), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6079>, accessed 5 April 2017. See also Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xvii; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Jowett, Benjamin (1817–1893)” (by Peter Hinchliff and John Prest), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15143>, accessed 5 April 2017.

for'. Jowett's appeal was a turning-point. Green put his lethargy aside and applied himself to the task in hand.³⁰

Green graduated a Bachelor of Arts in 1859. In 1863, after 'some hesitation', he signed The Thirty-Nine Articles and took the degree of Master of Arts. Green had little regard for the hierarchy of the Church. But neither did he sympathise with those of his contemporaries, who, finding themselves unable to sign The Thirty-Nine Articles, separated from the Church 'at considerable personal sacrifice'.³¹ From 1864 to 1866, as an assistant commissioner to the schools inquiry commission, Green inspected endowed schools in the Midlands, and was later elected as a teachers' representative on the governing body of King Edward's School in Birmingham. In 1866, Green considered a professorship at Owen's College, Manchester. Jowett urged against the move. In the end, Green concluded that 'the Manchester clerks' would want 'some shorter cut than my Hegelian philosophy' and 'the practical openings at Manchester' would likely be 'poor compensation for failure in one's proper line as a teacher'. In September 1866, Green was appointed to the teaching staff of Balliol as tutor; made senior dean the same year; and, finally, Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1878.³² As Collini has noted, not unusually for a late Victorian, Green's voice as a public moralist sounded first in the lecture hall—both *Prolegomena to Ethics* and *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, were edited versions of his professorial lectures.³³

Green became an 'energetic Liberal' and a member of the Oxford Town Council. He was active in extending access to higher education at Oxford to women, and establishing a high school for the town boys of Oxford. Green was much occupied with the 'condition of the people', temperance (he was a total abstainer), housing, wages, and electoral reform. Green's activity focussed on the welfare of the

³⁰ Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 75. For Green, Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" was the 'high-water mark of modern poetry'. Nettleship, "Memoir", 3:xviii.

³¹ Nettleship, "Memoir", 3:xxxvi; *ODNB*, s.v. "Green, Thomas Hill". The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (formulated and approved by Convocation in 1562 and incorporated in the Book of Common Prayer authorised by Parliament in the Acts of Uniformity of 1559 and 1662) was seen as the official statement of Anglican doctrine. All matriculants at Oxford and graduates of Cambridge were required to be subscribed to them. But well before the Green's time, the Thirty-Nine Articles had proved themselves capable of supporting widely differing interpretations. See Donald Greene and Gregory F. Scholtz, "How 'Degraded' Was Eighteenth-Century Anglicanism?," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24 (1990): 93–111; Richard Nash, "Benevolent Readers: Burnet's Exposition and Eighteenth-Century Interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25 (1992): 353–360. For the text of The Thirty-Nine Articles see *The Theologian*.
<http://www.theologian.org.uk/church/39articles.html>, accessed 5 April 2017.

³² Green to James Bryce, 23 March 1866, in *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters* (Bristol, UK: Thoemmes Press, 2003), 420; *ODNB*, s.v. "Green, Thomas Hill".

³³ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 225, 248

people—for the most part, the common people. Green was not of ‘the people’, but he identified with their cause, and that identification was no intellectual posturing. Green was unafraid of thinking through, and implementing in very practical ways, what could best improve their lives.³⁴ Importantly, as Bevir observes, we mistake Green if we see his concern for welfare of the community as indicative of a loss of religious faith which gave rise to an ‘emotional need that social reformism sometimes met’. There was, indeed, a causal link between Green’s changing faith and his desire for social reform, but that link hinged on his adoption of immanentist theologies—immanentist theologies that found expression in community and could not be realised without social reform.³⁵

Green married Charlotte Byron Symonds in July 1871. Charlotte was twenty-nine and Green thirty-four. They were to have no children. Green’s health was never robust. He became seriously ill in March 1882 and died, not a fortnight later, just weeks before his forty-sixth birthday. Before his death he asked to hear the eighth verse of the Epistle of Romans—‘I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world’. He spoke of his belief in God and immortality, while having ‘no clear idea of what life beyond might be like’. And he advised Charlotte ‘to try to be happy and lead a useful life’. That she did.³⁶

Purposes

Our philosophers are, indeed, philosophers—and, as such, they concern themselves with ideas. Nevertheless, each of our philosophers is purposeful in their thinking.

Although often described as a ‘polymath’, Whewell’s focus was not on the diversity of knowledge but on its synthesis. It was unity in diversity that inspired him. He sought the ‘big picture’. And this is how he approached his work—by taking stock of the whole of his subject and then tracing the connections within it so that he

³⁴ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xxiv; Mrs. Humphry Ward, *A Writer’s Recollections* (London: W. Collins Sons & Co, 1918), 133–134. For Green’s participation in the Oxford Temperance Association, see Peter Nicholson, Introduction to *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters* by T. H. Green, xix.

³⁵ Mark Bevir, “Welfarism, Socialism and Religion: On T. H. Green and Others,” *The Review of Politics* 55 (1993): 639.

³⁶ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:cix–clx; Mrs. Charlotte Byron Green to R. L. Nettleship, 24 December 1887, cited in Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 372. Charlotte Green stayed on in Oxford, as an active participant in generations of life at both Balliol and Somerville Hall (a hall of residence for women). She also trained as a nurse, and became a district nurse in Oxford. In addition, she was actively involved in local schools, local government, the temperance movement and, eventually, women’s suffrage. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. “Green, Charlotte Byron (1842–1929)” (by C. A. Creffield), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48416>, accessed 5 April 2013.

could comprehend it as a system, both within itself and as a component of the greater system of knowledge which is reflective of the whole of reality. For Whewell, this need for system arises naturally in the thinking mind. He explained—‘Many ... require ... coherence, proof, and system. ... I write for them because I am of them. I share their cravings. ... It is my task to write systems’.³⁷

Mill found his object in life—‘to be a reformer of the world’—at fifteen. But by his twentieth year that object rang hollow.³⁸ He concluded that human activity has three aspects—moral, aesthetic, and sympathetic—and that while the sentimentalist wrongly sets the aesthetic and sympathetic above the moral, it was Bentham’s error to ‘sink [them] entirely’. As Albert Venn Dicey later observed, for Mill, it would be ‘the labour of his life’ to resolve the tension between his ‘inherited beliefs, from which he never departed’ and the ‘moral and intellectual ideas and sympathies [of] his time’. In other words, to reconcile Bentham and Coleridge.³⁹

Green was a thinker—but also a teacher and a very practical reformer. As a thinker, Green was both serious and fearless. He bemoaned the ‘Pharisaical way of building the sepulchres of philosophers’ by extolling their genius ‘without making their spirit our own’. For him, ‘the genius of Locke and Hume was their readiness to follow the lead of Ideas’ and in the ‘spirit of Rationalism, ... however baffled and forced into inconsistent admissions’, still hold that ‘all things may ultimately be understood’. For Green, it lay with subsequent thinkers to explore ‘the difficulties to which their enquiry led’ and ‘find in them the suggestion of a theory which may help us to walk firmly where they stumbled and fell’.⁴⁰ Green also thought much on ‘the evil in the world and in his own country, and on the obligation incumbent on him and [others] to do something to mitigate inequality and misery and vice’.⁴¹ Green’s seriousness and fearlessness, combined, as it was, with an enduring moral earnestness, was hardly popular. For most, the impression Green made was merely that he was ‘in earnest’. Many did not share his enthusiasm for what he found ‘interesting and important’. But there were those among the students at Balliol, ‘to whom personal

³⁷ Fisch, *A Composite Portrait*, vii–viii; Becher, “William Whewell’s Odyssey”, 8; Whewell to Rev. F. Myers, 16 March 1845, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 319; Whewell to Rev. F. Myers, 6 September 1845, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 330.

³⁸ Mill, *Autobiography*, 111–112, 118.

³⁹ Mill, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, 93–94; A. V. Dicey, *Lectures on the Relation Between Law and Public Opinion in England During the Nineteenth Century* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008), 301; Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, 89. See also F. R. Leavis, Introduction to *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge* by John Stuart Mill, 10–11.

⁴⁰ T. H. Green, “Introduction to Hume’s ‘Treatise of Human Nature’,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 1:5.

⁴¹ Rev. P. A. Wright-Henderson, *Glasgow and Balliol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 44.

experience had made a reality of some religious, political, or scientific problem’, whom Green might rouse to antagonism by criticising ‘their cherished doctrines’, or reassure with a seeming ‘solution of their perplexities’. Among the latter were some trying to reconcile ‘some strain of idealism’ with the mundane challenges of ordinary life; or others seeking to reconcile their radicalism with loyalty; and yet others ‘whose acceptance of a moral principle or a religious idea was crossed by a half-understood scientific theory’. These students were attracted to Green as one who ‘saw in a law-abiding community the realisation of true freedom, and in the simplest utterances of faith the deepest truths of reason, and who believed physical law to be an expression of the same intelligence as the forms of thought and the principles of morality’.

Nettleship, speaking from his own Balliol experience of Green, observed:

There are a few in every generation of men at the university to whom contact with a real thinker is like a new experience. That, which for want of a better name we must call the speculative impulse, a thing in its nature as distinct, unanalysable, and incommunicable as the passion for goodness or for beauty, was in Green so fused with the rest of his personality that ordinary observers hardly felt the edge of it; but when it touched minds of the same temper, it struck fire.

And so Green found around him disciples, ‘eight or ten men’ whom a ‘not unkindly wit’ named ‘a society for looking at things as a whole’. Their beliefs were various, but they were bound together by one shared value—an ‘intolerance of superficiality’.⁴² These disciples and, more importantly, those they taught, were to be Green’s legacy. As R. G. Collingwood observed—‘the school of Green sent out into public life a stream of ex-pupils who carried with them the conviction that ... the philosophy they learnt at Oxford, was an important thing, and that it was their vocation to put it into practice’. So that the effect of Green’s thinking and teaching can be found ‘from about 1880 to about 1910, penetrating and fertilizing every aspect of national life’.⁴³ But Green did not trust all to his students and their future. He resisted what Collini calls ‘the beguilingly easy identity’ of the teacher as a shaper of future generations which, so often, hopefully absolves the teacher from both ‘direct

⁴² Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:lxvii-lxviii.

⁴³ Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 16–17. See also Raymond Plant, “T. H. Green: citizenship, education and the law,” *Oxford Review of Education* 32 (2006): 23–24; Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 45–46.

engagement with the present’ and ‘any assessable measure of success or failure’. Green took it upon himself to effect practical change in the here and now.⁴⁴

Values

Whewell’s thinking is marked by some key beliefs and values—that knowledge is hard-won; the need for intellectual collaboration; his respect for the past; the role of the imagination; that truth resonates with the human mind; and that life is a religious experience.

Whewell is keenly aware that knowledge is hard-won, gained incrementally over time. For Whewell, it is through hard intellectual struggle that error is dispelled and truth is revealed, and humankind advances ‘from falsehood to truth: or rather, from very imperfect truth to truth less imperfect’. So, over time, the honest intellect must resign what oftentimes seems ‘so beautiful, sublime and glorious’.⁴⁵ For Whewell, this shedding of outgrown conceptions of truth is not always easy, ‘the process of obtaining new conceptions’ being, for most, ‘far more unwelcome’ than any amount of labour in employing the old ones.⁴⁶ Whewell sees all fellow intellectuals as collaborators in the search for truth. Every ‘genuine student, of whatever kind of knowledge’ is to all others both a ‘friend and a brother’.⁴⁷ And, because the challenges to existing perceptions, through which a better grasp of the truth is gained, come from those who see things differently, the arguments of one’s adversaries are to be welcomed. This attitude of respect for one’s intellectual adversaries was evident in Whewell’s war of words with John Stuart Mill regarding induction. Whewell trusts that the philosophy of induction will become ‘more lucid in a controversial than in a didactic form’, a dialogue being ‘more instructive, as well as more amusing’, than a lecture.⁴⁸ And Whewell has a reverential respect for the past. He sees ‘the *whole* of the past’ as ‘our teacher’ and sees it as the ‘proper business’ of the educated to learn from that past and ‘transmit its lore to the future,

⁴⁴ Collini, *Public Moralists*, 227.

⁴⁵ William Whewell, *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences: Founded Upon Their History*. new ed. vol. 2 (London: John W. Parker, 1847), 7; William Whewell, *Of the Plurality of Worlds* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1867), 240, 266. See also Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 2.

⁴⁶ Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 2:101. See also Whewell, *Lectures on Systematic Morality Delivered in Lent Term, 1846* (London: John W. Parker, 1846), 38.

⁴⁷ William Whewell, *Trinity College Commemoration Sermon Preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, December 15, 1838* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 11–12.

⁴⁸ William Whewell, *Architectural Notes on German Churches*, New ed. (Cambridge: J. & J. J. Deighton, 1835), 133; William Whewell, *Of Induction: with Especial Reference to Mr. J. Stuart Mill’s System of Logic* (London: John W. Parker, 1849), 2–3. See also Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 2:223.

augmented by the best lessons which the present can add'.⁴⁹ Whewell holds that Providence gives each generation, in its turn, the means to discover the 'truths speculative and practical' that enable each generation to improve itself and its community. So 'there is a great deal of truth' already 'embodied in the frame of society' and for any individual, or any age, to claim to have discovered *the* truth and to discard the hard-won truths of the past, betrays both ignorance and arrogance on their part.⁵⁰

Whewell is convinced of the power, and the necessity, of the imagination. For Whewell knowledge implies 'a combination of Thoughts and Things ... without Thoughts, there could be no connexion; without Things, there could be no reality'.⁵¹ As John Wettersten and Joseph Agassi have noted, Whewell cuts across the traditional divide between the empiricists (for whom scientific theory is born of facts—not mind) and the intellectualists (for whom scientific theory is born of mind—not materialities).⁵² For Whewell, ideas are born of the imaginative mind 'Guessing at Truth', but those guessed-at truths must be verified or refuted by the stubbornly material.⁵³ And for Whewell, the truth resonates—there is a fundamental resonance between the material world and the human mind because 'the creator of ... the material universe is the creator of the human mind'.⁵⁴ On this point Whewell utterly disagrees with Mill. He rejects Mill's notion that 'experimental truth' hardens into 'necessary truth' simply through the incremental effect of habitual association; association reinforced by repeated observation. For Whewell, 'experimental truth' can never, of itself, morph into 'necessary truth'. It needs something more. It needs resonance—an echoing affinity. For Whewell, it is this resonance that enables the thinking individual to recognise a necessary truth for what it is—something truly known to be necessarily so.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Whewell, *Trinity College Commemoration Sermon*, 16–17. See also William Whewell, *On the Principles of English University Education* (London: John W. Parker, 1837), 138.

⁵⁰ Whewell to James Garth Marshall, 27 December 1842, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 280–281. See also William Whewell, *The History of the Inductive Sciences: From the Earliest to the Present Time*, vol. 1 (London: John W. Parker, 1837), 4; Whewell to James Garth Marshall, 27 December 1842, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 281–282.

⁵¹ Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 1:18.

⁵² John Wettersten and Joseph Agassi, "Whewell's Problematic Heritage," in Fisch, *A Composite Portrait*, 345.

⁵³ William Whewell, *On the Foundations of Morals: Four sermons preached before the University of Cambridge, November, 1837* (New York: E. French, 1839), viii; Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 2:56. See also 1:247.

⁵⁴ Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 1:59; Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 257–258.

⁵⁵ Whewell, *Of Induction*, 76, 81.

For Whewell, life is a religious experience, which derives its ultimate meaning from its divine purpose. Whewell has a deep personal faith which is not merely the background or context of his historical, scientific and ethical thinking but its very foundation and purpose.⁵⁶ But Whewell's faith is not insensitive to the challenge of new ideas. He knows the 'vehement commotion of the thoughts' that can 'shake' any faith 'for a time'. But, for Whewell, nothing can change the truths of faith—"the meaning of [one's] birth and life and death"—founded on 'habitual intercourse with God in prayer', on hours of private devotion; and on reading in the scriptures 'the truths which we ... have been taught to read there'. Whewell is unmoved by religious sceptics who give themselves 'the air of philosophers till they grow wiser'. Indeed, for Whewell, as for the ancients, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."⁵⁷

Mill's thinking is marked by some key beliefs and values including the moral function of the intellect; uncompromising truth seeking; civilization and duty. For Mill, clear thinking is essential for right outcomes and the want of 'studious exactness' gives rise to confusion and makes room for 'convenient' moralities justified by woolly thinking.⁵⁸ Further, because few of his contemporaries were capable of such 'studious exactness' Mill holds that, at least for a time, the intellectual elite, rather than hereditary or economic elites, should take the lead on things moral and political. Unsurprisingly, Mill saw himself as having a key role in that elite.⁵⁹ Mill also believes in uncompromising truth seeking. He saw himself as seeking the truth—no matter what. With what may strike the reader as a surprising lack of self-awareness, Mill proclaims his own objectivity—he vigorously attacks those who lack his 'single-minded earnestness for truth'; his 'intrepid defiance of prejudice'; his 'firm resolve to look all consequences in the face'.⁶⁰ Mill also values civilization. Mill sees Nature as irrational and morally depraved. It is the 'business' of humankind—both as individuals and in society—to manipulate Nature; to 'correct and mitigate' Nature; to overcome Nature by 'Civilization', 'Art' and 'Contrivance'.⁶¹ And Mill believes in

⁵⁶ John Hedley Brooke, "Indications of a Creator: Whewell as Apologist and Priest," in Fisch, *A Composite Portrait*, 171.

⁵⁷ William Whewell, *Strength in Trouble: A Sermon Preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, February 23, 1851* (London: John W. Parker, 1851), 12; Whewell to his sister Ann, 27 March 1841, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 219. Whewell quoted Deuteronomy 33:27 as he died. Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 555.

⁵⁸ Mill, "Nature", 376.

⁵⁹ Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, 120.

⁶⁰ John Stuart Mill, "Sedgwick's Discourse," in *Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society*, 54.

⁶¹ Mill, "Nature", 379, 381.

duty—one could even say, unrelenting duty. Approving Carlyle’s admonition to ‘work while it is called Today’, Mill asserts that there is ‘only one plain rule in life’ which is ‘eternally binding’—to ‘try thyself unweariedly till thou findest the highest thing thou art capable of doing, faculties and outward circumstances being both duly considered, and then DO IT’.⁶²

Green’s thinking is marked by some key beliefs and values including the useful life; the need for a more equal society; faith; and philosophical idealism. Green is preoccupied with living a useful life. This he accepts as a personal ideal.⁶³ And, rather than seeing his philosophy as a distraction from his usefulness, Green sees his philosophy as integral to it.⁶⁴ Green longs for a more equal society, in which all can realise their potential. Green worked to make education accessible to everyone—by establishing a ‘ladder’ of scholarships by which even the poorest able children could climb from the elementary school to the university. Green’s belief in the ‘essential equality’ of individuals gave ‘habitual direction’ to his thinking, resulting in many practical schemes for ‘“levelling up” the inequalities of human lot’, by ‘giving to the many the opportunities of the few’.⁶⁵

Green has an enduring faith—undogmatic, obscure, but certain. If the nature of Green’s faith proves difficult for others, Green is unapologetic. For Green, faith does not, and cannot, rely on verifiable facts, for verification of the idea of God cannot be found, it must be made. A faith dependent on belief in miraculous facts which, by their nature, are unverifiable, is vulnerable to the challenges of reason and, consequently, unworthy of the thinking individual.⁶⁶ But Green’s lack of theological dogmatism does not denote a lack of religious morality. Green has little time for those whose faith is ‘unsettled’ by ‘science’. He condemns such excuses for a lack of faith, and lack of morality, as ‘the foppery of men who want new excuses for old sins’. For Green, it is ‘our sins and nothing else that separate us from God’. He sees philosophy and science, at least for ‘those who seek not to talk of them but to know

⁶² Mill to Barclay, 16 April 1840, in Caroline Fox, *Memories of Old Friends: Being Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox*, ed. Horace N. Pym (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1883), 114.

⁶³ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xxiv; Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 29; Ward, *A Writer’s Recollections*, 133–134. See also Nicholson, Introduction to *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, xxviii.

⁶⁴ Indeed, for Green himself, ‘the only satisfaction to the inward [being] which lasts longer than a week arises from getting something adequate written’. Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xxxvii.

⁶⁵ Nettleship, “Memoir”, 3:xliv; Nicholson, Introduction to *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, xvii–xviii. See also Plant, “T. H. Green: citizenship, education and the law”, 34.

⁶⁶ T. H. Green, “The Witness of God,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:266, 273. See also Green to Henry Sidgwick, 28 December 1868, in *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, 423.

their power' not as threats but aids to both faith and morality.⁶⁷ Nor does Green's own lack of theological dogmatism lead him to condemn the theological dogmatism of others. For Green, 'so long as our prayers express the effort after a higher life, recognised as proceeding from, and only to be satisfied by, the grace of God, the theological formulae in which they are clothed are of little importance'.⁶⁸ But he has little sympathy for those, such as John Henry Newman, who affect a cloistered saintliness, and 'put themselves into an attitude—saintly, it is true, but still an attitude', rather than live a life of useful Christianity.⁶⁹ Green experiences no religious angst in reconciling his childhood faith with his adult reasoning. He speaks of having, 'almost from boyhood, behind all anxieties ... a consciousness analogous to that which our religious ancestors [called] "being at peace" or "under grace" '. He felt very little of 'the pain of doubt'. His faith matured incrementally, in response to the ongoing tutelage of 'ordinary criticism' rather than the seismic shifts of personal crises.⁷⁰

And Green is a philosophical idealist. Green holds that 'the real world is essentially a spiritual world, which forms one inter-related whole because it is related throughout to a single subject'. He bemoans the triumphal march of empiricism in Britain. For Green, the philosophy of Locke, Berkeley and Hume (giving rise to that 'most unfortunate selection' of 'isms'—empiricism, materialism and Comtism) is anachronistic. He points instead to Kant and Hegel, as 'representing a real advance in metaphysical inquiry'.⁷¹ For Green, the empiricists had wrongly gained ground in Britain by rational (or, more properly, irrational) sleight of hand. Their argument is fundamentally, indeed fatally, flawed. This is because 'a doctrine founded on the testimony of the senses, which ends by showing that the senses testify to nothing ... in order to state itself [takes] for granted popular notions which it afterwards shows to be unmeaning'. In this way 'it arrives at its destructive result by means of propositions which every one believes, but to the validity of which its result is really fatal'.⁷²

Green, then, unlike Whewell and Mill, was a philosophical idealist who saw the march of empiricism as a misstep. And, although his philosophy often reads as

⁶⁷ Green, "The Witness of God", 248, 252. See also Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion*, 248.

⁶⁸ Nettleship, "Memoir", 3:cvi.

⁶⁹ Green to Henry Scott Holland, 29 December 1868, in *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, 425.

⁷⁰ Nettleship, "Memoir", 3:xxxvi, cviii.

⁷¹ T. H. Green, "Review of J. Caird: 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion,'" in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:145; Nettleship, "Memoir", 3:xli; T. H. Green, "Mr. Herbert Spencer and Mr. G. H. Lewes: Their Application of the Doctrine of Evolution of Thought," in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 1:373.

⁷² Green, "Introduction to Hume", 1:132.

very other-worldly, he was very concerned with the very material here and now, and sought to give effect to the essential interrelatedness of his world and his fellows in very useful ways—education, housing, the ordinary concerns of the common people. Like Whewell, Green held the material world, with its physical laws, and the moral world, with its moral laws, to be the expression of the one grounding intelligence.

Chapter 5: Moral causation and its laws

Nicholas Higgins, in *North and South*, is a working man. He is a passionate unionist and a devoted father. When Mr Hale—in the ambivalent position of a former clergyman who has found himself unable to affirm conformity to the Thirty Nine Articles—awkwardly asks Higgins, when his too-young daughter Bessy dies, whether Higgins believes ‘in Him’, Higgins declares his need for God as *the* cause in the moral world.¹

Man! I could fell yo’ to the ground for tempting me. Whatten business have yo’ to try me wi’ your doubts? Think o’ her lying there, after the life hoo’s led and think then how yo’d deny me the one sole comfort left—that there is a God, and that He set her her life. ... I cannot bear to think it were all a set o’ chances, that might ha’ been altered wi’ a breath o’ wind.²

Higgins cannot make sense of the moral world without a purposive ‘Him’. Nor can Gaskell. But, while the purposive ‘Him’ is the cause by which Gaskell makes sense of *why* things happen in the moral world, recognition of the purposive ‘Him’ does not give Gaskell a clear insight into *how* things happen. In *Sylvia’s Lovers*, when ‘a mad notion’ flashes across Sylvia’s brain that ‘she would go to the wide full river, and end the hopeless misery she felt enshrouding her’, *something* intervenes. Perhaps the very natural ‘thought of her sucking child’. Perhaps a not at all natural ‘angel of God’. Only God knows. ‘But as she ran along the quay-side she all at once turned up ... through an open door’.³ Sylvia is saved. Something acts to save her.

Gaskell claims the Victorians are much more considerate of causes of human behaviour than their grandparents had been. ‘Fifty or sixty years ago’, she declares, ‘people ... guessed at causes’. With their ‘differently constituted’ minds, ‘they felt, they understood, without going through reasoning or analytic processes’;

¹ Mr. Hale’s position echoes that of the two thousand ministers ejected from their livings on St Bartholomew’s Day in 1662 because they could not conscientiously swear ‘unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed’ in the new Prayer Book as prescribed by the Act of Uniformity. See Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 33–36; Timothy Larsen, “Victorian Nonconformity and the memory of the ejected ministers: the impact of the bicentennial commemorations of 1862,” *Studies in Church History* 33 (1997): 459–460, 470; Victor Shea and William Whitla, eds., *Essays and Reviews: The 1860 Text and Its Reading* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 7–10; Hilary Fraser, “The Victorian Novel and Religion,” in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 103.

² Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, 227.

³ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, ed. Andrew Sanders (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 378.

understanding human behaviour ‘by some sort of intuition’.⁴ As Athena Vrettos has noted, although psychology, as a scientific discipline, emerged late in the Victorian period, when it did so, the concepts of ‘introspective psychology’ (that is, a ‘mental philosophy based on self-observation’) and the associated concepts of ‘selfhood, individual and social identity, the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious, and the rational boundaries of the human mind’, had already found their way into ‘popular understandings of human behaviour’—explicitly through journals and periodicals, but also, as Mary Poovey has observed, implicitly through novels such as Gaskell’s own *Mary Barton*.⁵ But Gaskell’s implied claim of Victorian rationality and self-conscious introspection falls short of triumphalism. Gaskell is perplexed by the failure of those who had ‘studied the subject’ to ‘ascertain the real causes’ of ‘the destitution that surrounded thousands upon thousands’ in the horror of the years 1839, 1840 and 1841—the whole matter being ‘of so complicated a nature, that it became next to impossible to understand it’.⁶ As Asa Briggs, among others, has pointed out, individuals as diverse in their thinking as Thomas Carlyle, Freidrich Engels, Thomas Arnold and John Stuart Mill despaired at their ‘divided society’ in which the working people were effectively shut out, excluded from the many benefits industrialization afforded the middle classes. So that, for many, including Gaskell, while the Victorians were more reasoning and analytic about the causation of human behaviour and human events than their forbears, they had by no means got to the bottom of the matter.

In this chapter we will explore our protagonists’ conceptions of moral causation, focussing on the laws of moral causation that they hold to be operating in the moral world. Broadly, our protagonists differentiate between causation in the *material world*, on the one hand, and the *moral world*, on the other. As we have noted in Chapter 1, the material world is simply the physical world we perceive through our senses. The moral world is comprised of moral events effected by the will of individuals, rather than the material necessities of the natural world.⁷ So that we may,

⁴ Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 318.

⁵ Athena Vrettos, “Victorian Psychology,” in Brantlinger, *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, 69; Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830–1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 146–153.

⁶ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, ed. Shirley Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 82; Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, 254–255, 261.

⁷ Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 251–252; Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 1:251. For examples of use of ‘moral’ illustrating this meaning see George Eliot to John Blackwood, 28 October 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:191; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 18 March 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:350; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 25 February 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:109; George Eliot, *Daniel*

to use our earlier example, distinguish between the rain falling—which is part of the *material world* and putting up one’s umbrella which is part of the *moral world*. For Whewell, and indeed for all of our protagonists excluding Mill, our experience of the material world necessarily points to the moral world—to something not ‘merely physical, ... something hyperphysical’; to ‘Soul, ... Perception, and Will’; to ‘Personality’.⁸ As we consider our protagonists’ conceptions of moral causation, we will need to bear in mind this distinction between the material world and the moral world.

And all of our protagonists, again excluding Mill, distinguish between causation in the material world and causation in the moral world. They share George Eliot’s delight in the explanatory power of the physical sciences, but, like her, find explanations of physical processes ‘feeble’ when compared with ‘the mystery’ that lies beneath them.⁹ Indeed, Gillian Beer observes that, for George Eliot ‘the microscope and the telescope, by making realisable the plurality of worlds, scales, and existences’ otherwise beyond the scope of human comprehension, are ‘a powerful antidote to that form of positivism which refused to acknowledge possibilities beyond the present and apparent world’.¹⁰ For George Eliot the mystery of our humanity lies outside the realm of scientific interrogation. She explains:

The consideration of ... physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action any more than it is the direct means of composing a noble picture or of enjoying great music. One might as well hope to dissect one’s own body ... as take ... physics (in which you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human) to be [the] dominant guide ... in what is solely human.¹¹

For Mill, causation goes to *predictability* rather than *compulsion*, and the ‘uniformities of succession’ that give rise to this predictability are to be found both in the material world and in the moral world; in ‘states of mind’. So, for Mill,

Deronda, 94; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 188; Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 91; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 531, 660; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 169, 243.

⁸ Whewell, *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, 2:436.

⁹ John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. 8., ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 851. For discussion of Mill’s concept of causation, see Chapter 7, pages 137–140. See also George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 5 December 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:227. See also George Eliot to Charles Bray, 15 November 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:403.

¹⁰ Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 141–142.

¹¹ George Eliot to The Hon. Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 10 December 1874 in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:99.

causation—both in the material world and moral world—is always prediction based on uniformities of succession.

For all of our protagonists, the moral world is, to some degree, governed by natural laws in much the same way as the material world. The foundational law of moral causation, recognised by all of our protagonists, again excepting Mill, is that actions that are good bring consequences which are beneficial, and actions which are bad bring consequences that are detrimental.¹² For Mill, an act is determined to be right or wrong solely by the object toward which it works.¹³ So to say that actions that are good bring consequences which are beneficial, and actions which are bad bring consequences that are detrimental, is, for Mill, tautological—being necessarily true by definition rather than as a consequence of any law of moral causation.¹⁴

For both Green and George Eliot, the inherently beneficial consequences of a good act and the inherently detrimental consequences of a bad act are neither reward nor punishment—they arise naturally from the act itself as ‘seed brings forth a crop after its kind’.¹⁵ It follows, for George Eliot, that our history is ever with us— affecting not only ourselves but others. Often irreparably.¹⁶

For Whewell, Spurgeon and Newman, while the consequences of an action follow naturally, they do so in accordance with the laws of moral causation constituted by divine authority to effect the moral government of the world.¹⁷ So that,

¹² Whewell, *The Elements of Morality, Including Polity*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co, 1864), 254; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 14 September 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:762; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 889; Dickens, “A Christmas Carol,” in *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*, 47–48. For other protagonists, see discussion later in this chapter.

¹³ So, for example, ‘despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, . . . provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.’ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, in *Essays on Politics and Society*, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, vol. 18, ed. John M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 224. There are other measures of the worth of an act, but, for Mill, they go to the character of the agent rather than the morality of the act itself. The morality of an action depends on its foreseeable consequences; its beauty, and its loveableness, or the reverse, depend on the qualities which it is evidence of.’ Mill, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, 93.

¹⁴ For Mill, the principle by which actions are judged good or bad is the principle of greatest happiness, according to which ‘actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness’ and ‘wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness’, where happiness is pleasure, and the absence of pain; and unhappiness is pain, and the privation of pleasure. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in *Ethics, Religion and Society*, 210.

¹⁵ T. H. Green, “Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 2:493; George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 74. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 5 November 1856, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:269; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 27 March 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:34.

¹⁶ See, for example, George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 213; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 253; George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 66; and the penitent Maggie’s irrevocable hurt of herself and of others in George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 491–492. Similarly, in her own life, George Eliot regretted that ‘there is so little we can make up for’. George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 24 November 1856, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:278.

¹⁷ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 254, 255. For Spurgeon, see C. H. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks* (Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1993), 112, 149; C. H. Spurgeon, “Right-Hand Sins: A sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 27 June 1868,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/3415-Right-Hand-Sins.pdf>, accessed 12 April 2017; C. H. Spurgeon, “Sin’s True Quality: A sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,” [undated], <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/3374-Sin-True-Quality.pdf>, accessed 17 April 2017; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:389; C. H. Spurgeon,

while the consequences are natural, they also act as moral sanctions. Nevertheless, at least for Newman, the consequences of misdeeds can be distant and seemingly disproportionate—‘a solitary act of intemperance, sensuality, or anger, a single rash word, a single dishonest deed, is often the cause of incalculable misery in the sequel with ‘fortunes ... frequently shaped by ... seemingly inconsiderable sins of ... early life’.¹⁸ And, more broadly, it is not only the acting individual who bears the consequences—‘we all suffer for each other, and gain by each other’s sufferings’.¹⁹ Further, Newman places his bar for acts that naturally bring good consequences rather high—not every good intention is rewarded. Rather, it is only what one does ‘honestly, sincerely, with prayer [and] with advice’ that must, in the end ‘turn to good’.²⁰ Arnold, too, holds that consequences follow in accordance with the law of moral causation constituted by divine authority, but his emphasis is on moral consequences—right actions bring ‘satisfaction’, a ‘sense of life’—of ‘being truly alive’.²¹ Gaskell emphasises the divine authority by which consequences are imposed, so that right actions give rise to beneficial outcomes and wrong actions give rise to detrimental outcomes even where causal connections are hard to discern, or a wrongdoer’s repentance has intervened to seemingly break the causal chain.²²

Gaskell applies this law of moral causation unerringly in her novels, at the cost of many tears for her readers. It brings, in *Mary Barton*, the death of the repentant John Barton; in *Ruth*, the death of the repentant heroine; in *Sylvia’s Lovers*, the death of the repentant Philip; and in *Wives and Daughters*, the death of the pathetic Osborne Hamley.²³ In each case, the death has little direct connection with the wrong done—John Barton dies of a stricken conscience; Ruth dies of a fever contracted whilst nursing her estranged seducer back to health; Philip dies of wounds suffered rescuing his young daughter from the crashing sea; and Osborne dies of a

“The Gorilla and the Land he Inhabits: A lecture delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 1 October 1861,” in *Autobiography*, 2:132. For Newman, see Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 397.

¹⁸ John Henry Newman, “Sermon VI: On Justice, As a Principle of Divine Governance,” in *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford: Between A.D. 1826 and 1843*, online ed., eds. James David Earnest and Gerard Tracey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 85, <http://www.oxfordscholarlyeditions.com/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198269625.book.1/actrade-9780198269625-div1-19>, accessed 16 April 2017.

¹⁹ Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 400.

²⁰ Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 31 August 1843, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:377.

²¹ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 177, 404.

²² For example—in the uproar that followed the publication of *Mary Barton*, Gaskell was sure that ‘in the long run’ the book would do no harm because she had written ‘earnestly [and] from the fullness of [her] heart’ so that it must bring good in the end. Gaskell to Edward Chapman, 3 January 1849, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 69.

²³ But, in *Wives and Daughters*, the irrepressibly mercurial Cynthia escapes—for whatever reason, Gaskell overlooks Cynthia’s deceit.

mysterious heart disease. The causal links between the wrongdoing and the death of the wrongdoer are tenuous and unforeseeable. Given that, in each case, Gaskell brings the reader into sympathy with the wrongdoer and, in every case but Osborne's, the wrongdoer repents—the reader despairs at each wrongdoer's slaying.²⁴ Indeed, in response to an outline of the story of *Ruth*, which culminates in the repentant heroine's death, Charlotte Brontë pleaded for Ruth's life—

The sketch you give of your work ... seems to me very noble; and its purpose may be as useful in practical result as it is high and just in theoretical tendency. Such a book may restore hope and energy to many who thought they had forfeited their right to both; and open a clear course for honourable effort to some who deemed that they and all honour had parted company in this world. Yet—hear my protest! Why should she die? Why are we to shut up the book weeping? My heart fails me already at the thought of the pang it will have to undergo. And yet you must follow the impulse of your own inspiration. If THAT commands the slaying of the victim, no bystander has a right to put out [their] hand to stay the sacrificial knife: but I hold you a stern priestess in these matters.

For George Eliot, such an emphasis on the divine authority by which consequences are imposed, wrongly characterises the consequences of one's actions as acts of God directed toward the individual, rather than the natural consequences of the actions themselves, which may affect the wrongdoer but, more likely than not, also affect innocent others. So, in *Middlemarch*, Bulstrode sees his impending public shaming as an act of God, rather than the natural consequence of his own wrongdoing. And he desperately casts about for the means of appeasement by which he can 'recover peace and trust'; for an appropriate 'sacrifice' by which he can 'stay the rod', believing 'in these moments of dread ... that if he spontaneously did something right, God would save him from the consequences of wrong-doing'. In the event, he bungles an attempt to seek a hasty reconciliation with Ladislaw, as the descendent of, and a proxy for, the dead woman he has wronged. For George Eliot, it is critical that consequences are understood to be natural consequences because, as a matter of fact, the consequences of wrongdoing reach beyond the wrongdoer, and an effective remedy must likewise reach out to all those who suffer by it.²⁵

²⁴ Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, ed. Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 405; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth*, ed. Alan Shelston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 450.

²⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 620–621, 689, 726. See also Fred Vincy misconceiving the consequences of wrongdoing. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 253. See further George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 523, 689.

A second law of moral causation accepted by all our protagonists is the operation of the individual conscience arising, necessarily, from the self-awareness of one's 'actions, ... thoughts and intentions'.²⁶ The universality and, indeed, the paramountcy, of the individual conscience was widely acknowledged in Victorian moral discourse—often by opposing sides of a moral question. For example, in relation to the Sabbatarian question, G. R. Searle has noted that, while 'most economists had a visceral dislike of all moralistic restrictions', they nevertheless argued for Sunday trading on the basis that the individual should be free to exercise their conscience and, furthermore, where exercising one's conscience may put one's competitors at an advantage, one should nevertheless be willing to make 'any little sacrifice that might be incidental' to so doing.²⁷ But, while our protagonists all accept the necessary operation of the individual conscience, here, too, we find differences.

Whewell places great value on the conscience of the individual—conscience is 'a trace of [God's] nature; an indication of [God's] will; an announcement of [God's] purpose; a promise of [God's] favour'.²⁸ At first blush, Whewell appears to be hugely optimistic as to the power of the conscience to rightly guide the individual. (So much so, that one wonders if he never came across any genuinely nasty individuals.)²⁹ Whewell acknowledges that the conscience of the individual reflects their life experiences, but those experiences do not land haphazardly on a tabula rasa. Whewell borrows from Professor Adam Sedgwick the 'apt and beautiful' image of the soul, at first an unvaried blank but one that has 'been already touched by a celestial hand' so that when it is 'plunged in the colours' of experience, 'it takes not its tinge from accident but design, and comes out covered with a glorious pattern'.³⁰ Indeed, the conscience can be 'the Voice of God'—an expression that certainly rings with authority.³¹ But it is important to note Whewell's conditions. An individual's conscience will be, for them, the 'Voice of God' only if they have done all that they can to 'enlighten and instruct' it by 'the aid of Religion, as well as of Morality'. So

²⁶ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 148. See also 42, 149, 251. Mill to William George Ward, 28 November 1859, *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:649–650; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 246.

²⁷ G. R. Searle, *Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 236.

²⁸ Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 266–267. See also 376–377.

²⁹ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 153.

³⁰ William Whewell, Preface to *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* by James Mackintosh, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1862), xliv.

³¹ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 152.

the conscience that is to guide is not a raw primitive conscience, but rather one developed and refined under the careful tutelage of the Church.³²

For Green, the individual's recognition of their moral flaws necessarily brings with it a sense of shame, or conscience, which is the spring of moral endeavour.³³ For George Eliot, too, the individual is uneasy when they offend their conscience and, conversely, at ease when they comply with its dictates.³⁴ But, for Green, the promptings of conscience arise from the individual's consciousness 'that there is an unconditional good which, while independent of [their] likes and dislikes, is yet [their] good'.³⁵ Whereas, for George Eliot, the conscience primarily acts by evaluating actions by the individual assuming the point of view of their better self.³⁶

For Dickens, a conscience is essential to one's humanity.³⁷ In "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain", Dickens paints a picture of a man who trades away his conscience to escape remorse. It is horrifying. By surrendering his conscience, Redlaw forfeits the intelligibility of his moral world. He can sense but cannot respond—he sees the moon but feels nothing; he listens to music, but it has 'no address to any mystery within him'. Knowing not 'good and evil' he knows nothing.³⁸ For Dickens, every individual, even the murderer, has a conscience.³⁹

Gaskell, too, places great weight on the conscience. But she is ambivalent about the merits of an *acute* conscience. She sees the hegemony of conscientious virtue as a decidedly Victorian phenomenon, and one that is not without its disadvantages. She bemoans the inhibitions of a scrupulous conscience—especially on, what would otherwise be, the carefree pleasures of the 'modern young lady'—and looks back, with more than a little envy, at the guilt-free pleasures of those who lived

³² Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 152.

³³ T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 367.

³⁴ Gwendolen feels 'terror ... in the night-watches at overstepping the border of wickedness by doing what she had at first felt to be wrong'. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 359. See also George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 372; George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 159; and George Eliot and George Henry Lewes to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 27 July 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:123.

³⁵ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 388.

³⁶ See, for example George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 41, 202; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 777.

³⁷ Dickens, "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain", 150, 204, 205.

³⁸ Dickens, "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain", 182, 187, 199.

³⁹ For instances of Dickens's murderers being struck by conscience, see Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 537; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 726; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 397, 402–403. See also Dickens to Lady Holland, 16 July 1845, in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 4, eds. Madeline House and Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 333. Dickens refers to his own conscience as his 'Monitor' but recognises its limitations. It can be dulled; or trained by habit. And even when it disturbs—it can be rationalised away or simply ignored. See Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 19 July 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:371; Dickens to Robert Browning, 12 April 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:86; Dickens to Samuel Cartwright, 29 January 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:24; Dickens to W. W. F. De Cerjat, 3 January 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:495. See also Dickens, *Domby and Son*, 519–520; Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 632; Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 508; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 142; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 588–589.

in less scrupulous times.⁴⁰ Indeed, Gaskell finds herself longing for something to ‘shame the demon (I beg its pardon) Conscience away; or to sleep’—‘grand pictures’, ‘holy music’ or ‘R. Browning’s poems’ may do the trick.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the stinging conscience plays a critical role in Gaskell’s oeuvre—a guilty conscience traumatizing Philip, in *Sylvia’s Lovers*, and ‘an avenging conscience’ slaying John Barton in *Mary Barton*.⁴²

Both Spurgeon and Newman see a more direct role for the divine in the conscience. For Spurgeon, while the conscience ‘can put the screw upon the soul to the uttermost degree’ and ‘measure out an infinite misery’ its effectiveness is guaranteed only in spiritually regenerate individuals who are divinely protected from that ‘excessive sin or habitual transgression’ which, in others, can eventually ‘kill’ the conscience. Nevertheless, for Spurgeon, even in the unregenerate, unless sin ‘gets to a high head’, the conscience operates as an effective ‘inquisitor’.⁴³ For Newman, however, the conscience is not as much a law of moral causation as a medium through which God directly guides the individual—the notion of ‘duty to an Unseen Governor’ being ‘implied in the very authoritativeness with which conscience dictates to us’.⁴⁴ For Newman, the conscience is the most immediate of instruments through which God guides the individual aright. And right living is achieved only through a ‘never-ceasing struggle between conscience and sin’.⁴⁵

Arnold and Mill place much less weight than our other protagonists on the role of the conscience. In his letters, Arnold acknowledges the role of conscience in governing his own behaviour, but he does not emphasise its role in his essays.⁴⁶ Given Arnold’s aims as a social and religious critic, this is unsurprising. Because Arnold sees Victorian society as lacking in Hellenism, which emphasises ‘spontaneity

⁴⁰ Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 74–75.

⁴¹ Gaskell to Eliza Fox, April 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 109.

⁴² Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 328–329, 343, 381; Gaskell to Mrs. Greg, early 1849, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 74. See Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 341, 351–359. See also Thurstan Benson’s prickings of conscience. Gaskell, *Ruth*, 200, 258.

⁴³ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Danger of Unconfessed Sin: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington” [undated], <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/1366-The-Danger-Of-Unconfessed-Sin.pdf>, accessed 12 April 2017; C. H. Spurgeon, “A Clear Conscience: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington,” [undated], <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/1443-A-Clear-Conscience.pdf>, accessed 12 April 2017.

⁴⁴ Newman, “On Justice”, 82.

⁴⁵ John Henry Newman, “Ceremonies of the Church,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 272; Newman, “On Justice”, 88. See also John Henry Newman, “Chastisement amid Mercy,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 794; John Henry Newman, “The Testimony of Conscience,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1119; Newman to Rev. R. W. Church, 3 April 1845, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:416–417; Newman, *Apologia*, 214.

⁴⁶ Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 13 October 1862, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:153; Arnold to Edith Jemima Simcox, 6 July 1882, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:218.

of consciousness' and suffering a surfeit of Hebraism, which emphasises 'strictness of conscience', in his writings he aims to foster, rather than inhibit, spontaneity and consequently de-emphasises the role of the conscience.⁴⁷ Mill rejects the 'inexplicable internal conviction' of moral sense as a ground for a morality. Nevertheless, he recognises the motivating value of a feeling of right and wrong, rather than merely rational assent. So, for Mill, the 'reproaches of one's own conscience' operate as a helpful supplement to the rational determination of right and wrong.⁴⁸

So our protagonists, with some variation in emphasis and rationale, broadly accept two laws of moral causation—firstly, that good actions bring beneficial consequences and, conversely, bad actions bring detrimental consequences; and, secondly, that the individual's conscience necessarily responds to one's self-awareness of one's actions, thoughts and intentions.

Some of our protagonists have identified further laws of moral causation relating to some of life's enduring perplexities—the link between the material and moral worlds; why people behave badly and why people suffer.

Each of Arnold, Gaskell and George Eliot identifies causal links between the material and moral worlds. Arnold and Gaskell hold that there is a causal connection between mind and body—particularly between moral flaw and physical disease.⁴⁹ And they were not alone. As Kirstie Blair explains, Victorian medical writers commonly hypothesised that 'organic heart disease' could be caused by 'internal emotions, such as grief or love, and by external events, such as the decline of religious belief or ... economic uncertainty'. Further, it was 'generally accepted that the heart responded directly to feelings, whether mental or physical'.⁵⁰ Examples of the link between moral flaw and physical disease abound in Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*—Mrs Hamley's social isolation and her never being quite well; Molly Gibson's unrequited love and her falling into 'low health'; Osborne Hamley's secrets and lies and his heart failure. As the worthy Mr Hamley observes of Osborne's death—'care killed him. They may call it heart-disease, ... I know better'. And in the real world,

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 165–168, 255.

⁴⁸ John Stuart Mill, "Theism," in *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, 445; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 228–230, 246. See also Mill, "Sedgwick's Discourse", 51; Mill to William George Ward, 28 November 1859, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:649.

⁴⁹ See Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 25 January 1865, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:371.

⁵⁰ Kirstie Blair, "'Proved on the Pulses': Heart Disease in Victorian Culture, 1830–1860," in *Framing and Imagining Disease in Cultural History*, ed. by George Sebastian Rousseau, et. al. (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 292.

Gaskell likewise recognises a link between body and mind.⁵¹ Although the connection between mind and body is, for Gaskell, mysterious, she sees it as a natural, rather than a supernatural, mystery. When, in *Sylvia's Lovers*, Sylvia's father becomes unbalanced—his obsessions leading first to crime and then to the gallows—Gaskell takes care to give a 'physiological explanation' of what was spoken of, by some, as a 'supernatural kind of possession'.⁵² Similarly, for George Eliot, individuals are dependent on, and responsive to, events occurring in the material world.⁵³ Nothing happens of itself—neither by the effort of one individual or by the occurrence of any one event.⁵⁴ All actions and outcomes are dependent on both external events and other individuals. Sometimes these events are momentous—political upheaval, war, famine, death.⁵⁵ Sometimes they are annoyingly trivial, like the 'jarring sounds and petty ... tasks' of a 'third-rate schoolroom'.⁵⁶ Sometimes they are known only to oneself—the 'bodily weakness' that can fell an individual's ambition.⁵⁷ Sometimes, while of one's own making, they are experienced by the individual as imposed on them—the 'petty degrading care' of debt that casts a 'blight of irony over all higher effort'. One cannot simply override these events in the world.⁵⁸

Each of Dickens, Gaskell and George Eliot identify moral laws that go, at least part way, toward explaining why people behave badly. For both Dickens and Gaskell oppression produces vice. In *Mary Barton*, Gaskell draws a direct link between the mill owners' oppression and their workers' vice, with Higgins observing sagely—'By-and-by they'll find out, tyrants makes liars'.⁵⁹ For Dickens, many individuals are born into oppression, and that oppression necessarily leaves its mark—if those with power 'crush humanity out of shape ... it will twist itself into ... tortured forms'.⁶⁰ And the consequences are felt not only by the crushed. The tortured forms

⁵¹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, ed. Angus Easson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41–42, 432, 597. See also Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 196; Gaskell to Anne Robson, 2 January 1865, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 741.

⁵² Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, 253.

⁵³ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 202.

⁵⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 838.

⁵⁵ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 26 December 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:411; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 165. See also George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 875–876; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 50.

⁵⁶ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 400. See also George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 180; George Eliot, *Romola*, 485.

⁵⁷ George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 13 November 1877, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:417–418.

⁵⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 587. See also George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 165.

⁵⁹ Gaskell, *North and South*, 292.

⁶⁰ Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 385. See also Speech at dinner for Hospital for Sick Children, 9 February 1858, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 250–251. See also Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 6 February 1850, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 107.

are themselves seeds sown—‘in the prodigious misery and ignorance of the swarming masses of mankind ... the seeds of its certain ruin’.⁶¹

For Gaskell, ignorance produces strife. Again in *Mary Barton*, the masters’ failure to share their information and understanding with their workers is shown to be the key cause of the workers’ strike. Gaskell carefully attributes the strike not to the actuality of the injustice of the workers’ want, but to their misunderstanding that their want was needlessly caused by their masters. She explains:

[The mill owners] forgot that the strike was ... the consequence of want and need, suffered unjustly, *as the endurers believed*; for, however *insane*, and *without ground of reason*, such was their belief, and such was the cause of their violence. ... No one thought of treating the workmen as brethren and friends, and openly, clearly, as appealing to reasonable men, stating exactly and fully the circumstances which led the masters to think it was ... wise ... to make sacrifices themselves, and to hope for them from the operatives.⁶²

It is difficult to follow Gaskell here, and to re-think her thoughts. To see the cause of a prolonged and devastating strike as the workers’ misunderstanding of their masters’ motives, rather than the workers’ experience of want, almost beggars belief. But there is no intended irony here. Gaskell disclaims the inviolability of hard-nosed political economy, but she is no radical. She advocates change—but it is a change of minds rather than a fundamental change in relationships. Gaskell is not alone in her focus on the importance of non-wage aspects of the master-worker relationship. E. P. Thompson stresses the critical role of ‘issues that are not encompassed by a cost-of-living series’ in some of the most bitter conflicts between masters and workmen at this time. For Thompson, the ‘issues that provoked the most intensity of feeling were often ones in which such values as traditional customs, “justice”, “independence”, security ... were at stake, rather than straightforward “bread-and-butter” issues’.⁶³

For Dickens, ignorance frustrates moral development more broadly. He holds that the mind is ‘the immortal mechanism of God’s own hand’, ‘breathed’ into individuals by ‘their wise Creator’, but education is needful—to develop self-respect; to facilitate co-operation between employers and employees, and a civil society more

⁶¹ Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 16 September 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:562. Dickens also speaks of ‘the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth.’ Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 389.

⁶² Emphasis added. Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 176.

⁶³ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 203.

broadly; and for ongoing ‘human improvement’.⁶⁴ By identifying ignorance to explain why people behave badly, Gaskell and Dickens also identify solutions—understanding and education. In this regard, Mary Poovey sees their novels as critical to the Condition of England debate. By asserting that oppression produces vice, ignorance produces strife, and ignorance frustrates moral development, in a narrative form—fully, if imaginatively, clothed in all-too-human characters that demand the reader’s sympathy—Dickens and Gaskell challenged the authority of the ‘political economists and social analysts’ to determine the Condition of England question solely on the basis of ‘privileged normative abstractions and calculations about aggregates ... derived from empirical observation’. For Dickens and Gaskell, such abstractions could never give sufficient insight into the Condition of England question, because they are inherently blind to the ‘feelings and passions’ that actuate all individuals, including the oppressed.⁶⁵

Likewise, for George Eliot, individuals are necessarily dependent on, and responsive to, others. In *Middlemarch*, Lydgate’s noble ambitions are frustrated by the tenacity of the seemingly mild Rosamond—so that he must find himself a little space in the crowd, as a ‘sort of shell’ to keep his ‘soul alive in’.⁶⁶ Dorothea’s hopes of a noble life are frustrated by Casaubon’s petty meannesses—‘trivialities’ by which ‘the seeds of joy are forever wasted’.⁶⁷ Further, some individuals find themselves subject to a ‘self-centred negative’ other who by ‘their trivial sentences, their petty standards, their low suspicions’ and ‘their loveless *ennui*’, make the individual’s life ‘no better than a promenade through a pantheon of ugly idols’.⁶⁸ Indeed, there is not one individual ‘who ... considering their past history, is not aware that it has been

⁶⁴ Speech at Athenaeum in Manchester, 5 October 1843, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 46; Speech at Mechanics’ Institution in Leeds, 1 December 1847, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 81–82; Speech at Birmingham and Midland Institute in Birmingham, 27 September 1869, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 400; Speech at Mechanics’ Institution in Leeds, 1 December 1847, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 82; Speech to Printers’ Pension Society, 4 April 1843, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 38. Dickens tells the working people of Manchester that education will ‘cheer’ them ‘through many of the struggles and toils of [their lives], ... ‘raise [them] in [their] self respect, ... enable [them] to tread down blinding prejudice, ... and everything but the truth, into the dust.’ Speech at The Free Library in Manchester, 2 September 1852, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 153. See also Speech at the Polytechnic Institution in Birmingham, 28 February 1844, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 61.

⁶⁵ Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 132–133.

⁶⁶ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 586, 768. Importantly, the narrator notes that Lydgate may have nevertheless overborne Rosamond had he only had the energy and courage to see out the effort. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 758. For other examples of the seeming impotence of rationality in the face of obstinacy see George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 78, 115; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 322; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 560. See also George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 587–588. For an outline of the compromise imposed on one with noble ambition who becomes a family man see George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 74.

⁶⁷ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 425.

⁶⁸ George Eliot, ‘The Lifted Veil,’ in *The Lifted Veil, Brother Jacob*, ed. Helen Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 736.

cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish action of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation of life'.⁶⁹ Conversely, the gift of 'perfect love', or simply 'the presence of a noble nature' can change the lights, so that the individual begins to see things differently, with a broader, and quieter perspective.⁷⁰ And, at the same time, by being looked up to and feeling a reverent gaze on us, we become our better self. For the trusting gaze is 'a sort of baptism and consecration' binding us to 'rectitude and purity'— for 'those who trust us educate us'.⁷¹

So, for George Eliot, each individual is the 'slow creation of long interchanging influences', and any bond between individuals is dependent, not only for its existence but also for its character, on the mutual effects of their individual chains of influences.⁷² But this mutual effect can be stifling rather than enabling. Indeed, it is rarely that the individual has sufficient insight and determination to overcome the conforming effect of others in their lives; of their community.⁷³ George Eliot not infrequently paints individuals as captured by the ordinary; belittled by the banal. Not only is their thinking stifled, their passion, too, is snuffed out, so that it is only the 'harness of routine' that makes their lives endurable.⁷⁴ This passionless unthinkingness most often arises simply from the impossibility of serious endeavour while dealing with the all-too-pressing banalities of the workaday world.

For in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness; for perhaps their ardour in generous unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly as the ardour of other youthful loves, till one day their earlier self walked like a ghost in its old home and made the new furniture ghastly. Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change!⁷⁵

For George Eliot, external impulses—from 'the winds of heaven to the thoughts of [individuals]' are forever criss-crossing each other 'with incalculable

⁶⁹ George Eliot to The Hon. Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 10 December 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:99. See also George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 459.

⁷⁰ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 146; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 762. See also George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 477.

⁷¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 771–772; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 485.

⁷² George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 409.

⁷³ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 531, 749.

⁷⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 668. See also George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such," in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 306; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 194, 380.

⁷⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 144–145.

results’; changing the lives and characters of individuals in a way that is mysterious to all—including the individuals themselves.⁷⁶ By identifying the conforming banalities of community as an explanation of why people behave badly, George Eliot discovers a solution—sympathetic fellowship. For George Eliot, redemption is effected, and can only ever be effected through an individual’s relationship with others. This work of redemption is mysterious, even divine—but it is natural.⁷⁷ And no one is beyond redemptive reach. Anyone may become ‘worthy to lead a life that may be a blessing’—for ‘no evil dooms us ... except the evil we love ... and make no effort to escape from’.⁷⁸ Relationships by which redemption is effected are a key theme in George Eliot’s novels. Illustrations abound—in *Silas Marner*, Silas’s relationship with the unknowing lone child Effie; in *Adam Bede*, Hetty’s relationship with the ever-faithful Dinah; in “Janet’s Repentance”, Janet’s relationship with Mr. Tryan; in *Felix Holt*, Esther’s relationship with Felix; and in *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen’s relationship with Daniel.⁷⁹ In each case, redemption is effected by the protagonist simply being conscious of ‘having a mind near [them]’ that asks them to ‘be something better’ than they actually are.⁸⁰ George Eliot explains:

Blessed influence of one true loving human soul on another! Not calculable by algebra, not deducible by logic, but mysterious, effectual, mighty as the hidden process by which the tiny seed is quickened, and bursts forth into tall stem and broad leaf, and glowing tasselled flower. Ideas are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them.⁸¹

Each of Newman and George Eliot identifies moral laws relating to suffering. For both Newman and George Eliot, good is achieved through suffering. For Newman, it is simply not possible to achieve any true good without suffering, and

⁷⁶ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 23; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 400.

⁷⁷ Effected by an ‘almost miraculous, divinely protected effort’. George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 541.

⁷⁸ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 765.

⁷⁹ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 131, 180; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 493–500; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 305–307; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 882.

⁸⁰ George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 238.

⁸¹ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 305–306. See also George Eliot’s Journal, 1 January 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:357; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 161.

impossible to achieve a great good without a great deal of suffering.⁸² For George Eliot we learn through suffering. She remarks the inevitable recurrence of loss throughout life—when we ‘wake up some fine morning and find all the poetry in which [the] world was bathed only the evening before utterly gone’. So that the ‘hard angular world of chairs and tables and looking-glasses’ stares at us ‘in all its naked prose’.

It is so in all the stages of life—the poetry of girlhood goes—the poetry of love and marriage—the poetry of maternity—and at last the very poetry of duty forsakes us for a season and we see ourselves and all about us as nothing more than the miserable agglomeration of atoms—poor tentative efforts of the *Natur Princip* to mould a personality. This is the state of prostration—the self-abnegation through which the soul must go, and to which perhaps it must again and again return, that its poetry or religion, which is the same thing, may be a real ever-flowing river fresh from the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep—not an artificial basin with grotto work and goldfish.⁸³

For George Eliot, it is through suffering that we experience a ‘fuller life’, so that pain is no more to be regretted than ‘a man with cataract ... regret[s] the painful process by which his dim blurred sight of men as trees walking had been exchanged for clear outline and effulgent day’. For we cannot ‘wish to return to a narrower sympathy’ any more than ‘a painter or a musician can wish to return to [their] cruder manner, or a philosopher to less complete understanding.’⁸⁴ But, for George Eliot, this growth into deep happiness takes time. A long time.⁸⁵ In her own life, she bemoaned its slowness, observing that we ‘go on bungling till our experience can only serve us for a very brief space’ and ‘as soon as we have found the key of life “it opes the gates of death” ’.⁸⁶

Further, for George Eliot, suffering is unavoidable.⁸⁷ Most individuals suffer occasionally, many continuously—living out their lives in a bewildered compression

⁸² Newman to Mrs. Thomas Mozley, 16 March 1841, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:300.

⁸³ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 4 June 1848, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:264.

⁸⁴ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 574.

⁸⁵ George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 371.

⁸⁶ George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 10 April 1866 in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:237. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 24 November 1856, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:278; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 14 June 1858, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:465.

⁸⁷ George Eliot to Charles Lee Lewes, 30 July 2015, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:126. See also George Eliot to Mrs. Henry Houghton, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:313–314. George Eliot speaks of death as a release. Indeed, for George Eliot, the prospect to be dreaded is not death, but the moral decay that can attend the decay of the aged body and mind. George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 10 April 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:133; George

that denies them sympathy; denies them individuality; denies them their humanity. And, because this suffering surrounds us continually, we do what we can to avoid feeling it. We avert our gaze. We harden our hearts. We must—if we are to get along.

In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot leads the reader to approach this suffering from both sides. She asks the reader to sympathise with sufferer—those ‘middle-aged men’ who once meant to ‘alter the world a little’ but now find themselves ‘shapen after the average and ... packed by the gross’—and to shudder at the ‘conforming falsities’ they have ‘inhaled unknowingly’. But she also asks the reader to sympathise with the suffered—those who have ‘uttered [their] conforming falsities’ and drawn their ‘silly conclusions’. Further, she makes it plain that, at bottom, most of us are too weak to suffer sympathetically—are unable, or unwilling, to bear it—and instead live out our lives ‘well wadded with stupidity’. For ‘if we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence’. But, for George Eliot, there is a better way. Dorothea dares to embrace ‘a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life’. She does not die, but she does cry.⁸⁸ And, for George Eliot, we must all learn to cry. No escape is possible ‘except by perverting or mutilating’ our true nature.⁸⁹

Another, more peculiarly Dickensian, law of moral causation relating to suffering, is that the death of the young brings good in its wake. For Dickens, it ‘is a mighty, universal Truth’ that ‘when Death strikes down the innocent and young ... he lets the panting spirit free’ and ‘a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it’.⁹⁰

Newman, Spurgeon and Dickens identify additional laws of moral causation which more particularly reflect their religious beliefs. For both Newman and Spurgeon, God intervenes in the world to effect the divine purpose. For Newman, this

Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 22 November 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:225. See also George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 4 May 1869, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:26.

⁸⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 144–145, 193–194.

⁸⁹ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 430.

⁹⁰ Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 544. Nell’s death in *The Old Curiosity Shop* was of great personal significance to Dickens. Dickens to John Forster, 17 January 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:188. Elisabeth Jay is sceptical of Dickens’s orthodoxy here, observing that ‘despite the use of orthodox vocabulary’, the ‘“the mighty, universal Truth”’ Dickens seeks to underline with Nell’s death is ‘more akin to religious humanism ... than to Christian dogma’. Elisabeth Jay, *The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth Century Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 164. Dickens is certainly no Evangelical, but his conviction as to the life beyond would seem beyond doubt. See page 44 notes 142–144.

intervention touches the lives of individuals and occurs in the gaps that are the accidents of their lives. While we may observe the laws of causation in both the material and moral worlds, such laws are not explanatory of individual lives.

Newman explains:

I call the characteristics of an individual *accidents*, in spite of the universal reign of law, because they are severally the coincidents of many laws, and there are no laws as yet discovered of such coincidence. A man who is run over in the street and killed, in one sense suffers according to rule or law; he was crossing, he was short-sighted or pre-occupied in mind, or he was looking another way; he was deaf, lame, or flurried; and the cab came up at a great pace. If all this was so, it was by a necessity that he was run over; it would have been a miracle if he had escaped. So far is clear; but what is not clear is how all these various conditions met together in the particular case, how it was that a man, short-sighted, hard of hearing, deficient in presence of mind, happened to get in the way of a cab hurrying along to catch a train. This concrete fact does not come under any law of sudden deaths, but ... is the accident of the individual.⁹¹

And it is not only the visible events of the individual's life that are dependent on such accidents. So too are mental events. For Newman, that an individual 'should have the particular experiences necessary for real assent on any point ... may be the result of a multitude of coincidences in one and the same individual, coincidences which we have no means of determining', which we call accidents. These accidents are not random. They are the causal gaps in which the divine intervenes. For both Newman and Spurgeon, as for Hamlet, 'there's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will'.⁹² Spurgeon recounts many such shapings, including special providences effected by God's unmediated intervention in the physical world.⁹³ He recalls various instances—from the fortuitous timing of the collapse of a building under the weight of snow just hours after the congregation had left, to the provision of an expansive chest to those intended 'habitually to preach'.⁹⁴ Newman is keenly aware of the perplexing advantage of some born into the world—'God gives ... unequal advantages, comforts, education, talents, health. ... We are favoured'. But,

⁹¹ Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 81.

⁹² Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 82. See *Hamlet*, Act 5, Scene 2, lines 10–11.

⁹³ Indeed, Spurgeon declared he had experienced 'so many interpositions of Divine providence, in small matters as well as great ones', that whatever happened he was 'bound to fall on [his] feet.' Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:369. See also 1:272, 531, 2:98, 153; 291, 471.

⁹⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:450; 2:101.

for Newman, such privileges bring temptation. Comforts can bring extreme moral danger. Intellectual privilege, too, has its price—‘intellectual gifts’ bring ‘the temptation of unbelief and disobedience’ and, when the powers of intellect are great, the moral danger is likewise increased.⁹⁵

For Arnold, the one eternal law of moral causation that governs all of the moral world is that ‘righteousness is salvation’—for those that will save their life shall lose it, and those that will lose their life shall save it.⁹⁶ This law of moral causation is derived, and continuously affirmed, in the same way as the laws of the material world—from the practical experience of humankind over time.⁹⁷ For Arnold, ‘as a matter of experience, ... the only real happiness is in a kind of impersonal higher life’, where ‘the happiness of others’ is as ‘essential’ to the individual as their own.⁹⁸ And because this truth keeps on becoming evident ‘from one generation to another’, each individual has a ‘central clue in [their] moral being’, which resonates with this law of moral causation and unites them to it.⁹⁹ For Arnold, then, there is a stubbornness about laws of moral causation, a stubbornness born of the lived experience of humankind, so that the individual, like society, cannot but fail to realise their full potential if they seek to deny, or defy, them.

We have seen that our protagonists broadly accept, with some variation, two key laws of moral causation: each individual has a conscience which necessarily responds to their own consciousness of their actions, thoughts and intentions; and actions bring consequences after their kind—good actions bringing beneficial consequences and bad actions bringing detrimental consequences. Further, we have seen that Arnold, Gaskell and George Eliot each identify causal links that cross over between the material and moral worlds—including, for Arnold and Gaskell, causal links between moral flaw and physical disease.

⁹⁵ John Henry Newman, “The Christian Mysteries,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 134; John Henry Newman, “Temporal Advantages,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1458; John Henry Newman, “The Self-wise Inquirer,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 142–144.

⁹⁶ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 370–372. Elsewhere expressed as ‘the method and secret of Jesus, that is to say, conscience and self-renouncement’. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 401. For Arnold, the second limb of this law was enunciated and exemplified by Jesus Christ, but it had been making itself evident ‘ever since man appeared upon earth’. It had ‘often ... been latent, but [had] always been there. Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 358. See also Arnold, “A Psychological Parallel”, 133.

⁹⁷ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 192.

⁹⁸ Arnold, “Preface to Last Essays”, 157.

⁹⁹ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 192; Arnold, “St Paul and Protestantism”, 31.

We have also seen that each of Dickens, Gaskell and George Eliot identify moral laws in an effort to explain why people behave badly. For Dickens and Gaskell oppression produces vice and ignorance both produces and frustrates moral development more broadly. For George Eliot, individuals are always dependent on each other for moral development—and while dependence on a noble soul can be wonderfully enabling, dependence on a less than noble soul can be cruelly stifling. In any event, for George Eliot, individuals rarely overcome the conforming effect of their community and are often repressed by the banalities of life.

Further, we have seen that for both Newman and George Eliot, good is achieved through suffering. And, for Arnold, there is but one eternal law of moral causation—those that will save their life shall lose it, and those that will lose their life shall save it. Further, neither the individual nor society can realise their potential if they seek to deny, or defy, this law.

We have seen, too, that for both Newman and Spurgeon, God intervenes in the world to effect the divine purpose. We will explore their conceptions of Providence in Chapter 6, along with the differing conceptions of Providence held by Whewell, Dickens and Gaskell.

Chapter 6: Providence and prayer

Whewell trusts to the ‘Ruler of the earth and skies’ who ‘sustains and guides the visible creation’. Dickens speaks of ‘the Almighty’; a ‘merciful wisdom’; a ‘wise ... ordering’ that ‘works to the doing of what is to be done’. Gaskell finds assurance in ‘God’s holy Providence’; in God’s ‘decree’. For Spurgeon, all is ‘Predestination’. For Newman, all is a spiritual battle and, eventually, God’s power must have its way.¹ Each of these protagonists has a conception of causation in the moral world which is centred on Providence—that is, the foreknowing and protective care of God expressed in divine direction, control, and guidance.² In this chapter we will explore the variety and complexity of these protagonists’ conceptions of Providence. We will see that, while they have much in common, they also have significant differences, reflecting their different beliefs and values.

For Whewell, Providence is effective, but not dramatic. It is reassuringly gentle, comfortable and unexceptional—working to achieve what is best in the moral world primarily through the laws of moral causation, but also through the hearts and minds of individuals. God has complete control—he is the ruler of the earth and the skies—so we can ‘really trust Him’ and ‘believe ... He is ruling well’.³ And here, Whewell has his eye on the bigger picture. Providence is concerned with the well-

¹ Whewell to Mrs. Austin, 30 March 1851, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 417–418; Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 357; Dickens to William Howard Russell, 10 June 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:347; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 26 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:420; Dickens to Mrs. Brown, 28 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:422; Gaskell to Parthenope Nightingale, 18 January 1856, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 383; Gaskell, *North and South*, 251; C. H. Spurgeon, “Prayer Certified of Success: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 19 January 1873,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/1091-Prayer-Certified-Of-Success.pdf>, accessed 16 April 2017; John Henry Newman, “Faith and the World,” in *Selected Sermons*, ed. Ian Turnbull Ker (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press International U.S., 1994), 358–358.

² Dickens gives this Providence various other names—for example, ‘the eternal Providence of God’ (Dickens to Henry Chorley, 3 February 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:207); ‘God’ (Dickens to Miss Mary Dickens, 15 September 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:659); ‘God’s leave’ (Dickens to W. C. Macready, 4 October 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:716); ‘God’s blessing’ (Dickens to The Rev. W. G. Cookelsley, 1 January 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:255); the ‘mercy of God’ (Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 172); ‘D.V.’ (that is, *Deus Volente* or God Willing, Dickens to Miss Marion Ely, 10 January 1848, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:229); ‘God’s pleasure’, or, that which will ‘please God’ (Dickens to Alfred Dickens, 16 May 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:111); ‘Heaven’ (Dickens to Charles Lever, 21 June 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:268); a ‘dispensation’ (Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 112); ‘Destiny’ (Dickens to Thomas Beard, 13 March 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:224); and ‘Fate’ (Dickens, *Bleak House*, 732). Gaskell uses various terms—for example, ‘God’s providence’ (Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 215); ‘D.V.’ (Gaskell to Harriet Anderson, 15 March 1856, in *Further Letters*, 157); ‘the Lord’s doing’ (Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 203); ‘God’s will’ (Gaskell, *North and South*, 268).

³ Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 254–255; Whewell to Mrs. Austin, 30 March 1851, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 417–418.

being of society—of nation, of humankind. And this well-being is effected both through the ‘Laws of Nature’—by which, in ‘power, . . . wisdom, [and] goodness’ God ‘sustains and guides the visible creation’; and the laws of moral causation—by which God regulates the moral world. These laws together foster the ‘irresistible esteem for what is right’ that is ‘stamped upon the human mind by the Deity’. It is for these broader purposes that Providence ensures the preservation of the Established Church, and ‘the progressive course’ of humankind. Whewell also sees the work of Providence in individual lives, including his own, providing material resources, and opportunities to work and improve the world—altogether managing things much better for us than we ever could for ourselves.⁴

For Dickens, Providence is comforting. It is the means by which God lightens the load of each of us as we journey through this world, ‘in which we . . . suffer, and strive, and die’, to the Heaven beyond.⁵ So there is Providence in the ‘soothing influence’ of ‘the sight of the earth and the sky’—given for ‘our relief’ as we endure our time on earth. There is Providence in ‘the power we have of finding some . . . comfort in the hardest trials’. There is, even in the grimmest circumstances, the assurance of Providence.⁶ Providence brings individuals together—or keeps them apart; allots their station in life; brightens their path, and numbers their days. And, while Providence works in the very ordinary events of the workaday world, its ultimate purpose is extraordinary—to bring us to the world beyond.⁷ But, for Dickens, Providence is not all determining. Individuals—by ignoring or mistaking its

⁴ Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 16, 266–267, 357; Whewell to his sister Ann, 8 May 1835, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 173; Whewell, *Trinity College Commemoration Sermon*, 18; Whewell to Mrs. Austin, 30 March 1851, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 417–418; Whewell to his sister Ann, 15 January 1842, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 241; Whewell to James Garth Marshall, 25 December 1849, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 371. Whewell is writing at a time of ongoing tension between the more vocal members of the Evangelical, High Church and Broad Church parties within the Church of England. While there had been a sizeable number of Evangelical ministers in the Church of England in the 18th century, they had grown into a party in the first three decades of 19th century—a party emphasising individual holiness, family devotions and preaching for conversion, and de-emphasising liturgical aesthetics. By the 1830s, Anglican Evangelicalism was losing impetus and the High Church party, in the form of the Oxford Movement, began reasserting the importance of liturgy, tradition, and corporate holiness, within a context of an international catholic church. The Oxford Movement was resisted by members of both the Evangelical party and the Broad Church movement. See Davies, *Worship and Theology in England*, 3:214, 219–220, 227, 236, 243.

⁵ Dickens to Mrs. Henry Austin, 3 November 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:493. See also Speech to the Railway Benevolent Institution, 5 June 1867, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 362.

⁶ Dickens to Mrs. Henry Austin, 3 November 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:493; Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 387. See also Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 585; Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 346; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 5 October 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:771.

⁷ Dickens to Thomas Beard, 13 March 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:224; Dickens to Mrs. Lehmann, 5 June 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:267; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 35, 41; Dickens to Miss Mary Boyle, 10 September 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:656; Dickens to William Howard Russell, 10 June 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:347; Dickens to Miss Emmely Gotschalk, 1 February 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:25–26.

path, or by their own moral failure—can, and often do, frustrate Providence.⁸ The ‘beneficent design of Heaven’ can be ‘overthrown’.⁹ And here we see Dickens—in a tradition Barry V. Qualls identifies as initiated by Thomas Carlyle and avowedly pursued not only by Dickens but also George Eliot among others—stretching the term ‘Providence’ to embrace the paradox of a divine provision vulnerable to overthrow, and so ‘using the language of ‘the “old theorem” of belief’, with which his readers were more than familiar, to lead them into new ways of understanding the ‘natural supernaturalism’ of their world.¹⁰ Nevertheless, for Dickens, when individuals exercise ‘ability, courage, and skill’, Providence gives effect to their efforts. Indeed, one cannot succeed unless Providence would have it so.¹¹ So while individuals can, through their ignorance and moral failure, make things worse in the world, they cannot, despite all prudence and diligence, make things better in the world, unless Providence gives power to their efforts.

The Providence known to Newman and Spurgeon is very unlike the reassuringly gentle and comfortable Providence known to Whewell and Dickens. For both Newman and Spurgeon, life is a battle—indeed, an ongoing war—between evil and good; between Satan and God; between living for this world and living for the next.¹² And the enemy is ever at the door. Indeed, the enemy is everywhere:

that confederacy of evil which Scripture calls the world, that conspiracy against Almighty God of which Satan is ... instigator, is something wider, and more subtle, and more ordinary, than mere cruelty, or craft, or profligacy; it is that very

⁸ See Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 220; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 8 April 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:233. See also Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 425.

⁹ Dickens, “The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain”, 205. See also Dickens to The Rev. David Macrae, 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:556.

¹⁰ Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction*, 17–18. See also 85, 89.

¹¹ Speech at presentation to Captain Hewett on arrival in Boston, 29 January 1842, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 16; Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 10 February 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:263. See also Dickens to Thomas Mitton, 4 December 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:605; Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 25 January 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:254; Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 27 January 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:254; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 27 November 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:526; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 12 February 1864, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:356; Dickens to Alfred Dickens, 16 May 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:111. And Dickens is mindful of Providence in the ordinary of the everyday—see, for example, Dickens to Miss Marion Ely, 10 January 1848, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:229; Dickens to J. T. Gordon, 6 September 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:651; Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 12 January 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:11.

¹² Newman, “Faith and the World”, 358–358; C. H. Spurgeon, “Satan in a Rage: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 2 November 1879,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/1502-Satan-In-A-Rage.pdf>, accessed 19 April 2017.

world in which we are; it is not a certain body or party of men, but it is human society itself.¹³

And, for both Newman and Spurgeon, the execution of this war, and the eventual victory of good over evil, is the work of Providence. But Spurgeon's conception of Providence differs from Newman's in that, in the longer term, it benefits only certain individuals. Not all are elect. God loves only 'His chosen creatures', choosing only them to be 'heir[s] of Heaven'.¹⁴ Spurgeon is unflinching here—God 'mean[s] to destroy' those who are not elected by God for salvation; God 'intend[s] their destruction'. Further, this election does not respond to any quality in any individual. The sole ground for this inexorably deterministic election is 'that God would have it so'.¹⁵ Here, as Hilton has observed, the difference between Spurgeon and many of his fellow Evangelicals is not so much a matter of belief but of emphasis. Many Evangelicals, both inside and outside the Church of England, shared Spurgeon's belief in the predestination of individual souls to a literal Heaven or Hell. But most were rather less inclined than Spurgeon to hold their belief dogmatically, and much less inclined than Spurgeon to shout about it—preferring to hold the belief in predestination 'speculatively, in a ... more relaxed and even doubtful way', never bringing it into their 'public ministrations'.¹⁶

Newman, like Dickens and Whewell, sees Providence acting in individual lives—providing friendships, health, sickness, and death.¹⁷ And, like Whewell, he also sees Providence as concerned with the wellbeing of humankind, guiding the 'revolution of empires; the rise and fall of states; ... the world's history'; and particularly concerned with the preservation of the Church.¹⁸ And for Spurgeon,

¹³ Newman to F. Rogers, 25 November 1840, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:285; Newman, "Faith and the World", 358; C. H. Spurgeon, "Satanic Hindrances: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 29 October 1865," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0657-Satanic-Hindrances.pdf>, accessed 19 April 2017. See also C. H. Spurgeon, "Satan Considering the Saints: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 9 April 1865," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0623-Satan-Considering-The-Saints.htm>. Accessed 21 April 2017; Spurgeon, "Satan in a Rage".

¹⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:167; Spurgeon to Miss Susannah Thompson, 11 January 1855, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 55. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:165, 168.

¹⁵ Spurgeon to Mr. Thomas W. Medhurst, 14 July 1854, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 69–70; Spurgeon to Mrs. Susannah Spurgeon, 11 January 1855, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 54; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:164. See also 1:166. Indeed, the elect, because they are the elect, are protected from temptation to the 'grosser sins and vices ... very often, ... by remarkable Providences'. C. H. Spurgeon, "Christians Kept From Sin: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 13 January 1870," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/3037-Christians-Kept-From-Sin.pdf>, accessed 19 April 2017.

¹⁶ Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, 8–9.

¹⁷ Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 30 April 1843, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:369; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 3 June 1844, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:387. See also Newman to F. Rogers, 25 July 1832, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:237.

¹⁸ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 48–49; Newman to Mrs. Jemima Newman, 13 March 1829, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:179–180.

every event in *all* its detail, both in the material and the moral worlds, is determined beforehand by God—with an active determination, not merely the foreknowledge of an omniscient mind. God has ‘foreknown and predestinated everything that happens in Heaven above or in the earth beneath’. The ‘station of a reed by the river is as fixed as the station of a king. . . . Predestination embraceth the great and the little, and reacheth unto all things’.¹⁹ For Spurgeon, there is no wriggle room. Everything is decreed by God.

For Gaskell, Providence fills the gap between all we can control and all we experience. Gaskell often remarks the limitations of the individual’s power and, in the space beyond that power, Gaskell finds Providence.²⁰ But she speaks of some events beyond our control as accidents—often happy accidents, but accidents nevertheless.²¹ In *North and South*, Doctor Gibson’s proposal of marriage to Mrs Hyacinth Kirkpatrick—which, even as it is made, is an obviously poor choice on the worthy doctor’s part—is explained as a series of accidents which somehow tumble together and cohere in a life changing decision. The accidents are many—Mr Coxe’s infatuation with Molly (pointing to Molly’s need of a protective step-mother); Lady Cumnor’s being out of health (calling the Doctor to the Towers and, incidentally, to Hyacinth’s side). And there are ‘accidents’ that bear more directly on the Doctor’s will—the accents of her voice; the colours of her dress; the rustle of her skirts.²² In this way, Gaskell shows some moral events to be not so much the outworkings of an individual’s will, or the wise working of Providence, but the results of an often entangled engagement between the individual’s will, the will of others, and the accidents of events seemingly beyond, not only the control of the individual, but anyone’s control. Nevertheless, as a remedy for life’s perplexities, Gaskell consistently commends Providence.²³ The individual is always bounded by God’s

¹⁹ Spurgeon, “Prayer Certified Of Success”.

²⁰ For examples of limitations on the individual’s power, see Gaskell, *North and South*, 145; Gaskell, *North and South*, 26; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 217–218.

²¹ Dickens too often evokes a looser amoral, fate-like phenomenon—‘fate’, ‘the best’, ‘fortune’, ‘malignant conjunction of stars’, ‘hazard and mischance’—or just plain ‘luck’. See Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 666; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 771; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 27 October 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:689; Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 228; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 113; Dickens to Colonel Travers, 14 November 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:110; Dickens to The Hon. Robert Lytton, 1 October 1869, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:417; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 425; Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 525.

²² Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, 107–109. See also Gaskell, *North and South*, 221–222.

²³ See Gaskell to Charles Bosanquet, 20 April 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 551; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 69, 291–292; Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 129. In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, George Eliot remarks the practical benefits of Gaskell’s approach. She draws characters who conceive of Providence as the divine direction of individual lives and, while its conceptual egoism is not denied, its practical effect is approved as a very good, if not the best, way to make sense of what does not otherwise make sense in the world. See George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 75, 315.

will. God is ‘the maker of circumstance’—it is God that sends sleep; it is God that spares life; it is God that sends illness; and it is God that sends death. The individual may do as they will, but the consequences of their actions are necessarily bounded by God’s will.²⁴ And because this boundary that is Providence presents itself in the most natural of events—in sleep, in sickness, in health, in death—Providence can appear to be mere chance.²⁵ This possibility of confusion is made all too apparent in *Sylvia’s Lovers*. When Philip’s employer chooses him to go ‘to Lunnon’ on business, and his colleague despairs that Philip has all the luck, the worthy Alice turns on him with complete assurance—‘Luck! ... Niver let me hear such a vain word out o’ thy mouth. ... It’s the Lord’s doing, and luck’s the devil’s way o’ putting it’.²⁶

To further clarify these protagonists’ conceptions of Providence, we will consider how they account for bad things happening; their perceptions of the role of the individual; and their notions of prayer. Given these protagonists’ varied approaches to Providence, we again find both important commonalities and key differences.

Excepting Dickens, for whom Providence can be frustrated by the moral failure of individuals, all of these protagonists hold that Providence ensures, by whatever means, that what happens next always—at some level, whether as experienced discretely by the individual, or as the history of humankind, or somewhere in between—fulfils the benevolent purposes of God. How, then, do these protagonists account for the bad things that happen?

For Whewell, all is—or, at least, must be—for the best. ‘Many things, which at first seem ... great calamities’ are, in fact, great blessings. ‘Whatever [Providence] dispenses to us is for our good’. If our lot appears ‘severe and inscrutable, ... it is ... our ... ignorance that make[s it] seem so’. The trials we encounter ‘are but as pebbles on the shore of the ocean, compared with the eternity for which they prepare us’.²⁷ So, for Whewell, our problem is one of understanding; of limited perspective.

²⁴ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 37, 329; Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 259, 333; Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, 215; Gaskell, *North and South*, 251; Gaskell to Harriet Anderson, 15 March 1856, in *Further Letters*, 157. See also Alice’s wisdom in *Mary Barton*—‘I sometimes think the Lord is against planning. Whene’er I plan overmuch, He is sure to send and mar all my plans, as if He would ha’ me put the future into His hands.’ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 75.

²⁵ See Gaskell, *North and South*, 270, 419; Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, 389.

²⁶ Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 202–203. See also Gaskell, *North and South*, 424–425.

²⁷ Whewell, *Strength in Trouble*, 9; Whewell to his Sister Elizabeth, 28 February 1820, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 57.

For Gaskell, Providence is full of ‘sad, perplexed minors’.²⁸ And whatever is beyond our changing, is to be accepted as Providence; as sent from God.²⁹ When a young wife and mother, feeling overwhelmed by all she has to do and ‘both wanting money’ and ‘feeling weak in body and entirely disheartened’, seeks Gaskell’s advice as to how she may become ‘an authoress’, Gaskell tells her to think deeply about the limits of her power. ‘How much do you have in your own power? How much must you submit to because it is God’s appointment. You have it in your power to arrange your day’s work to the very best of your ability. . . . Your want of strength may be remedied possibly by care [and] attention; if not, you must submit to what is God’s ordinance’. Gaskell’s language hovers between God sending and permitting difficult circumstances, but the sentiment is always the same. Providence is oftentimes effected through enduring loss; through suffering pain. It is through trials that individuals grow and fallen individuals achieve redemption—and sometimes, that trial is death.³⁰ In *Mary Barton*, Job tells Mary of the marriage and death of his daughter. His daughter nursed her young husband, Jennings, when he was gravely ill with fever, and died with him. As Job and old Jennings returned home, the latter bemoaned the fate of the young couple—‘it strikes me it would ha’ been better for my son if he had never begun to keep company wi’ your daughter’. Job is outraged—‘Better say at once it would ha’ been better for God never to ha’ made th’ world, for then we’d never ha’ been in it, to have had th’ heavy hearts we have now’. For Job to be ‘casting up again th’ events God had pleased to send, were worse blasphemy’. And here Job echoes Gaskell’s advice to her disheartened authoress, any bad thing beyond our changing is to be accepted as sent by God. Indeed, to refuse to accept adversity as sent by God, and to declaim adversity as evidence of God’s indifference or, worse still, impotence, would be, as Job put it, ‘worse blasphemy’.³¹

Newman, too, holds that God permits difficulties for our longer term spiritual benefit. But he characterises such difficulties as chastisement. He speaks of a ‘scrape’ he has gotten into as ‘a rebuke and punishment for my secret pride and sloth’; of illness as ‘a rebuke for past waste of time’; and of ‘bereavement’ as chastisement

²⁸ Gaskell, *North and South*, 402. See also Gaskell, *Ruth*, 101.

²⁹ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 237–238.

³⁰ Gaskell to Unknown, 25 September 1862, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 694–695. See Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 119. See also Gaskell, *Ruth*, 357–358; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 489.

³¹ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 105.

for his intellectual vanity.³² For Spurgeon, too, ‘affliction’ is, for some, ‘necessary’ and ‘answer[s] salutary ends’—generally, refining the character by developing patience; preparing for ‘greater heights of service’; and providing guidance.³³ Indeed, for Spurgeon, trials of all sorts—‘a sick wife, a newly made grave, poverty, slander, sinking of spirit—teach us lessons nowhere else to be learned so well’; they ‘drive us to the realities of religion’.³⁴ And, because Spurgeon holds that every fact and every event is deliberately decreed by God, he is compelled to explain every disadvantage as a benefit and, consequently, he stretches the concept of spiritual benefit—both awkwardly and unconvincingly. His reasons for the poverty of some of the elect, when God ‘could make them all rich if He pleased’, are desperately assorted—to teach the not-so-poor how grateful they should be for ‘the comforts’ God has given them; to demonstrate that God can take rich or poor, as He pleases; to demonstrate God’s ‘power to comfort’; to ‘plague the devil’ by showing the elect can endure poverty and keep faith; and to give others opportunity for generous compassion.³⁵ At times, Spurgeon despairs of explanation—‘God knows what is for His own glory’ and need not explain. In any event, Spurgeon insists that ‘harsh providences’ must be a blessing. When his very young granddaughter dies, he stubbornly declares—‘It *must* be right! It *must* be good! Our Father is *never* mistaken nor unkind’.³⁶

For all of Dickens, Gaskell, Spurgeon, Newman and Whewell, Providence works through individuals. Indeed, for Dickens, Providence cannot effect its purposes unless the needful individual does what Providence requires of them. Dickens illustrates the critical role of the needful individual in *David Copperfield*. Mr Peggotty explains:

When my child ... stood upon the brink of more than I can say or think on—Martha, trew to her promise, saved her. ... She was

³² John Henry Newman, Memorandum dated 21 March 1841, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:299; Newman to Rev. Thos. Mozley, 13 May 1832, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:228; Newman, *Apologia*, 33. See also Newman to Mrs. Jemima Newman, 1 July 1833, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:361.

³³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:410; Spurgeon to Pastor James Wells, 11 March 1871, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 74; Spurgeon to Unknown, 25 July 1874, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 75; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:207–208. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:242, 416.

³⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:414. See also 2:386.

³⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, “Duty of Remembering the Poor: a sermon delivered at The New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, 25 September 1856,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0099-The-Duty-Of-Remembering-The-Poor.htm>, accessed 21 April 2017.

³⁶ Spurgeon, “Satan Considering the Saints”; Spurgeon to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Spurgeon, 11 September 1890, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 111. Emphases added. See also Spurgeon to Unknown, 9 March 1881, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 75.

arnest. She had know'd of her bitter knowledge wheer to watch and what to do. She had done it. And the Lord was above all!³⁷

Further, Providence has a particular life purpose for each individual.

Dickens was certain of his own providential purpose—to ‘understand the heavier social grievances’ and, ‘through Literature, help to set them right’.³⁸ Further, in the ‘wise ... ordering’ in which ‘all works to the doing of what is to be done’, Providence provides, along with the purpose, the means to achieve it. So, it is Providence that gives Dickens his ‘faculty ... of correctly observing the characters of [individuals]’; his ‘imaginative life and constitution’; and his immense ‘energies’.³⁹ And public recognition of his purpose drives him on.⁴⁰ Indeed, for Dickens, it is his Providential purpose that gives life its value.⁴¹ So, too, for Newman and Spurgeon. The conviction they are ‘instruments’ that Providence is ‘employing’ to effect its ultimate victory is, for each of them, a source of profound meaning and joy.⁴²

Whewell, too, is keen to fulfil his particular life purpose. We can trace his earnest pursuit of that purpose, and gain valuable insights into his conception of Providence, in his correspondence with Archdeacon Hare. When deciding, at forty-six years of age, whether to give up life as an academic for that of a pastor, Whewell writes of choosing ‘as well as [he] can’ the task ‘assigned’ to him by Providence and relying on God’s ‘blessing’ for the strength and abilities he needs to do as ‘directed’.⁴³ Here we see a mix of persuasions. The tensions are apparent to us and very apparent to Whewell as he tries, almost desperately it seems, to resolve them. Providence has *assigned* a task, and *directs* Whewell to do it, and yet Whewell must *choose* the task

³⁷ Speech at dinner for Hospital for Sick Children, 9 February 1858, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 249; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 734. See also, Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, 310–311, 482–483; Gaskell, *Ruth*, 95–96, 121, 369.

³⁸ Speech to Administrative Reform Association, 27 June 1855, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 201.

³⁹ Dickens to Mrs. Brown, 28 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:422; Dickens, “Preface to the Cheap Edition of *Dombey and Son* (1858),” in *Dombey and Son*, 949; Dickens to Mrs. Brown, 28 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:422; Dickens to Miss Mary Gibson, 20 October 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:683. For Dickens, these capacities bring curses—‘the restlessness’ which ‘so besets’ him, and the ‘vague unhappiness which tracks’ him. Dickens to Mrs. Brown, 28 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:422. See also Dickens to John Forster, 5 September 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:434.

⁴⁰ When Thackeray publicly acclaimed Dickens as ‘a person commissioned by Divine Providence to correct and instruct his fellow-men’, Dickens was both ‘moved ... and ... animated’. Dickens to W. M. Thackeray, 23 March 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:575. See “Marylebone Institution,” *The Times*, 23 March 1855. For Dickens’s sense of responsibility as to his providential purpose see Dickens to The Rev. David Macrae, 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:556. As to the providential purpose of the Arts more broadly, see, for example, Dickens to Thomas Adolphus Trollope, 11 December 1864, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:462; Dickens to Mrs. Austin, 5 November 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:219; Dickens to The Reverend Archer Gurney, 25 April 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:320.

⁴¹ Dickens to John Tomlin, 23 February 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:218; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 14 January 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:10.

⁴² Newman to Mrs. Elizabeth Newman, August 1835, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:116; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:197–198, 2:249.

⁴³ Whewell to Archdeacon Hare, 26 December 1840, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 214.

he will undertake, and, despite his sincerity and care, may choose amiss. In the event, Whewell chose the life of the academic. But just ten months later, when once again on the verge of giving up academia, this time for marriage, he is offered the mastership of Trinity College. He accepts unhesitatingly, but not unconcernedly. He writes, again to Archdeacon Hare: ‘I look with awe upon the weight of the duties which it involves, and upon my own deficiencies of character and attainments; but the task appears to be so *plainly brought before me by Providence* that I do not see how I can turn aside from it’.⁴⁴ Here, it seems, the importance of the mastership—and the opportunity it afforded for doing good in the world; the co-incidence in timing with his proposed marriage; the rescue of his academic life, so dear to him; all point to the hand of Providence. His duty is clear. Nevertheless, he stands in need of Providence, to attain the ‘strength and virtue’ required to ‘discharge the duties of the office’ and find ‘happiness’ in the mastership and marriage.⁴⁵

Gaskell likewise, strives to fulfil her particular life purpose. She explains:

We have all some appointed work to do, [which] no one else can do so well; [which] is *our* work; what *we* have to do in advancing the Kingdom of God. ... We must find out what we are sent into the world to do, and define it and make it clear to ourselves, ... and then forget ourselves in our work.⁴⁶

Gaskell has her own appointed work to do, but, as a wife, she must also consider her husband’s need to discharge his appointed work.⁴⁷

Given, then, that for all of these protagonists, Providence works through individuals, how do they see Providence actuating individuals to achieve its purpose?

For Whewell, Providence gives individuals moral faculties—‘powers of thinking, judging, inferring, discovering’; the ‘sense of beauty, the love of art, pleasure [in] nature’. And it is through these moral faculties—by the ‘*influence* of the feeling of responsibility, the *perception* of right and wrong, the hope of happiness, the *love* of good’—that Providence guides the individual aright. Indeed, for Whewell, these mental states together comprise the ‘irresistible esteem for what is right’ that is

⁴⁴ Whewell to Archdeacon Hare, 19 October 19, 1841 in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 231. Emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Whewell to his sister, October 1841 in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 232.

⁴⁶ Gaskell to Eliza Fox, February 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 107.

⁴⁷ Gaskell cannot leave Manchester, for her health’s sake, because ‘the work appointed both for [her] husband [and herself] me lies in Manchester.’ Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 12 December 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 139.

‘stamped upon the human mind by the Deity’.⁴⁸ So, for Whewell, given the operation of the laws of moral causation considered in Chapter 5, the imprint of the Deity on human nature itself motivates individuals to seek to do what is right. In this way, for Whewell, Providence achieves its purposes naturally and rationally.

For Dickens, Providence achieves its purposes by touching the minds of individuals; by the barely conscious guiding of those who will be guided—who seek to be led, and are willing to trust to that inner leading. Dickens takes a cottage because ‘*something* guided [him] to it’, acknowledging ‘the presence of the spirit which directs [his] life’.⁴⁹ For Gaskell, too, Providence is effected through subtle, almost natural, shifts in the mind of the needing individual. In *Ruth*, when Jemima is overcome by her loss of her erstwhile lover Mr Farquhar, she cries out to God, half-thinking her ‘wild imploring cry’ must ‘force out a sign from Heaven’. But it does not. Indeed, nothing seems to happen at all. Nevertheless, ‘a dawn [steals] on through the darkness of her night’. And, in time, the sun comes up; the weather brightens; a half-holiday approaches; and Jemima feels a little joy.⁵⁰ For Gaskell, this self-directed healing is unsurprising—it is a ‘natural unavoidable consequence of all truth and goodness being one and the same, and therefore carried out in every circumstance, external and internal, of God’s creation’.⁵¹ But, for Gaskell, Providence is sometimes achieved by God more directly touching the minds of people, calling out their better selves, to achieve the divine purpose. Gaskell speaks of ‘Dear Mr Milnes’ warming her heart as he ‘spoke of ... Providence calling the great heroes and heroines of the world out of private life, out of deep self-unconsciousness’ to do its service. While concerned it may sound rather like ‘bosh’, Gaskell declares—‘it makes one feel the livingness of God ... to think how ... He is sending his spirit down into [Florence Nightingale]’ to effect his purposes.⁵²

For Newman, Providence uses both the laws of moral causation—the ‘seminal principles’ of the moral world—and the moral sense to guide the individual

⁴⁸ Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 255, 257, 259, 266–267. See also 375–377; Whewell, *Philosophy of Inductive Sciences*, 2:330.

⁴⁹ Dickens to Mrs. Charles Dickens, 5 March 1839, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:517; Dickens to John Forster, 29 January 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:35.

⁵⁰ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 334. See also Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 310–311.

⁵¹ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 284–285. Here Gaskell’s thinking echoes Whewell’s notion of a fundamental resonance between the material world and the human mind because ‘the creator of the atmosphere and of the material universe is the creator of the human mind, and the author of those wonderful powers of thinking, judging, inferring, discovering, by which we are able to reason concerning the world in which we are placed’. Whewell, *On Astronomy and General Physics*, 257–258.

⁵² Gaskell to Parthenope Nightingale, 18 January 1856, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 383; Gaskell to Catherine Winkworth, 11–14 October 1854, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 307.

aright. And, in particular instances when there is a particular need, God also touches the mind directly to guide the reproaching conscience.⁵³

Given Spurgeon's conviction of the inherent 'corruption, depravity and wickedness' of individuals and their 'utter inability' to do any good of themselves, it is unsurprising that Spurgeon's Providence frequently guides individuals—or, at least, the elect individuals—by direct 'promptings of ... God'.⁵⁴ Spurgeon himself recounts many such experiences. Indeed, Spurgeon tells of experiencing 'so many interpositions' of Providence, 'in small matters as well as great ones', that whatever happened he was 'bound to fall on [his] feet'.⁵⁵ Such interpositions include prompting the remembrance of a text to elicit a guiding thought; directly suggesting 'holy thoughts' that encourage and comfort; and prompting others to assist and encourage their needing fellows.⁵⁶

But this is not to say that our protagonists do not see the hand of Providence in the more prosaic workings of the moral world. Dickens often reads apparent coincidences as the workings of Providence.⁵⁷ Newman and Spurgeon see the ordinary circumstances of life—the family into which one is born, where one goes to school, offers made, invitations received—as the means by which Providence effects immeasurable blessings.⁵⁸ But, given that life, for both Newman and Spurgeon, is a spiritual war between God and Satan, the accidents of life can both help and hinder individuals seeking the path of Providence. One may find it hard to spot the difference between divine guidance pointing out the providential path—to be followed with effort; divine hindrance blocking exits from the providential path—to be avoided; divine hindrance on the providential path—to be overcome thereby

⁵³ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 48–49.

⁵⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, "Presumptuous Sins: a sermon delivered at The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, 7 June 1857," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0135-Presumptuous-Sins.htm>, accessed 22 April 2017; Spurgeon to Mrs. Eliza Spurgeon, 19 February 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 22; Spurgeon, "Satanic Hindrances".

⁵⁵ On that occasion Spurgeon had discovered, on losing his railway ticket, that his sympathetic fellow railway passenger was the General Manager of the railway line. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:369.

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:248; C. H. Spurgeon, "Satan Departing, Angels Ministering: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 15 August 1889," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/2326-Satan-Departing-Angels-Ministering.pdf>, accessed 19 April 2017; C. H. Spurgeon, "Struggling Against Sin: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington," [undated], <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/3482-Struggling-Against-Sin.pdf>, accessed 22 April 2017; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:367. See, for example, a shoemaker being 'moved' to place a text in his window, which encouraged Spurgeon as he passed. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:272. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:268–269, 2:98, 153, 291, 471.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Dickens to William Telbin, 19 January 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:264. See also Dickens to W. W. F. De Cerjat, 19 January 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:266.

⁵⁸ Newman, *Apologia*, 304; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:165; Spurgeon to James Low, 27 January 1854, in *Autobiography*, 1:254; Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 81–82. See Spurgeon to the Baptist Church of Christ worshipping in New Park Street Chapel Southwark, in *Autobiography*, 1:259. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:464.

building character; Satanic enticements to leave the providential path—to be resisted; and Satanic hindrances along the providential path—again to be overcome; all clouded with the individual’s incompetencies and selfish ambitions. So, for both Spurgeon and Newman, the path of Providence can be difficult to discern.⁵⁹

And, for both Newman and Spurgeon, Providence is sometimes effected by God’s unmediated intervention in the physical world.⁶⁰ We have already noted, in Chapter 5, Spurgeon remarking the providential timing of the collapse of a snow laden roof and the providentially expansive chest of the preacher.⁶¹ Indeed, for Spurgeon, God’s guidance may be given supernaturally—in ways ‘mysterious and remarkable’. He recounts himself hearing, on one occasion, ‘what seemed a loud voice, but which may have been a singular illusion’, challenging and guiding him.⁶² Here again, Spurgeon’s views—and, indeed, Newman’s—align with those of many Evangelicals who, being more or less inclined to accept the notion of God’s unmediated intervention in the physical world, ‘reserved a place for “special” interventions—especially ‘in judgments of whole nations’ and ‘securing ... individual conversions’.⁶³

Given their conceptions of how Providence works, what do our protagonists think is the appropriate response of individuals? Here our protagonists all agree—effort and acceptance. None of our protagonists see the individual as a passive pawn in the hands of Providence. Effort is required. Further, this effort is the natural response to the apprehension of the reality of Providence.⁶⁴ Accordingly, Whewell tells his students they will need sobriety and restraint, sympathy, and, critically, education, to discharge their role in Providence—so that ‘the progressive course to which [humankind] is by [its] Maker destined’ may be realised.⁶⁵ Whewell himself felt the need of ‘strength and virtue’ to ‘discharge the duties’ of his own role.⁶⁶ Similarly, for Spurgeon, effort is needed to prepare individuals for their ‘Divine

⁵⁹ See Spurgeon, “Satanic Hindrances”; Newman, *Apologia*, 75. Spurgeon decries would-be preachers for misinterpreting their past business failures as providential signs that they should be preachers. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:102.

⁶⁰ Newman, *Apologia*, 263.

⁶¹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:450, 2:101.

⁶² Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:207–208.

⁶³ Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, 13–14.

⁶⁴ David Copperfield illustrates this responsive effort. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 696–697. Dickens prides himself of his immense efforts to realise his purpose—his ‘constant and ... earnest endeavours’, his ‘great care and pains’. Dickens to The Rev. David Macrae, 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:556; Dickens to Frau Albert, 30 April 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:104. See also Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 19 February 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:60–61.

⁶⁵ Whewell, *Trinity College Commemoration Sermon*, 13, 15, 18.

⁶⁶ Whewell to his sister, October 1841, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 232.

call'.⁶⁷ In the workaday world, too, effort is required. The individual must do all they can before asking God to bless their efforts.⁶⁸ As John Ploughman so sagely explains—'there's no good in lying down and crying, "God help us!"'. Providence 'will put a bit of bacon into [the] pot' if one 'looks after [their] garden and keeps a pig'.⁶⁹

For Newman, identifying and discharging one's role in Providence requires unrelenting effort. Hitting the mark is critical—the individual will 'have to answer for it', if they stray. But the path is not always clear. Indeed, it can remain hidden for 'whole years' on end.⁷⁰ Over and over, we see Newman struggling to find his way. He doubts his motives, he doubts his convictions, he struggles to disregard what may be his own feelings. He fears 'delusion'. He remains 'undecided'; 'doubtful'. He implores God to show him the way, and lead him on. Newman, in short, is a desperate man. He recognises that 'life is for action' and that 'to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith'. But he is no bold individual—he is loathe to surprise, chary of haste, and unable leap into the dark.⁷¹ Instead, he feels his way. The effort is immense.⁷²

While effort is required to fulfil one's role in Providence, for Spurgeon, there are nevertheless times when the individual has no choice but to do so. Of one young man, Spurgeon declares, he was 'thrust in my way by Providence ... of necessity. It was no choice with him ... he simply acted because he was acted upon by a higher power'.⁷³

All our protagonists agree on the need for the individual to come to terms with what is given to them by Providence. The words used vary—patience,

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:386. See also Lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association Aberdeen, 12 March 1861, in Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:130.

⁶⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Golden Key of Prayer: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 12 March 1865," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0619-The-Golden-Key-Of-Prayer.pdf>, accessed 22 April 2017.

⁶⁹ Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks*, 54. See also Dickens, *Bleak House*, 213; Dickens to Mrs. Burnett, 3 May 1848, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:886; Dickens to Miss Mary Dickens, 15 September 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:659–660; Gaskell to Unknown, 25 September 1862, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 694–695.

⁷⁰ Newman, *Apologia*, 75, 163.

⁷¹ See Newman to a lady of excitable temperament, April 1841, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:310–311; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 21 May 1844, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:386; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 24 November 1844, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:399; Newman to Mrs. T. Mozley, festival of St Andrew 1844, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:402; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, October 1845, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:421–422; Newman, *Apologia*, 50; Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 92.

⁷² For Newman, obedience is the first step in a virtuous circle of ongoing discovery and conformity to one's particular providence; and perplexed individuals, 'who wish for light but cannot find it' need only obey. Newman, "Obedience the Remedy for Religious Perplexity," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 148.

⁷³ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:385.

acceptance, resignation, submission—depending on the difficulty of doing so. But the thought is the same—what is given to us by Providence is, in the end, for our good, so we best accept it and get on with it.

Gaskell urges acceptance of circumstances beyond our control and patient submission to Providence. Indeed, as we have noted, for Gaskell, to refuse to do so is ‘blasphemy’.⁷⁴ And for Spurgeon, likewise, resisting Providence is nothing less than ‘wickedly finding fault with God’. Instead, one must, through prayer, seek ‘submission to our Lord’s will’.⁷⁵ For Newman too, ‘submission’ to ‘the Divine yoke’ is essential for right living, and he urges ‘the contemplation of obedience and holiness’ to acquire ‘perfect resignation to God’s will’.⁷⁶ Whewell, too, urges acceptance, but his focus is on gaining a deeper understanding, a broader perspective, so that we can accept Providence’s difficulties for what they are, short-lived preparation for eternity.⁷⁷

We have seen that, for Dickens, there is much that happens in this world that is not the work of Providence but, rather, is its design overthrown. Providence has complete rule only in the ‘bright and happy world beyond the Grave’.⁷⁸ So, for Dickens, one is not at all bound to accept all that is outside one’s control. Indeed, one ought to do what one can to make the world a better place.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, for Dickens, there is much in the world given by Providence, which must be accepted accordingly. One key Providential provision, which one must accept in this way, is the institution of class. Dickens mocks ‘persons in the

⁷⁴ Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 105. See also Gaskell’s approval of Mary’s ‘unusual wisdom of resolving to do nothing, but strive to be patient, and improve circumstances as they might turn up’. Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 129. See further Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 291–292. For examples of accepting the death of a young child as the work of Providence see Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 69; Gaskell to Charles Bosanquet, 20 April 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 551. For the story of young Willie Gaskell’s death see Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 152–155.

⁷⁵ Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks*, 44–45; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:486–487.

⁷⁶ John Henry Newman, “Human Responsibility, as Independent of Circumstances,” in *Fifteen Sermons*, 145; Newman to Z. Y. X., 29 May 1840, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:274–275. See also Newman to the lady of excitable temperament, April 1841, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:310–311.

⁷⁷ Whewell to his Sister Elizabeth, 28 February 1820, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 57.

⁷⁸ Dickens, “The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain”, 205; Dickens to William Bradbury, 3 March 1839, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:515. See also Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 220; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 425; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 8 April 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:233.

⁷⁹ Dickens himself worked very hard to improve the lot of the poor. See, for example, Dickens to J. V. Staples, 3 April 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:95; Dickens to E. M. Fitzgerald, 29 December 1838, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:483–484; Dickens to Dr Southwood Smith, 20 November 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:656; Dickens to The Rev. G. F. Galaher, 19 January 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:13; Dickens to Henry Austin, 31 January 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:19; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 1 February 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:20; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 29 September 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:428; Dickens to George Russell, 14 December 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:283; Dickens to George Russell, 19 December 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:285; Dickens to J. C. Parkinson, February 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:314–315; Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 6 February 1850, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 107. See also Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 541; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 13–14, 53–54; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 199–200, 498.

humbler classes of life' who 'ape the manners and customs of those whom fortune has placed above them—particularly 'the would-be aristocrats of the middle classes'.⁸⁰ In his novels, he warns of the dangers of class breaking aspirations—most graphically in Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend*. Headstone started life as 'as a pauper lad', but we first meet him in gentleman's attire—'he was never seen in any other dress, and yet there was a certain stiffness in his manner of wearing this, as if there were a want of adaptation between him and it'. He is a troubled man with a troubled face—'the face belonging to a naturally slow or inattentive intellect that had toiled hard to get what it had won, and that had to hold it now that it was gotten'. Headstone, whose foundational crime is to suppose that he can, by dint of his own labours, make himself the equal of a born-to-it gentleman, is shown to be a terminally ambitious misfit who makes himself ridiculous. Worse than that, Headstone's ploddingly unstoppable ambition to be the gentleman he is not, transmogrifies into a nasty obsession with Lizzie Hexam and leads him on to the attempted murder of his nemesis, the charmingly useless gentleman Eugene Wrayburn, and to his own suicide. Dickens's message is clear—both class as an institution, and the individual's allotted place in it, are to be accepted as the provision of Providence.⁸¹

Conceptions of prayer, especially supplicatory prayer, are inherently linked to conceptions of Providence. Unsurprisingly, notions of prayer came under scrutiny in Victorian England as understandings of why things happen left less room for divine intervention, and many Victorians—both pious and profane—re-examined traditional conceptions of prayer.⁸² But, as Schneewind notes of Sidgwick, while many Victorians had moved beyond propitiation, and acknowledged the science of universal causation, they nevertheless acknowledged the continuing role of prayer as the means

⁸⁰ Charles Dickens, "London Recreations," in *Sketches by Boz*, ed. Dennis Walder (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 115.

⁸¹ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 218, 285–291, 389–390, 535, 619, 685–696, 770–781. In contrast, the dustman Mr. Boffin is praised to the skies for his ready acceptance of the position into which he was born, and his readiness to forfeit the fortune he 'wrongly' inherits to its 'rightful' (gentleman) owner. See 768. Charley Hexam's burning ambition to break class is likewise shown to be selfish. See 694. See also Emily's wanting 'to be a lady, above her station' which is likewise shown to be a fatal flaw. It leads her to reject the worthy and class appropriate Ham for the unworthy and class inappropriate Steerforth, only to be abandoned by him. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 313, 474.

⁸² The years 1872 and 1873 witnessed the 'prayer-test' debate—'a remarkable skirmish in the centuries old warfare between science and religion'. Members of the scientific fraternity proposed a scientific experiment to determine the effect of prayer on the recovery of the sick—with one group of patients being prayed for by a devout congregation, and the others being left to fend for themselves, without prayer. The theological party declined participation, arguing that religious beliefs cannot be tested by scientific experiment. Stephen G. Brush, "The Prayer Test: The proposal of a 'scientific' experiment to determine the power of prayer kindled a raging debate between Victorian men of science and theologians," *American Scientist* 62 (1974): 561–563.

to ‘indulge a profound and imperious instinct’—the religious expression of the relationship between the individual and the divine.⁸³ Our protagonists’ references to prayer are telling.

For Gaskell the answer to true prayer is always a shift in mind.⁸⁴ In *Ruth*, Gaskell paints a beautiful picture of the individual in prayer—Miss Benson loiters in the chapel, unwilling to disturb Ruth, who is ‘evidently praying, and, by her quiet breathing, receiving grave and solemn influences into her soul’. (Here we have what Janet Larson calls the ‘Victorian language of “feminine soul” and ... prayer ... embedded one in another’ so as to throw on both ‘a new interpretative light’.)⁸⁵ Ruth rises, ‘calm and composed even to dignity’. For Gaskell, those who pray to request favours, miss the point. Prayer is an opportunity to seek grace to do God’s unerring will.⁸⁶ In Ruth’s prayer we see Providence as unerring—her response is submission and her reward is grace.

Dickens gives various illustrations of prayer in his novels. Two striking prayers are wrought in moral panic. When Mr Peggotty learns that his precious Emily has run off with the charming Steerforth he prays to his ‘good and gracious God to kill her ... sooner than let her come to ruin and disgrace!’. Likewise, when Oliver Twist learns he is to be delivered to the nefarious Bill Sikes, he prays ‘in a paroxysm of fear’, that ‘he should die at once’, rather than ‘be reserved for crimes, so fearful and appalling’. Neither prayer is answered. Emily does come to ruin and disgrace—but finally to redemption; and Oliver is coerced into crime—but proves incorruptible. Two less striking prayers spring from gratitude and concern. Barnaby Rudge’s mother prays that God will help the simple Barnaby ‘in his darkened walk through this sad world’. And young Oliver, now prospering under the gentle care of Mrs Maylie, Rose and Mr Losberne, calls down blessings on his benefactors, to ‘[sink] into their souls, diffusing peace and happiness’.⁸⁷ Whether these prayers are answered, none can know.

⁸³ Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics*, 27.

⁸⁴ Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 176.

⁸⁵ Janet L. Larson, “Lady-Wrestling for Victorian Soul: Discourse, Gender, and Spirituality in Women’s Texts,” *Religion & Literature* 23, no. 3 (1991): 51.

⁸⁶ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 154; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 176. See also Gaskell, *Ruth*, 334; Gaskell, *North and South*, 268; Gaskell to Mrs. Mary Arnold, 16 April 1859, in *Further Letters*, 196.

⁸⁷ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 458; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 164; Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 154; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 255.

As an insight into Dickens's conception of Providence, his depiction of Lizzie's prayer in *Our Mutual Friend*, is most telling. When she sees 'a bloody face' in the river, 'turned up towards the moon, and drifting away', Lizzie prays:

Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, and grant, O Blessed Lord, that through thy wonderful workings it may turn to good at last! To whomsoever the drifting face belongs ... help my humble hands, Lord God, to raise it from death and restore it to some one to whom it must be dear!

Her prayer is at once a cry for help and a prayer of submission. Critically, it does not check her actions. Using the skills she has learned in her father's boat—scraping a living and assorted dead bodies from the Thames—Lizzie finds the boat, takes to the water and spots the drowning figure by moonlight. It is '*as if* possessed by supernatural spirit and strength' that she lashes the body to the boat and runs the boat ashore. It is 'by main strength' she lifts him in her arms and binds his wounds. She prays again.

Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, enabling me, without a wasted moment, to have got the boat afloat again, and to row back against the stream! And grant, O Blessed Lord God, that through poor me he may be raised from death, and preserved to some one else to whom he may be dear one day, though never dearer than to me!

And, foreseeing that he will bleed to death unless she gets him to the inn, she rows 'hard', 'desperately, but never wildly' until she reaches the inn and makes it fast. 'By main strength' Lizzie carries Eugene into the house. She knows she could not 'at another time' have had the strength to do it, but she knows she did.⁸⁸ Lizzie prays for help, for help for her humble hands—humble hands that have been well prepared by her hard experience of life. Lizzie's prayers bring no miracle—but, with a thankful and determined heart, *she* does the undoable. In this prayer we see Dickens's Providence as the work of individuals, the very hard work of individuals.

For Dickens, effective prayer is aligned with the purposes of Providence. Prayer does not change anything. Rather, it echoes the unerring purposes of Providence and the individual's willing effort to effect those purposes. It does not presume to dictate—only to submit. It asks no blessing for self. It asks only for others; blessings to lighten the load as we 'walk through this sad world'. Similarly, in

⁸⁸ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 682–685. Emphasis added.

the real world, Dickens's claims for prayer are modest. For himself, he prays that he may, through God's mercy, finally rejoin those who have gone before, in Heaven. He exhorts his sons to 'never abandon the wholesome practice of ... private prayers, night and morning'. Attesting he 'has never abandoned it' and knows 'the comfort of it'.⁸⁹ For Dickens, prayer doesn't change the world. It simply reassures the individual of their place in this world and the next; of their place in Providence.

For Newman, prayer is always effective—so long as the praying individual has attained sufficient holiness. And Newman's bar for the requisite holiness is high—'consistent obedience, mature, habitual, lifelong holiness'.⁹⁰ In this way, Newman effectively forges an identity between the petitioner's requests and Providence—and, by doing so, renders unanswered prayer a marker of unholiness. So Newman's prayers seem very like prompting God, desperately at times, to effect Providence. It is 'with deep earnestness' that the still Anglican Newman invokes his friends, if ever he be in serious danger of conversion to Rome, to pray that, 'if it was not indeed the will of God' that he do so, 'he might be taken away before he did it'.⁹¹ In any event, at the end of his life, Newman declares that God has 'never failed me, never disappointed me, has ever turned evil into good for me' and, in doing so, directly connects God's faithfulness to his own prayerfulness—'when I was young I used to say (and *I trust it was not presumptuous to say it*) that our Lord ever answered *my prayers*'.⁹² A testimony, one can only assume, to his 'lifelong holiness'. In Newman's prayers we see Providence as unerring, and the individual conforming to that Providence through holiness.

For Spurgeon prayer is an act of piety—individuals ought to pray because they are commanded to pray. Prayer secures 'consecrated fellowship' with God as a remedy for the tendency to 'worldliness'; and meditative prayer affords insights into the 'higher and more mysterious truths of God'. I have found it difficult to weave together Spurgeon's conception of supplicatory prayer. It is riddled with tensions. As

⁸⁹ Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 154; Diary of Charles Dickens, 1 January 1838, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:629; Dickens to Edward Dickens, 26 September 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:188; Dickens to Alfred Dickens, 28 May 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:48. See also Dickens to Henry Dickens, 15 October 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:202.

⁹⁰ Newman, "Intercession," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 708. See also Newman, *Tract 90: On Certain Passages in the Thirty-Nine Articles*, 3.

⁹¹ H. W. Wilberforce (as attributed by Newman), Extract of article (Dublin Review, April 1869), in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:256–257. See also Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 31 August 1843, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:377; Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 15 March 1845, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:411–412.

⁹² Newman to J. R. Mozley, March 1884, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:431. Emphasis added.

a starting point, Spurgeon asserts that prayer is a certain way to secure the good things we desire. He advocates frequent prayers—asking for God’s help in all the needful circumstances of our workaday world. Spurgeon declares—God ‘has heard my prayers, not now and then ... but so many times that it has grown into a habit with me to spread my case before God with the absolute certainty that whatever I ask of God, He will give it to me’. More than this, Spurgeon correlates the effort of the supplicant and the effectiveness of their prayer—‘as ... a certain amount of leverage will lift a weight, ... a certain amount of prayer will get anything from God’. So the earnest supplicant should pray ‘more vehemently, ... cry aloud; spare not’. Indeed, Spurgeon advocates arguing with God—explaining to God how God ought to act in the circumstances. In any event, for Spurgeon, the greater the faith, and the number, of supplicants, the more effective their prayers.⁹³ Spurgeon is very aware that others perceive a tension between belief in an unerring Providence and supplicatory prayer, and resolve that tension by emphasising submission over supplication. Spurgeon is unimpressed.

It is ... questioned, in many quarters, whether there is any real effect produced by prayer, except that ‘it excites certain pious emotions in the breasts of those who pray’. This is a pretty statement! ... We are sure that we obtain answers to prayer. ... I solemnly declare that I have received of the Lord that which I have asked at His hands, and ... I am associated with multitudes of men and women who bear witness to the same fact, ... that they ... sought the Lord by prayer and supplication, and He heard them, and delivered them out of their distresses.⁹⁴

But Spurgeon qualifies his assertion that ‘a certain amount of prayer will get anything from God’.⁹⁵ Qualifies it radically. For Spurgeon, to be effective, supplicatory prayer must not only be made subject to ‘the Divine Will’ it must also be aided by divine interposition. Spurgeon is not blind to what this implies—that prayer is effective only if it anticipates what God has already decreed. So that prayer cannot

⁹³ Spurgeon, “The Golden Key Of Prayer”; C. H. Spurgeon, “The Ravens’ Cry’: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 14 January 1866,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0672-The-Ravens-Cry.pdf>, accessed 21 April 2017; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:197. Spurgeon attributes the success of the Tabernacle to their ‘very conspicuous’ reliance on prayer. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:6, 395. See also Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks*, 61; Spurgeon to James Low, 27 January 1854, in *Autobiography*, 1:263. See also 1:256.

⁹⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:56–57.

⁹⁵ Spurgeon, “The Golden Key Of Prayer”.

change anything.⁹⁶ So, for Spurgeon, on the one hand, if prayers go unanswered it is because the supplicants are not sufficiently earnest, numerous or faithful and, on the other hand, no matter how earnest, numerous or faithful the supplicants, no prayer can change anything. The tension is self-evident, and Spurgeon resolves it by falling back, as he so often does, on the ‘predestination’ that ‘embraceth the great and the little, and reacheth unto all things’. For Spurgeon, ‘God has as much ordained’ the prayers of the elect ‘as anything else’, and when they pray, they ‘are producing links in the chain of ordained facts’. Spurgeon declares, ‘Destiny decrees that I should pray—I pray’. Similarly, ‘Destiny decrees that I shall be answered and the answer comes to me’.⁹⁷ For Spurgeon, experiencing life’s happenings in this way—as prayed for (as decreed by God) and then received (as decreed by God), the individual is thankful to God for the blessings received.⁹⁸ In Spurgeon’s conception of prayer, we can see the reflections of the tension in his conception of Providence—at once unerringly unchangeable decree and yet experienced, at least by some individuals, as responsive to their needs.

Both Dickens and Gaskell are alive to the hazards of a Providence-centred world view. Dickens observes that the lazy, the selfish, the irresponsible, the incompetent, and the just plain bad, like to paint their own moral failures as the unavoidable outworking of Providence. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Mr Podsnap finds it both ‘remarkable’ and ‘very comfortable’ that ‘what Providence meant, was invariably what Mr Podsnap meant’, and highly convenient that ‘Providence has declared that you shall have the poor always with you’—thereby relieving Podsnap of the obligation to do anything about it.⁹⁹ Equally, in the real world, Dickens is appalled when those in power attribute disasters of their own making to Providence.¹⁰⁰ Gaskell and Dickens also warn against the self-deceiving use of Providence as a mask for an individual’s selfish will. When, in *Sylvia’s Lovers*, Philip fails to warn Charley Kinraid, his rival in love, of the press-gang waiting to take Charley, Philip excuses his

⁹⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, “Order and Argument in Prayer: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 15 July 1866,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0700-Order-And-Argument-In-Prayer.htm>, accessed 22 April 2017; C. H. Spurgeon, “The Throne of Grace: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 19 November 1871,” <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/1024-The-Throne-Of-Grace.htm>; accessed 22 April 2017.

⁹⁷ Spurgeon, “Prayer Certified Of Success”.

⁹⁸ Spurgeon, “Order And Argument in Prayer”.

⁹⁹ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 132, 144.

¹⁰⁰ Dickens to Captain E. E. Morgan, 19 March 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:571. See editor’s note 6.

own inaction by telling himself ‘it is God’s providence’ that Charley be taken. Philip priggishly thanks God for the resulting opportunity to gain Sylvia’s hand—the hand he has long coveted. The reader is appalled. And so, in time, is Philip.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in *Dombey and Son*, Mrs Chick, in expectation of soon coming up in the world, unfairly excommunicates her loyal but humble friend and is comfortably right in her appalling wrong because, as she ‘piously’ explains, ‘there’s a providence in everything; everything works for the best’. Likewise, the reader watches on in horror as Mrs Skewton encourages her daughter to chase after the wealthy, but otherwise horridly unsuitable, Dombey because ‘there is such an obvious destiny in it’.¹⁰² Indeed, for Dickens, those looking for lame excuses, can characterise even opportunities for theft as Providence.¹⁰³

In her novels George Eliot tellingly critiques popular conceptions of Providence. As her critiques bear directly on the conceptions of Providence discussed in this chapter, I have included a consideration of those critiques here. We will consider her conception of causation in the moral world more broadly in Chapter 7.

George Eliot sees the notion of the divine direction and control of our individual lives—a notion particularly characteristic of both Newman’s and Spurgeon’s conception of Providence—as mere egoism. She explores this conception of Providence in *Middlemarch*:

Your pier-glass ... polished ... by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. ... The scratches are going everywhere impartially and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement. ... These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent—of Miss Vincy, for example. Rosamond had a Providence ... who had kindly made her more charming than other girls, and who seemed to have arranged Fred’s illness ... in order to bring her and Lydgate

¹⁰¹ Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 215–222.

¹⁰² Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 420, 458.

¹⁰³ See Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 321.

within effective proximity. It would ... contravene these arrangements if Rosamond ... consented to go away.¹⁰⁴

Rosamond's defiance is telling. It illustrates what is, for George Eliot, the fatal egoism of claiming the direction of Providence as a moral guide. On the one hand, Rosamond relies on the 'arrangement' of past events (that is, their coming about without any doing on her part) as evidence that where she finds herself is the right place for her to be. But, on the other hand, she resists the 'arrangement' of future events (without any doing on her part)—as they seem likely to compromise the advantages of her current position. We find the inherent egoism of Rosamond's candle-to-the-pier-glass Providence writ large in Mr Bulstrode:

Bulstrode's course up to that time had, he thought, been sanctioned by remarkable providences. ... The events were comparatively small, but the essential condition was there — namely, that they were in favour of his own ends. It was easy for him to settle what was due from him to others by inquiring what were God's intentions with regard to himself. [Others] seemed to lie outside the path of remarkable providences.¹⁰⁵

Further, this candle-to-the-pier-glass Providence is often used as a mask for self-interest. George Eliot's novels abound with illustrations. Many are trivial and comic, but many are telling instances of individuals claiming whatever seems easiest or best for them is the provision of Providence. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the in-laws make themselves comfortable with their cold-heartedness, by taking the view that 'a judgment had fallen on Mr. Tulliver, which it would be an impiety to counteract by too much kindness'.¹⁰⁶ And in *Daniel Deronda*, Gascoigne urges Gwendolen to marry the wealthy, if chillingly manipulative, Grandcourt because she has 'a duty' to do so when 'Providence offers ... power and position'.¹⁰⁷

But it is in *Middlemarch* that George Eliot most thoroughly critiques the comfortable assumption that whatever satisfies one's interests is the provision of Providence and, consequently, not to be ruffled. In Casaubon, George Eliot draws strong links between a self-interested notion of Providence and a wretched self-centredness. The Reverend Edward Casaubon has 'iron-grey hair' and 'deep eye-

¹⁰⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 264.

¹⁰⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 618.

¹⁰⁶ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 210. See also 343. For the trivial and comic see "Brother Jacob," in George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil, Brother Jacob*, 52; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 102, 333.

¹⁰⁷ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 178–179. See also George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 389–390; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 276; George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 23. See also Stephen invoking Providence to elude moral responsibility for his attempted elopement with Maggie. George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 485.

sockets'. He is 'a man of profound learning ... having views of his own which [are] to be more clearly ascertained on the publication of his book'. He is 'engaged on a great work concerning religious history'—the *Key to all Mythologies*—in which he hopes to 'show (what indeed had been attempted before, but not with that thoroughness, justice of comparison, and effectiveness of arrangement ... at which Mr. Casaubon aimed) that all the mythical systems ... in the world [are] corruptions of a tradition originally revealed'. For Casaubon, the purposes of Providence are his own purposes. This is not because Casaubon is some kind of clerical megalomaniac who believes himself to be the centre of the universe. Quite the reverse. Casaubon is riddled with 'the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy'.¹⁰⁸ Here George Eliot points to a danger much more subtle, and pernicious, than megalomania. If an individual sees their chosen project in life as God's providential purpose for them, then they can see anything that advances their project, or helps them to advance their project, or makes it easier for them to advance their project—and almost any satisfaction can do that—as a providential provision. In this way, the often sincere individual can see almost anything as God's providential provision for them. So, because Casaubon sees the *Key to all Mythologies* as his providential purpose, he can see anything that makes his life easier as a providential provision. This is why he proposes to Dorothea without a hint of romance. For Casaubon, meeting Dorothea is 'providentially related ... to ... the completion of [his] life's plan'. Casaubon makes himself ridiculous, but is nevertheless sincere, when he declares to his would-be bride—he should regard acceptance by her as her husband as 'the highest of providential gifts'.¹⁰⁹ For Casaubon, 'Providence, in its kindness ... supplied him with the wife he needed' and, this being the case, 'whether Providence had taken equal care of [Dorothea] in presenting her with Mr. Casaubon was an idea which could hardly occur to him'.¹¹⁰

In Bulstrode, George Eliot draws strong links between a self-interested notion of Providence and self-righteousness. Nicholas Bulstrode is the banker in town. He knows a little more about his fellow citizens than they would like him to know. And his fellow citizens owe him a little more than they would like to owe. Bulstrode enjoys the power his position affords. Bulstrode's past is a mystery, known

¹⁰⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 11, 16, 24, 376–377.

¹⁰⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 44.

¹¹⁰ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 279. See also 373.

to himself and confessed in private to his God—a God of a decidedly Evangelical variety. Bulstrode believes his redemption has been effected by faith, in private, in a single doctrinal transaction between him and his God. Bulstrode seeks to live his redeemed life to the glory of God—through excruciating piety (half starving himself and going the length in family prayers); unhesitating righteousness (‘to point out other people’s errors [is] a duty that Mr. Bulstrode rarely [shrinks] from’); and public philanthropy (building a research hospital ‘under submission to the Divine Will’).¹¹¹ Bulstrode happily accepts the success of his banking business, along with the money, status and consequent power to do good that it brings, as God’s providential provision—‘conducive to the divine glory’.¹¹² Bulstrode believes his path in life has been prepared for him by a generously beneficent Providence—a Providence that has, at times, cleared the way for him by blocking the way for others. Bulstrode’s conception of redemption through atonement—under which believers are redeemed by their faith and unbelievers are condemned by their lack of it—enables Bulstrode to see those others, who don’t believe as he believes, as ‘God’s enemies’, without intrinsic worth, to be ‘used merely as instruments’ for the advancement of God’s cause; for the advancement of Bulstrode’s cause. So when the boozy and blackmailing Raffles appears in Middlemarch, like a corpse resurrected from Bulstrode’s long buried past, Bulstrode trusts to Providence to do whatever is needed to protect his worthy self from the public shaming that will snatch away the very possibility of living his redeemed life to the glory of God. Bulstrode trusts to Providence for the destruction of another, for the purpose of saving his own reputation. So, while Raffles is ‘getting worse, and slowly dying’, Bulstrode can ‘go to bed and sleep in gratitude to Providence’.¹¹³

We may be tempted to see Bulstrode’s conception of Providence as a self-serving hypocrisy. It is self-serving, certainly. One who holds both that God is alienated from the world and that they are aligned with God, will inevitably seek to justify actions that are detrimental to their fellows, and beneficial to themselves, on the basis that those actions are ordained by God. But George Eliot warns us that to

¹¹¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 128, 131, 682.

¹¹² Here Bulstrode typifies the not unusual Victorian phenomenon of the Evangelical banker—combining worldliness and other-worldliness; secular ambition and religious conviction. See Jay, *The Religion of the Heart*, 47–48.

¹¹³ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 175, 519–521, 614–615, 619, 697, 709, 717.

see Bulstrode's conception of Providence as a hypocrisy is to fail to understand how the world is experienced by those who separate God from humanity:

We are concerned with [events] from Mr. Bulstrode's point of view, and he interpreted [them] as a cheering dispensation conveying perhaps a sanction to a purpose. ... [The] destin[ies] [of others] ... belonged to the unmapped regions not taken under the providential government, except perhaps in an imperfect colonial way. ...

This was not what Mr. Bulstrode said to any man for the sake of deceiving him: it was what he said to himself—it was as genuinely his mode of explaining events as any theory of yours may be, if you happen to disagree with him. For the egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity; rather, the more our egoism is satisfied, the more robust is our belief.¹¹⁴

For George Eliot an Evangelical theology inevitably gives rise to a conception of Providence which places oneself at the centre. Events are understood only as they affect oneself, and are seen to be being directed at oneself—whether as a blessing or a chastisement. So Bulstrode sees Raffles as existing only in relation to Bulstrode. He is nothing of himself. He is not an individual with his own history, and his own needs. Rather, Raffles is merely a force—a force for Bulstrode to reckon with.¹¹⁵ It is this self-centricity of Evangelical conceptions of Providence that George Eliot mocks when she asks a correspondent—‘Don't you think it would have been “providential” if you had had no friends, so that you could have joined our party and made us happier? I know that would be considered good theology in some quarters’.¹¹⁶

In her novels, George Eliot also condemns the foolish reliance on a Providence by which individuals convince themselves all will be well. In *Adam Bede*, Arthur is misled—and Hetty is ultimately destroyed—by Arthur's ‘implicit confidence ... that he was really such a good fellow at bottom’ that, despite exploiting Hetty's naivety, ‘Providence would not treat him harshly’.¹¹⁷ And in *Middlemarch*, the less than prosperous Mr. Vincy, and his layabout son Fred, both come adrift trusting too much to a generous Providence.¹¹⁸ For George Eliot, the individual who

¹¹⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 520–521.

¹¹⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 525.

¹¹⁶ George Eliot to Mary Marshall, 22 December 1864 in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:170–171.

¹¹⁷ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 361.

¹¹⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 128–129, 343

looks to Providence to provide for them separately from their own efforts is bound to be disappointed. And when the selfless Dorothea reads the ill-tuned world as the work of Providence by ‘accounting for seeming discords by her own deafness to the higher harmonies’, it is not so much the egoism of Providence but its optimism, that George Eliot gently rebukes.¹¹⁹

George Eliot also asserts the practical impossibility of, even the most sincere, discerning what amounts to Providence for the purpose of guidance. She illustrates this principle in *Adam Bede*. Dinah confidently tells her Aunt Poyser—‘Your wish for me to stay is not a call of duty which I refuse to hearken to because it is against my own desires; it is a temptation that I must resist’.¹²⁰ But the reader does not share Dinah’s confidence—mostly because the reader wants her to stay, and thinks that, if she were sensible, she would want to stay too. But, more than that, the reader has already seen that Dinah is that ‘very old-fashioned kind’ of Methodist who seeks divine guidance by ‘opening the Bible at hazard’.¹²¹ And while the reader fully trusts Dinah’s sincerity in seeking guidance, they are left with grave doubts as to effectiveness of her methods.

So, for George Eliot, the notion of Providence as the divine direction and control of individual lives is inherently flawed. It arises from an illusion—the illusion that because we are at the centre of the world as we see it, we are also at the centre of Providence. Further, a notion of Providence that puts oneself at the centre, sees others only as they affect oneself, and not as individuals with their own histories and needs. In any event, it is impossible to discern what amounts to Providence for the purpose of individual guidance.

All of our protagonists with Providence-centred world views—Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon—are, to some extent, aware of the inherent tension in the concept of an unerring Providence effected through the willed and effortful action of often erring individuals. Those tensions are considered in Chapter 10.

We have seen that Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon each have conceptions of Providence which, while they have much in common, have different emphases and some significant differences. All hold that, at some level,

¹¹⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 75.

¹²⁰ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 520.

¹²¹ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 82, 203–204. See also Nancy’s somewhat whimsical resignation to Providence. George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 156.

Providence determines what happens next in the world—so that whatever may happen is, at least in the longer term, for the best. Further, they all agree that Providence is realised, at least in part, by individuals. For Dickens, this means Providence can be frustrated in this world by the failure of individuals to play their intended part. These protagonists also recognise that bad things happen, and accommodate the tension this implies in various ways. Further, all of these protagonists agree that the individual must accept what is given by the hand of Providence—and that resisting Providence is both foolish and wrong.

In Chapter 8, we will consider the moralities of Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon, and identify the extent to which they reflect their conceptions of Providence. But first, we will consider how Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot conceive of a moral world which, while comprehending a providence of sorts, is without Providence.

Chapter 7: Beyond Providence

Four of our protagonists—Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot—have conceptions of the moral world which are not centred on Providence. We will consider their conceptions in this chapter. We will find that the conceptions of the moral world held by Arnold, Green and George Eliot comprise notions of providence but, in each case, those notions vary significantly from the Providence owned by Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon, which we considered in Chapter 6.

John Stuart Mill

Mill's conception of the moral world has no notion of providence. It was from his father, James Mill, that the young John Stuart learned of the incongruence between a Providence combining 'infinite power' and 'perfect goodness', and 'a world so full of evil'.¹ Mill never relents pointing out that belief in such a Providence is 'a perversion of the moral faculty', obliging the believer to 'maintain that evil is good'.² In any event, Mill pays scant regard to any notion of providence.

Unlike our other protagonists, Mill does not draw a sharp distinction between material and moral causation. For Mill, nothing that we experience is uncaused. The present, in both its material and moral aspects, is utterly dependent on the past, and the future is utterly dependent on the present.³ The drop of a leaf, the call of a bird, the smile of a child, the roar of a crowd, an undeserved kindness, an unprovoked assault—everything we experience has its cause. And, for Mill, this cause is to be found 'in some fact or concourse of facts which immediately preceded the occurrence' for 'the whole of the present facts are the infallible result of all past facts, and, more immediately, of all the facts which existed at the moment previous'.⁴ For Mill, causation is grounded in mental habit and attributed by the observer. We impute causation where we observe an invariable association between certain phenomena (causes, or, for Mill, *invariable antecedents*) and other phenomena (their effects). For

¹ Mill, *Autobiography*, 50.

² See Mill to Arthur W. Green, 16 December 1861, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:754; Mill to Edwin Arnold, 13 May 1872, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 17:1894; Mill, *Autobiography*, 204.

³ Mill, *Logic*, 7:325, 346, 569–570; John Stuart Mill, "Auguste Comte and Positivism," in *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, 293.

⁴ Mill, *Logic*, 7:379. See also Mill, *Logic*, 7:347–348, 377–378.

Mill, to go beyond what we can observe (or what we can properly induce from observation) is to go beyond the proper scope of our knowledge. It follows that causation can only signify invariable antecedence. It cannot signify any occult power in anything to make or change anything else.⁵ So, for Mill, causation goes to predictability rather than compulsion. The laws of causation do not *make* anything happen. They merely enable the experienced observer to predict, with some degree of certainty, what will happen next.⁶

When considering Mill's conception of moral causation, we must keep this concept of causation, as predictability rather than compulsion, in mind.⁷ Mill had two very personal reasons for holding the doctrine of freedom of the will. Firstly, his soul resisted futility. If our will, is made *for* us, not *by* us, then our moral efforts are irrelevant; our lives are the products of circumstances; and we do not make them. Secondly, as a would-be reformer of society, he found the doctrine of freedom of the will attractive, indeed, necessary. Change can be effected only if individuals believe they have the freedom to initiate it. Mill recognised that these two needs were, in one sense at least, at odds with his intellectual commitment to deterministic causation. But on this commitment, Mill would not yield. And here again, we can discern two reasons. Firstly, Mill was convinced of the validity of the application of deterministic causation to the will. For Mill, 'will is in its own nature as regular a phenomenon, as much a subject of law, as anything else.' Secondly, deterministic causation is essential if we are to have any control over our will; if our volitions are to mean anything. If our will is uncaused, our volitions are random, in which case, our actions have no moral meaning. For Mill, it is 'incontestable that there exist uniformities of succession among states of mind, and that these can be ascertained by observation and experiment'. But the laws of moral causation are difficult to identify. The alternative chains of cause and effect—the uniformities of succession—being, as a practical matter, difficult, but not inherently impossible, to identify and apply.⁸

⁵ Mill to Samuel Bailey, 21 January 1863, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:824. For Mill, as for both David Hume and Auguste Comte, 'there is no other kind of [cause]: cause ... means the invariable antecedent'. Mill, "Auguste Comte and Positivism", 265–267; John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy and of the Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in His Writings* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1867), 361.

⁶ For the practical business of living, probability rather than certainty, must, and does, suffice. Mill, *Logic*, 7:591. For the practical difficulties, even impossibility, of certain prediction see Mill, *Logic*, 7:379–381. See also 7:332, 443–444. See also Snyder, *Reforming Philosophy*, 116.

⁷ Mill, *William Hamilton's Philosophy*, 548, 555–556; Mill, *Autobiography*, 134–135; Mill to Florence Nightingale, 23 September 1860, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:710.

⁸ Mill, *Logic*, 7:337, 442, 8:834, 851; Mill to Rowland G. Hazard, 18 May 1870, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 17:1723.

Given that we live in a material world, our moral life is necessarily mediated by the material world. Query, then, whether, for Mill, moral events interfere with material uniformities of succession, so that moral acts initiate material changes which appear as inexplicable aberrations in the chain of causation; or, conversely, the material and moral worlds are so linked that human volition is itself a predictable event in a uniformity of succession.

In the *Logic* (published in 1843) Mill emphasises the place of human volition within the chain of uniformities of succession. He speaks of human volition as ‘not an efficient, but simply a physical cause. Our will causes our bodily actions in the same sense, and in no other, in which cold causes ice, or a spark causes an explosion of gunpowder’. Further, ‘the volition, a state of our mind, is the antecedent; the motion of our limbs in conformity to the volition, is the consequent’.⁹ Here, by denying that volition is an *efficient* cause (that is, the initiating cause of an event) Mill places human volition within the chain of uniformities of succession, alongside causes devoid of mind—here, cold and spark.¹⁰ By placing human volition within the chain of uniformities of succession, Mill asserts not only that human volitions cause physical events, but also that physical events shape human volitions. For Mill, it is ‘extremely probable’ that all desires, emotions, even our judgments and volitions, arise within the chain of uniformities of succession as a result of *association*—and are, ultimately, derived from simple sensations.¹¹ Our more complex ideas consist of simple ideas brought into relation through the principle of association; and all simple ideas arise directly from a corresponding sensation.¹² In this way, in the *Logic*, mental events (including human volition) take their place *within* the chain of causation—predicted by, and predictive of, events in the physical world.¹³ But in

⁹ Mill, *Logic*, 7:355.

¹⁰ Here Mill refers to the ‘rather ancient doctrine’ of efficient causation which had ‘been revived during the last few years in many quarters’. See Mill, *Logic*, 7:353.

¹¹ Mill, *Logic*, 8:855–856. Here Mill follows his father, James Mill. James Mill, in turn, follows David Hume. See Mill, *Autobiography*, 95–96; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 49–53, 57–58.

¹² Mill, *Logic*, 7:53. This is not to say that Mill has a fundamentally materialistic conception of the physical world. He speaks of matter as ‘a Permanent Possibility of Sensation’—leaving open the question of whether the objects which give rise to sensations have any objective physical existence. See Mill, *William Hamilton’s Philosophy*, 227.

¹³ Mill, *Logic*, 8:837–838. In “Auguste Comte and Positivism” (published in 1865) Mill emphasises the place of human volition *within* the chain of causes and effects—both physical and mental—so that human society obeys not only its own laws, but also ‘all the laws of organic and animal life, together with those of inorganic nature’ which determine the physical conditions under which society is carried on. Mill, “Auguste Comte and Positivism”, 282. But these laws of society are not laws of causation which operate separately from the laws of mind. ‘That social phenomena depend on the acts and mental impressions of human beings, never could have been a matter of any doubt, however imperfectly it may have been known either by what laws those impressions and actions are governed, or to what social consequences their laws naturally lead.’ Mill, *Logic*, 7:455. Further, in a letter in 1867,

Theism (published in 1870) the older Mill appears to claim more for human volition than in the *Logic*. In *Theism* he emphasises not so much human volition being shaped by events, but events being shaped by a human volition that is ‘constantly modifying natural phenomena, not by violating their laws, but by using their laws’. Indeed, ‘the power of volitions over phenomena is itself a law’. This power of the mental over the material is indirectly exercised, through the direct power that the human mind has over human muscle.¹⁴

These evolving emphases are less surprising if we bear Mill’s purposes in mind. As Laura Snyder makes clear, the purely empirical philosophy of the *Logic*, including its associationist emphasis, was developed for a political purpose: to promote an epistemology suited to the social reforms Mill sought.¹⁵ Mill’s aim in the *Logic* is to attack intuitionist philosophy, in mathematics and natural science, so as to deprive the moral and political conservatives of the ‘great intellectual support’ intuitionist philosophy afforded. But if human volition is placed too firmly within the chain of causation, there is a risk that this purpose may be defeated.¹⁶ So, it is important for Mill not only to defend the empiricist and associationist doctrines that could undermine conservatism and open up the possibility of social reform, but also to keep alive the notion that individuals are not bound by a chain of deterministic causation and may, of their own volition, effect change to improve the world.

So, for Mill, all that happens in the world, both in its material and moral aspects, is the infallible result of all that has happened in the past. But Mill is pragmatic in his emphasis—at times emphasising human volition within the succession of events, and at other times emphasising the manipulation of the succession of events by human volition.

Matthew Arnold

Arnold’s conception of the moral world is centred on a notion of providence somewhat akin to the Providence considered in Chapter 6—the ‘august drama’ of

Mill refers to ‘the emancipation of pol. Economy—its liberation from the kind of doctrines of the old school (now taken up by well to do people) which treat what they call economical laws, demand & supply for instance, as if they were laws of inanimate matter, not amenable to the will of the human beings from whose feelings, interests, & principles of action they proceed’. Mill to William Thomas Thornton, 19 October 1867, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 16:1320.

¹⁴ Mill, “Theism”, 474. See also Mill to Rowland G. Hazard, 18 May 1870, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 17:1723.

¹⁵ Snyder, *Reforming Philosophy*, 4, 115. See also Mill, *Autobiography*, 203.

¹⁶ Mill, *Autobiography*, 171–172.

‘human perfection’.¹⁷ Arnold gave expression to his conception of this drama in the context of what Antony Harrison has called the ‘culture wars’ of the 1850s and 1860s—the ‘confrontation of two opposed fields of mid-Victorian taste which we might, for practical purposes, label “culture” and “sensation” ’—culminating in the publication of Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* in 1867, as the sensation novel approached the peak of its popularity.¹⁸

The governing principle of Arnold’s ‘august drama’ is the eternal moral law discovered through the ages by the practical experience of humankind—‘righteousness is salvation’ and ‘[they] that will save [their] life shall lose it, [they] that will lose [their] life shall save it’.¹⁹ For Arnold, it is self-evident that each individual is subject to two forces contending for mastery—the lower sensual self and the higher intellectual and spiritual self.

All experience as to conduct brings us at last to the fact of two selves, or instincts, or forces ... contending for the mastery in [the individual]: one, a movement of first impulse and more involuntary, leading us to gratify any inclination that may solicit us, and called generally a movement of [the individual]’s ordinary or passing self, of sense, appetite, desire; the other, a movement of reflection and more voluntary, leading us to submit inclination to some rule, and called generally a movement of [the individual]’s higher or enduring self, of reason, spirit, will. ... for [an individual] to obey the higher self, or reason, or whatever it is to be called, is happiness and life for [them]; to obey the lower is death and misery. [So] it turns out as a matter of experience ... that the only real happiness is in a kind of impersonal higher life, where the happiness of others counts with [an individual] as essential to [their] own. [The individual] that loves [their] life does really turn out to lose it, and the new commandment proves its own truth by experience.²⁰

Further, for Arnold, each individual has a ‘central clue’ in their ‘moral being’, which resonates with this eternal moral law and joins them to this ‘universal order’.²¹

The key players in Arnold’s august drama of human perfection are Culture and Anarchy; Hebraism and Hellenism; or the Barbarians, the Philistines and the

¹⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 222. Indeed, Arnold bemoans individuality. See Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 176.

¹⁸ Antony H. Harrison, “Victorian Culture Wars: Alexander Smith, Arthur Hugh Clough, and Matthew Arnold in 1853,” *Victorian Poetry* 42 (2004): 518–519.

¹⁹ Elsewhere expressed as ‘the method and secret of Jesus, that is to say, conscience and self-renouncement’. Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 192, 372; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 296, 401.

²⁰ Arnold, “Preface to Last Essays”, 154, 157.

²¹ Arnold, “St Paul and Protestantism”, 31.

Populace. These players are abstracted, generalised and reified—what we may call *motive forces*. All moving, over time, in and out of counterpoise—feeling their way to a more perfect humanity. Arnold attributes his own insight and freedom to the motive force of Culture.²² But, for the most part, Arnold sees the august drama playing out in relation to classes or types rather than individuals. His moral agents are the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace, but also, the English, the aristocrats, the ‘working classes’, Protestant Dissent, women, schoolboys, those ‘who believe in right reason’, ‘men of soul’.²³ For Arnold, it is ‘*people’s* spirits’ that ‘must be changed’; it is ‘*our fellow-men*, in the East of London’ who ‘we must take along with us ... towards perfection’; and it is a ‘*Wesleyan minister of 40 or 50* whose under-culture, self-satisfaction, representative character, and robust influence, drive one to despair’. For Arnold, the individual Wesleyan minister counts for nought and ‘must die in his sins’—salvation lies with ‘the young ones, who have been born in a somewhat changed and better atmosphere’.²⁴

Arnold looks past individuals—he focuses on classes and types moving so very gradually towards perfection. And it is in this context that Arnold calls on his readers to step-up and view their own moral choices as significant; as part of something much bigger than themselves; as part of the perfection of humankind. So, even though Arnold’s primary focus is on classes or types, once an individual has grasped a big idea—be it the eternal moral law or a motive force—it is the individual, with their particular ‘nature and training’, that is best able to ‘work out’ the idea in the way that works for them.²⁵

In any event, Arnold holds that some individuals have a special capacity to stand out from their class, and work against its motive force. He gives himself as evidence—‘I myself am properly a Philistine ... the son of a Philistine ... I have, for the most part, broken with the ideas and the tea-meetings of my own class’. These

²² Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 110–111.

²³ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 97, 144–146, 222–223; Arnold, “The Church of England”, 75; Arnold to Thomas Henry Huxley, 10 May 1870, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:412; Arnold to Frances Lucy Wightman Arnold, 16/23 August, 1855, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:323; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 2 February 1864, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:276. See our previous discussion of Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace at Chapter 3, pages 66–67.

²⁴ Arnold to Sarah Emily Davies, 28 December 1864, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:361; Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 216; Arnold to Richard Holt Hutton, 15 April 1864, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:298. Emphases added. And, when Arnold complains of the English ‘affirming’ themselves and doing as they like, he speaks of classes of individuals, each affirming the same self and doing as they all like. For Arnold, it is ‘owing to the exaggerated notion [we hold] of the mere doing as one likes, of the affirming oneself, and oneself just as it is’ that the ‘people of the aristocratic class want to affirm their ordinary selves, their likings and dislikings; people of the middle-class the same [and] people of the working-class the same.’ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 134.

²⁵ Arnold to Victoria Lady Welby, 26 May 1887, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 6:286.

individuals who break free of the limitations of their class (Arnold calls them *aliens*) are led ‘not by their class spirit but by a general *humane* spirit; by the love of human perfection’. They ‘believe in right reason, in the duty and possibility of extricating and elevating our best self; in ... progress’. They are part of something much bigger than themselves and have a vital role to play in the august drama of human perfection.²⁶ For Arnold, it lies with each alien to extricate themselves from the limitations of their class and elevate their best selves by tilting themselves toward other influences—influences other than the motive forces of their class. But, even though they break with their class, Arnold’s aliens are not individualistic. Rather, once free of their class, the alien is ‘united, impersonal’ and ‘at harmony’ with Culture—for Culture suggests not the idea of the individual but ‘the idea of the State’.²⁷

So, Arnold’s moral world is a drama—the august drama of human perfection, played out between motive forces and classes moving ever-so-slowly towards perfection, under the tutelage of the eternal moral law.

Thomas Hill Green

In Green’s conception of the moral world we can discern something of the notion of providence—in the unifying principle of the eternal consciousness. But his eternal consciousness is not so much the means by which we are provided for in the world as it is the means by which we experience our world.²⁸

²⁶ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 110, 144, 222–223. See also 146. In his own case, Arnold points to John Henry Newman as a critical encouragement. Like many other undergraduates at Oxford, Arnold was ‘charmed by Newman’s sermons’ at St Marys but, unlike his brother Tom, was not persuaded by Newman’s religious opinions. Clinton Machan, *Matthew Arnold: A Literary Life* (London: MacMillan, 1998), 16–17. However, Arnold named Newman as one of four people from whom he was ‘conscious of having learnt ... habits, methods, ruling ideas’ along with Goethe, Wordsworth and Sainte Beuve. Arnold to John Henry Newman, 28 May 1872, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:123. See also ‘Meanwhile, I shall proceed on my way, thankful to the *circumstances* that have *made me awake* to the necessity of somehow getting my head above the present English atmosphere in order to accomplish anything permanent. Emphasis added. Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold, 11 May 1848, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:108.

²⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 134–135, 146. Arnold decries the ‘notion of its being the prime right and happiness’ of each individual ‘to affirm [them]self, and [their] ordinary self; to be doing, and to be doing freely and as [they like]’. For Arnold, this mistaken belief in the supreme value of individual is the result of Hebraism—which emphasises strictness of conscience at the expense of spontaneity of consciousness; the moral at the expense of the intellectual. 176. See also Arnold to Jane Martha Arnold, 25 January 1851, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 1:188–189; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 9 September 1866, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:71.

²⁸ Green equates the actualisation of ‘the eternal consciousness’ with both the unfolding of the individual’s will, and the actualisation of God in the world. Green defines the ‘eternal consciousness’ as ‘the law of nature or the will of God or its “idea”’, or ‘freedom in the consciousness of union with God, or harmony with the true law of one’s being ... freedom in devotion to self-imposed duties’. T. H. Green, “Different Senses of ‘Freedom’ as Applied to Will and the Moral Progress of Man,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 2:322. Green does use the term ‘providence’, but I have been unable to find any use that indicates that Providence (as we are using the term) forms any significant part of his conception of moral causation. See, for example, Green, “Lectures on the Principles of

For Green, all we know is known to us as ‘constituent of one world’. We experience the world both coherently and consciously, through the ‘unifying’ (or ‘synthetic’) principle which, being grounded in the eternal consciousness, connects all possible experience into a coherent whole. Causation is a characteristic of this unifying principle; a characteristic of the connectedness that our experience of the world implies.²⁹ We experience the world coherently because we experience every event as caused. For Green, cause is not something that happens *to* an event, cause *is* an event.³⁰ So each thing in the world, at least in its material aspects, is ‘necessarily determined’ by all the other things in the world. This means that we conceive of the natural world as uniform; as subject to uniform laws. But, for Green, reason cannot find ‘an object adequate to itself’ in the material world. The very cohesion of the material world ‘implies ... something further to be known’ and the individual looks beyond the material world for the ‘one, complete, and absolute’ reality.³¹ Green observes that the scientist who is ‘apt to deny the existence of, or at least our concern with, anything which is not strictly an object of science or matter of fact’; tends to misinterpret the conscience, and the moral life more broadly, as a ‘natural history’ and, consequently, ‘lower[s] its ideal’. So, while the material world facilitates and is, indeed, essential for a moral life, it is the moral world—experienced, most immediately, through the individual’s conscience—that is the real world. It is the moral world that matters.³²

Causation in the material world and causation in the moral world are, for Green, essentially distinct. Following Kant, Green holds that everything in the material world ‘works according to laws’, whereas moral beings act ‘according to the consciousness ... of laws, i.e. according to principles’.³³ For Green, in the material

Political Obligation”, 2:474; T. H. Green, “The Incarnation,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:215; Green, “The Witness of God”, 3:239; T. H. Green, “The English Commonwealth,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:350, 352.

²⁹ T. H. Green, “Faith”, 3:267; T. H. Green, “Mr. Herbert Spencer and Mr. G. H. Lewes,” 1:500; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 17, 37; T. H. Green, “Introduction to Hume”, 1:266.

³⁰ Green rejects Mill’s invariable antecedent. For Green, the rain does not uniformly *precede* me putting my umbrella up. It is one of the *conditions* of me putting my umbrella up—it must *subsist* when I put my umbrella up; the *necessary coincidence* of cause and effect being an observable fact. If a cause ceases before the effect begins, it cannot be the cause of the effect. Green, “Introduction to Hume”, 1:266.

³¹ Green, “Faith”, 3:267. It is unsurprising, then, that Green leaves no room for the miraculous in the ‘objective world’.

³² Green, “Faith”, 3:265. For Green, the conscience is ‘the authority of [one’s] own moral nature’ and is something to be *experienced* rather than *explained*. He sees a very real moral danger in trying to explain the conscience using the tools of physical science. T. H. Green, “Fragment of an Address on the Text ‘The Word is Nigh’,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:223. See also T. H. Green, “Popular Philosophy in its Relation to Life,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:112; Green to Charlotte Symonds, 10 April 1871, *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, 438.

³³ T. H. Green, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant: The Metaphysics of Ethics,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 2:83.

world, ‘events happen in a determinate series’ regardless of whether any individual consciously connects them. But in the moral world, whether events happen depends on whether an individual consciously connects them; whether an individual perceives an object ‘as one which will yield [them] personal satisfaction’.³⁴ Here Green distinguishes between material conditions or events (such as, to use our earlier example, rain falling; a lack of strong wind; an accessible umbrella) and moral conditions or events (such as one’s aversion to getting wet; deciding to put up one’s umbrella). Natural events are ‘determined by antecedent events according to natural laws’. But moral events, although in their own way determined, are not materially determined. A moral event is, at least in part, ‘constituted by an act of self-consciousness’ which is not a material event—an act in which one presents to oneself a certain idea of oneself as an idea of what, for the time being, is their own good. So my putting my umbrella up is a moral event. It is partly determined by material conditions (the rain, the lack of strong wind) but it is also determined by moral events—my presenting to myself the idea of myself enjoying being dry and snug because I think that is best for me.

For Green, the critical difference between necessarily deterministic causation in the material world (which precludes freedom) and causation in the moral world (which is freedom) is self-consciousness.³⁵ When anything in the material world is ‘taken up into self-consciousness’ through the senses, it takes on a moral character. The individual’s response to a necessarily determined fact in the material world, whether resistance or submission, is a free moral action. The same fact in the material world may move one individual ‘to a surrender of the mind to the body’ and another ‘to humility and self-abasement’. And it is, for Green, this will—the will to submit or resist—that is the individual; the self-conscious individual.³⁶ Any ‘act of will’ is ‘the expression of’ the individual, as they are at the time. The object of the individual’s will is ‘the reflex of what for the time—as at once feeling, desiring, and thinking—the

³⁴ Green, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant”, 2:95.

³⁵ Colin Tyler has noted the tension between Green’s conception of the freely willing individual realising themselves and ‘the nature of human progress [as] fundamentally structured by an ideal of the eternal consciousness’. For Tyler, this tension—between what he calls the ‘self-interventionist’ and ‘spiritual determinist’ strands of Green’s metaphysics of agency—is both unreconciled by Green and inherently irreconcilable. It seems to me that Green aims to achieve a reconciliation between the two by linking the individual’s self-realisation to their submission to the eternal consciousness by taking the eternal consciousness into themselves, so that the individual who does not align themselves with the eternal consciousness does not (and cannot) realise their (true) self. See Colin Tyler, *The Metaphysics of Self-Realisation and Freedom* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), 89.

³⁶ Green, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant”, 2:91–92, 94–95; T. H. Green, “The Force of Circumstances,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:6; Green, “Different Senses of ‘Freedom’ ”, 2:320. See also Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 100.

[individual] is'. Any 'feeling, thought, and desire with which [their] act conflicts' (including 'the pangs of conscience, or ... the annoyance, the sacrifice, implied in acting conscientiously') are influences the individual is aware of, and to which they are susceptible, but they are not the individual.³⁷

For Green, there is 'a real unity in all [one's] desires, a common ground of them all'—the individual is both 'conscious of itself and consciously seeking in the satisfaction of desires the satisfaction of itself'. Each individual is both desiring and reasoning. But desiring and reasoning are different ways in which 'the consciousness of self' expresses itself in the world. Reasoning is 'the effort of such consciousness to take the world into itself' and desire is the effort of such consciousness 'to carry itself out into the world'. And, for Green, every act we can 'impute to ourselves or count our own is both an act of thought and an act of desire. Indeed, for Green, the will is 'equally and indistinguishably desire and thought'. But the will is the desire and thought of the individual as a 'self-distinguishing and self-seeking subject' and the will is necessarily directed toward the 'realisation of the individual.'³⁸ So, for Green, the will is the individual, the self-conscious individual, realising itself.

Importantly, for Green, the will of the self-conscious individual cannot be subject to external forces because the self-conscious individual 'has no outside'. The individual is 'not a body in space with other bodies elsewhere in space acting upon it and determining its motions'. The individual 'is determined by objects which, in order to be objects, must already be in consciousness'; must already have been made the individual's own. To say that any external objects have power over the individual, or, for that matter, that the individual has power over them, is, for Green, misleading, because it implies that the one can exist without the other, which is not the case—the 'self-consciousness and its object, will and its object, form a single individual unity'.³⁹

Further, for Green, an individual cannot realise their possibilities, and find satisfaction, if they ignore 'the law which determines where [their] self-satisfaction is to be found'. For Green, real freedom cannot be achieved by 'overcoming the law of [one's] being'—to do so is, by the nature of things, impossible; 'every fancied effort' merely proving its necessity. The 'feeling of oppression' which 'always goes along

³⁷ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 173.

³⁸ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 145, 154–155, 172–173.

³⁹ Green, "Different Senses of 'Freedom' ", 2:320. For Green, 'in such a case the evidence of consciousness, fairly interpreted is final. The suggestion that consciousness may not correspond with reality is, here at least, unmeaning ... for the only reality in question is consciousness.' Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 121.

with the consciousness of unfulfilled possibilities' gives meaning to the experience of the effort of self-improvement as 'a demand for "freedom" '. Rather, real freedom is achieved by making the fulfilment of the law of one's being 'the object' of one's will; by seeking self-satisfaction in objects in which it should be found, and seeking it in those objects because it should be found in them.⁴⁰ However, an individual's past can restrict their present freedom to fulfil the law of their being. How we perceive what is best for us, and how that perception steers our conduct—'is due to the past history of [our] inner life'. But, for Green, this does not imply we are precluded in some way from self-realisation. How I now 'feel, desire and think', arises out of the way I have done so in the past; but, then as now, I have been, in all of my feelings, desires and thoughts, 'conscious of [my]self as [my] own object, and thus self-determined'. This is because all of the influences that determine the individual do so through their self-consciousness—a self-consciousness which, as we have seen above, 'has no outside'. For Green, it is to the individual 'thus constituted, conscious of its nature—of all that makes it what it is, temper, character, ability—as its own, that new feelings and desires occur from moment to moment upon the suggestion ... of circumstances'.⁴¹

So, for Green, the will is the individual, the self-conscious individual, realising itself. And the world is an experience, a coherent experience, grounded in the eternal consciousness, by which individuals realise themselves.

George Eliot

George Eliot's conception of causation in the moral world is grounded in a world view ever conscious of the 'mystery' beneath the real. This mystery is, tellingly, *beneath* the real. It is not above or beyond this world. Rather it is the 'sublime' to be found among us; in the community of our humanity—in the 'one soul' that 'moves' in the 'multitude'.⁴² So, it is in the 'larger sweep' of human endeavour, in the broadest view of the moral world, that we gain the truest insight into this mystery. It cannot be grasped by scrutinising the individual in isolation—any more

⁴⁰ Green, "Different Senses of 'Freedom' ", 2:308–309, 324. Green gives the example of a reforming alcoholic 'seeking to break the bondage to liquor'. They experience their quest for sobriety as a quest for 'freedom'. Green observes that 'it is easy to tell such people that the term is being misapplied; that they are quite "free" as it is, because ... to get drunk is as much an act of free will as anything else'.

⁴¹ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 114. But, not every circumstance, or even every feeling or desire, gives rise to a moral event. Feelings come and go without being attended to, desires often arise and pass 'without exciting any reaction'; without the individual 'placing itself in an attitude of acceptance or rejection towards them'. In that case there is no moral event. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 114–115.

⁴² George Eliot to Charles Bray, 15 November 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:403; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 481. See also George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 5 December 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:227.

than we can find the power of an army, or the brilliance of the sunshine, by examining their component parts. Rather it is reflected in the connections, both visible and invisible, that link individuals to their circumstances, to external events, and to each other. These connections are the ‘both ... visible and ... invisible, histor[ies]’ that lead individuals to each action they take; to each suffering they endure. In her novels, George Eliot evokes the reader’s sympathy by leading them along these often invisible ‘pathways of feeling and thought’. For nothing happens of itself—neither by the effort of one individual or by the happening of any one event. No one and nothing is that strong.⁴³

George Eliot remarks three consequences that follow from this mystery reflected in human connectivity—the interconnectivity of individual lives; the moral necessity of engaging with others; and our reliance on human goodness.

For George Eliot, all actions and outcomes are experienced by the individual as contingent—dependent on, and limited by, external events and other individuals. The ‘convergence of human lots’ shows the ‘slow preparation of effects from one life on another’. An entanglement with a once-a-stranger, or a forgotten once-a-friend, unfolds an unforeseen future. An unexpected collision frustrates carefully made plans.⁴⁴ But, for George Eliot, the apparent contingency of such entanglements and collisions is illusionary. While they often appear to be ‘a point of origin’, entanglements and collisions always fall within ‘a course of action which is, in strictness, a slowly-prepared outgrowth’ of the individual’s ‘entire character’. We each ‘make a moral tradition’ for ourselves.⁴⁵ In this way, each individual’s character is a ‘slow creation’, built by their own actions but dependent always on the mutual effects of other chains of influences.⁴⁶

For George Eliot, each individual is fundamentally and necessarily connected to their fellows, so that focussing on oneself, rather than on one’s fellows is ‘moral stupidity’—necessarily diminishing one’s joy in being alive in the world.⁴⁷ So it is by

⁴³ George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 184; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 202; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 838.

⁴⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 95. The importunate once-friends include, in *Felix Holt*, the inconveniently disloyal Jermyn (who knows Harold Transome’s secrets); in *Middlemarch*, the unscrupulous pest Raffles (who knows Bulstrode’s secrets); and in *Romola*, the inconveniently resurrected and much wronged Baldassarre (the evidence of Tito’s treachery). See George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 342; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 693–697; George Eliot, *Romola*, 150–151.

⁴⁵ George Eliot, *Romola*, 382–383, 420.

⁴⁶ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 409. ‘Dempster’s vices have their natural evolution in deeper and deeper moral degradation ... and death from intemperance.’ George Eliot to John Blackwood, 11 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:347. See also Tito’s moral failure following a succession of lies. George Eliot, *Romola*, 419–425.

⁴⁷ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 567.

opening her curtains and seeing ‘a man with a bundle on his back, ... a woman carrying her baby,’ and a ‘shepherd with his dog’, that the despondent Dorothea feels ‘the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings’ of her fellows and knows herself to be a part of their ‘involuntary, palpitating life’. She cannot ‘look ... on ... as a mere spectator’, nor hide herself from it. For George Eliot, Dorothea is, like all of us, fundamentally and necessarily connected to her fellows. For her to deny that connection is to deny her humanity.⁴⁸

Further, one must trust to other individuals. There is no other option. The ‘human goodness’ of individuals is ‘the only guarantee that there can be any other sort of goodness’ in the world. So it is only ‘the individual beings who compose the world’ that can make the world a better place.⁴⁹

As we have seen in Chapter 6, for George Eliot the notion of Providence as the divine direction and control of individual lives is mere egoism. But she also uses the term ‘Providence’ within the meaning of our ‘providence’—as nature’s prescient and beneficent power. So, in *Middlemarch*, it is ‘a kind Providence’ that ‘furnishes the limpest personality’, even Sir James Chettam, ‘with a little gum or starch in the form of tradition’.⁵⁰ There is humour here certainly, but there is also a hint, if not a claim, of a providence that kindly satisfies our most ordinary needs. And it is this beneficent providence with which George Eliot is most comfortable. Elsewhere, she explains directly—‘We reap what we sow, but Nature has love over and above that justice, and gives us shadow and blossom and fruit that spring from no planting of ours’.⁵¹

There are echoes of this providence in George Eliot’s notion of an individual’s vocation. George Eliot is very conscious of her own vocation as a writer—it is not merely taking on a role in life, rather, it is taking on specific tasks—tasks that must be found out and done. She sees fulfilling one’s vocation as ‘the

⁴⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 788.

⁴⁹ George Eliot to Mrs. Nassau John Senior, 13 March 1870, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:83; George Eliot to The Hon. Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 10 December 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:98–99. George Eliot has scant regard for endeavours to improve society by reforming legal and social structures. It is only by changing the beliefs of the *individuals* who make up society—the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong—that real change is effected. George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 293–294; George Eliot to Mrs. Nassau John Senior, May 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:46. See also George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 179; George Eliot to Mrs. Richard Congreve, 28 January 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:227; George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 4 March 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:128; George Eliot to Alice Helps, 7 June 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:149; George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, 15 June 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:151; George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 4 October 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:291; George Eliot to Mrs. Edward Burne-Jones, 26 August 1878, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:63.

⁵⁰ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 21.

⁵¹ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 237.

highest blessing life can give us'. But there is often a price to pay.⁵² George Eliot links fulfilment of one's vocation to resignation to one's lot in life. In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Amos Barton is shown to be ineffectual not because he is an unworthy fellow, but because he has overreached his competencies and found himself out of his depth. For 'a tallow dip, of the long-eight description, is an excellent thing in the kitchen candlestick' but 'when you stick it in the silver candlestick, and introduce it into the drawing-room, ... it seems plebeian, dim, and ineffectual'. For George Eliot, many worthy individuals, like the tallow dip and Amos Barton, fail to fulfil their vocation in life because they are dissatisfied with their lot and, in rebelling against it, get themselves into the wrong place. Conversely, in *Adam Bede*, Dinah Morris ably fulfils her vocation because she believes that 'we can all be servants of God wherever our lot is cast'—so long as we accept the work for which we are fitted and to which we are called.⁵³

Alongside this notion of providence, George Eliot holds a notion of necessity which evolves over time. The young George Eliot attests to a 'firm belief' in necessity.⁵⁴ But, in later years, she frequently employs the more fluid notion of destiny—sometimes simply as shorthand for how things do, in fact, turn out; sometimes, ironically, as a very transparent cover for her own responsibility.⁵⁵ In any event, George Eliot's destiny is no external force acting on individual lives. Rather, it is the outworking of the actions of others and the individual's response to them. This destiny does not hold the wind and the rain in store. Rather, she holds '*dramatis personae* ... folded in her hand'. So it is, in a very real sense, an individual's entanglements and collisions with their neighbours that realise their destiny. And, for an individual in a 'precarious condition', a collision with a self-centred neighbour may prove to be a most 'malignant destiny'.⁵⁶

⁵² George Eliot to John Blackwood, 24 February 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:24; George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 5 May 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:64; George Eliot to Mrs. John Cash Corey, 6 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:343.

⁵³ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 25; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 123.

⁵⁴ George Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, 1 January 1854, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:136; George Eliot to John Chapman, 24–25 July 1852, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:49. In *Adam Bede*, with a touch of humour that may be an uneasy confession or a gentle nudge at uncompromising necessitarians, the narrator asserts that 'with every ... anomaly, adequate knowledge will show it to be a natural sequence'. George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 64.

⁵⁵ See George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 15 November 1878, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:77. She unconvincingly tells the D'Albert-Durades that she was very keen to visit them 'but destiny said "No." We lingered too long in Florence, and were obliged to hasten home.' George Eliot to François D'Albert-Durade, 15 June 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:425. See also George Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, 1 June 1852, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:30; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 14 March 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:310; George Eliot to Mrs. Thomas Adolphus Trollope, 15 May 1864, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:149.

⁵⁶ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 95; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 48. See also George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 120.

For George Eliot, there is much in life we cannot force—whether it be providence, necessity, destiny or simply the inevitable. So resignation—‘that unembittered compliance of soul with the inevitable’—is essential.⁵⁷ Further, she sees ‘resignation to the disposal of ... providence’ as the key teaching of the Christian gospel.⁵⁸ In her novels, George Eliot repeatedly illustrates the grief in store for those who resist resignation to providence—in *Daniel Deronda*, it is Gwendolen’s kicking against providence that wrecks her chances of finding enduring happiness; in ‘Mr Gilfil’s Love-Story’, it is Caterina’s dashing herself ‘against the hard iron bars of the inevitable’ that results in her ‘palpitating heart’ being ‘fatally bruised’; and in *Adam Bede*, it is Hetty’s scorn of her humble lot in life that destroys her life altogether.⁵⁹

Thomas Pinney links George Eliot’s high estimate of Sophocles’s *Antigone* with her own experience of the need for resignation in resolving the tension between one’s own values and the demands of one’s society—the ‘antagonism of valid claims’. For George Eliot, ‘wherever the strength of an [individual’s] intellect, or moral sense, or affection brings [them] into opposition with the rules which society has sanctioned, there is renewed the conflict between Antigone and Creon’. Pinney observes that George Eliot’s own early life ‘could be resolved into a series of such conflicts’ which ‘if ... not strictly tragic, ... were at least intensely painful to a mind like hers, in which the principles of intellectual independence and of piety were equally strong’.⁶⁰ And, as Gerhard Joseph has noted, George Eliot explores this tension between ‘what Arnold would call Hebraic and Hellenic impulses’ not only in her essay on *Antigone*, but also in her novels—in the tension between Maggie and Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*; in the tension between Romola and Tito in *Romola* and, most strikingly, in the tension between Dorothea Brooke and Will Ladislaw in *Middlemarch*.⁶¹ Nevertheless, for George Eliot, as for Nancy in *Silas*

⁵⁷ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 22 November 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:311; George Eliot to John Walter Cross, 14 August 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:165. Indeed, for herself, she takes as her mantra—‘never to beat and bruise one’s wings against the inevitable but to throw the whole force of one’s soul towards the achievement of some possible better’. George Eliot to Clifford Allbutt, 30 December 1868, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:499.

⁵⁸ George Eliot, “Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming,” in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 129.

⁵⁹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 274; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 105, 196, 386. In sharp contrast, Adam and Dinah are shown to find their purpose, and their happiness, by bearing ‘the unalterable’ and doing ‘nothing but ... obey and ... trust’. George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 80–81, 509.

⁶⁰ Thomas Pinney, Introduction to “The Antigone and It’s Moral,” in *Routledge Library Editions: George Eliot*, vol. 3, *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge, 1963).

⁶¹ Gerhard Joseph, “The Antigone as Cultural Touchstone: Matthew Arnold, Hegel, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Margaret Drabble,” *PMLA*, 96 (1981): 25–26.

Marnier, the ‘antagonism of valid claims’ can be finally resolved only by resigning ourselves ‘to the lot that’s been given us’.⁶²

But, this resignation is not passivity. For George Eliot, as for Auguste Comte, resignation must complement activity.⁶³ We must be willing to accept our own lot, but the ill fortune of our fellows invites our activity. We must, practically if not philosophically, conciliate necessity with willed activity; with ‘willing strongly’ and ‘willing to will strongly’. For without willing activity we are ‘empty, barren souls’.⁶⁴

We have seen that the fictional prayers of both Dickens and Gaskell help clarify their conceptions of Providence. Similarly, the prayers in George Eliot’s novels both reflect, and give insight into, her conception of providence, necessity and destiny.

In *Daniel Deronda*, we see Daniel praying—unexpectedly, and in community. George Eliot tells us that ‘prayer which seeks for nothing special’—but is at once ‘a yearning to escape from the limitations of our own weakness’, an ‘invocation of all Good to enter and abide with us’, and a ‘self-oblivious lifting up of Gladness ... that such Good exists’—is the most powerful act of worship, all the more powerful when experienced in community with one’s fellows. And Daniel is surprised by its power, feeling it as ‘a divine influx in the darkness’. In *Adam Bede*, we see Dinah praying—habitually, and alone. She feels ‘the presence of a Love and Sympathy deeper and more tender than was breathed from the earth and sky’. She feels herself ‘enclosed by the Divine Presence’. And her fears and anxieties melt away ‘like ice-crystals in a warm ocean’. In *Middlemarch*, we see Dorothea unable to pray—in crisis, and alone. Her thoughts are hopelessly mangled. She can only ‘cast herself, with a childlike sense of reclining, in the lap of a divine consciousness’. And

⁶² George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 176. In her own life, George Eliot strove for resignation to adverse destinies—hardest of all, to accept ‘the cutting short’ of Lewes’s ‘full life, while so many half empty lives go on in vigorous uselessness’. George Eliot to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, 10 April 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:132–133. See also George Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 10 April 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:133.

⁶³ Indeed, George Eliot often quoted *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (translated by Richard Congreve in 1858) on this point—it speaks of life as ‘a necessity admitting modifications’, and our response as ‘destined to be a compound of resignation and action’. T. R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 21.

⁶⁴ George Eliot to Mrs. Henry Horton, December 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:134—‘*Notre vraie destinée se compose de resignation et d'activité*’, or ‘our true destiny is composed of resignation and activity’; George Eliot to Charles Bray, 19 March 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:391; George Eliot to The Hon. Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 19 August 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:166. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 25 November 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:127.

she is sustained by this prayer of surrender. In *Felix Holt*, we see Rufus Lyon praying—in crisis, but unruffled. He lifts up ‘no formal petition’, but he considers the situation ‘as if ... in the company of a guide ready to inspire and correct him’. He strives to ‘purify his feeling ... from selfish or worldly dross’. And this striving is ‘sure to wrest an answer by its sublime importunity’.⁶⁵

In *The Mill on the Floss* we find Maggie praying—at once penitent and tempted. Maggie is struggling to resist the epistolary pleas of the lover she has abandoned mid-elopement. She resolves to wait and pray—‘the light that had forsaken her would come again’. She waits long into the night, ‘waiting for the light that would surely come again’. And it comes—‘the long past’ comes back to her with ‘fountains of self-renouncing ... faithfulness and resolve’. She claims the resignation of Thomas à Kempis—‘I have received the Cross ... I will bear it, and bear it till death, as Thou hast laid it upon me’. But she despairs at the waiting—the waiting for death. She despairs at the prospect of other trials—trials in which she will ‘struggle and fall and repent again’.

Maggie fell on her knees against the table, and buried her sorrow-stricken face. Her soul went out to the Unseen Pity that would be with her to the end. Surely there was something being taught her by this experience of great need; and she must be learning a secret of human tenderness and long-suffering, that the less erring could hardly know? “O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort—”

At that moment Maggie felt a startling sensation of sudden cold about her knees and feet; it was water flowing under her. She started up ... it was the flood!⁶⁶

The flood would reconcile her to her long past, with its faithfulness and resolve—and take her life. Maggie rescues her estranged brother from the flood waters, declaring it God’s doing. Tom guesses at her ‘almost miraculous, divinely protected effort’ and brother and sister are reconciled. But within minutes their small boat disappears and their lives are ended in ‘an embrace never to be parted’; in an eternal baptism effected by mindless flotsam propelled by a mindless current.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 416–417; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 202; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 44; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 362.

⁶⁶ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 535–536.

⁶⁷ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 541–542.

In each case, prayer is effective—not because the prayer is answered but because the prayer *is* the answer. In each case, prayer is a self-conscious yielding to the mystery beneath the real, whatever its name—the ‘Good’, the ‘Divine Presence’, the ‘divine consciousness’, the ‘Unseen Pity’ or simply ‘a guide ready to inspire and correct’. This yielding asks for nothing other than a more perfect resignation to one’s place in the world. And, for George Eliot, this earnest prayer of yielding necessarily succeeds. Indeed, she holds that ‘there is no such thing as an impotent ... deity, if the deity be really believed in, and contemplated ... in prayer’. For ‘every object of thought reacts on the mind that conceives it’ so that we can ‘solicit help from [an] abstraction’.⁶⁸

George Eliot recognises that this prayer that is yielding to an abstraction may, for some, prove elusive. But, for her, yielding to the mystery beneath the real does not depend on intellectual awareness, or even conscious feeling. Rather, it is yielding to the ‘vague sense of goodness and love, and of something right lying underneath and beyond ... this ... life’ that ‘without grasping any distinct idea, without going through any course of religious emotions’ comes to the individual who experiences, ‘faith, love, and hope’ in community with their fellows. For George Eliot, as for Mr. Tryan, ‘every effort ... made in humility and dependence is a prayer’.⁶⁹

Given that George Eliot sees prayer as a conscious yielding to the mystery beneath the real, it is unsurprising that she consistently resists notions of prayer as beseeching the divine—whether for things, or for events, or even for instruction. Such prayers seek to effect congruence between the petitioner and their place in the world, while side-stepping the difficult and necessary work of yielding.⁷⁰ In *Middlemarch*, Casaubon demands that Dorothea promise to avoid, in the event of his death, doing what he ‘should deprecate’, and apply herself instead to what he ‘should desire’. Dorothea is reluctant to comply—suspecting that by doing so she will be

⁶⁸ George Eliot, “Leaves From a Note-Book”, 247. For examples of George Eliot’s approval of prayer (or something very like it) as resignation see Dorothea’s ‘dumb inward cry for help to bear this nightmare of a life’. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 375. See also George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 89; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 260, 866–867.

⁶⁹ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 159; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 305. See also Gwendolen’s ‘inarticulate prayers, no more definite than a cry’ and Dorothea’s almost prayer to Lydgate—‘this cry from soul to soul’. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 738; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 289–290.

⁷⁰ George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, 26 December 1877, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:439; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 86. See 710, 724, 823–824 for references to Bulstrode’s prayers. See also, George Eliot’s spoof on prayer as asking for favours when Tom seeks relief from the daily trauma that is Euclid. George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 149–150. See also Mordecai’s prayer, and Daniel Deronda as an answer to it, as the means of hope in community with one’s fellows. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 638.

forever bound to the futility of Casaubon's *Key to all Mythologies*. She undertakes to give her decision in the morning. For much of the night, Dorothea doesn't sleep. She lies in conflict, 'ill and bewildered, unable to resolve, praying mutely'. At last she sleeps, and wakes feeling 'sure that she should promise to fulfil his wishes'. Casaubon has already 'read prayers, breakfasted' and, too agitated to work, set off for a walk in the garden.

The contrast between their prayers is telling. Dorothea's prayer is an agony. She accepts the need to yield—more than that, she yearns to yield, because selfless yielding gives Dorothea's life meaning. But she resists futility. Her sustaining hope is that she may contribute something worthy. Must she yield to a futility? This is the abyss Dorothea seeks to negotiate in those long dark hours, praying mutely. There are no words for her pain. In the morning, Dorothea feels sure that she should promise; that she should pledge herself to futility. Her earnest prayers of yielding appear to have borne their foreseeable fruit—and the reader is horrified. Casaubon's prayer is routine. He is impatient of Dorothea's pledge. He reads his prayers, eats his breakfast and, finding himself too agitated to work, takes a turn in the mild air. His prayers are read. Their words bespeak the yearnings of the Church Fathers rather than the yearnings of Casaubon's own mind. There is no self-examination. The incongruence between Casaubon's weak heart and his resolute ambitions evokes no yielding on his part. Instead he demands the yielding of another. His prayers bear no fruit. He is the same man before and after his prayers—ambitious; unyielding. In the event, Casaubon dies alone, before Dorothea gives her promise.⁷¹

In Casaubon's prayers we can see George Eliot's disdain for the routine reading of prayers, snatched from Prayer Books before meals, as if an aid to digestion. In Dorothea's prayers we see, yet again, George Eliot's conception of prayer as yielding. But we are reminded here that true prayer is always yielding to a *mystery*; yielding to the *unknown*. Dorothea fears she is yielding to futility—because she can foresee only the futility of Casaubon's *Key to all Mythologies*. But her future is unknown. In the event, it is unexpected, difficult and rewarding. Her yieldingness enables her to accept it; to eventually embrace it. Her life will be one of sacrifice unrecognised—but not futility.⁷²

⁷¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 477–482.

⁷² George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 838.

So, for George Eliot, the connections, both visible and invisible, that link individuals to their circumstances, external events, and each other, reflect the mystery beneath the real. In those connections we can trace the pathways of feeling and thought that lead individuals to each action they take, and every suffering they endure. But those connections also echo a providence in which one can fulfil one's vocation, and find great joy, so long as one is both resigned to one's lot in life and active in improving the lot of others.

We have seen that Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot each have different conceptions of the moral world, none of which centre on the conception of Providence discussed in Chapter 6.

For Mill, the moral world, like the material world, is the infallible result of all that has happened in the past. Mill recognises, and sometimes emphasises, the place of human volition within the succession of events that constitute the world, but—given that his causation goes to predictability rather than compulsion—he sees moral events as caused in much the same way as events in the material world. There are no echoes of providence in Mill's moral world.

For both Arnold and Green, the moral world is a process; a movement forward—a movement which, in some of its aspects, sounds echoes of providence. For Arnold, that movement is the august drama of human perfection, played out between motive forces—primarily, Culture and Anarchy; Hellenism and Hebraism—as the classes of individuals they motivate move ever so slowly towards perfection. For Green, the movement is the realisation of the eternal consciousness, facilitating the self-realisation of individuals through self-consciousness.

For George Eliot, the moral world reflects the mystery beneath the real. It consists of so many connections, both visible and invisible, that link individuals to their circumstances, external events, and each other. And those connections echo a providence—providing purpose and great joy, so long as one both accepts one's place in the world and works to make life better for others.

In Chapters 8 and 9 we will consider the moralities of our protagonists, and identify the extent to which they reflect their conceptions of causation in the moral world.

Chapter 8: Dutiful moralities

A world-view centred on a Providence realised by the actions of individuals necessarily implies a morality centred on duties. For each individual must play the part Providence requires. In this chapter, we consider the moralities of Whewell, Dickens, Gaskell, Newman and Spurgeon, including their conceptions of duty and virtue.¹ In this chapter I take ‘duty’ to be an action, or an act, that is due in the way of moral or legal obligation. A duty is born of a relationship—parent and child, husband and wife, master and servant, citizen and state. I take ‘virtue’ to be a moral quality of the individual, independent of one’s relationship with others. Virtue is a disposition rather than an action.²

All of these protagonists accept duties as obligations, not options.³ So that to acknowledge a duty is to undertake to perform it—no matter how unpleasant.⁴ Further, although duties are born of relationships and are consequently reciprocal—in that the performance of a duty by one individual will, in the normal course, elicit the willing performance of the corresponding duty by its beneficiary—for these protagonists, the obligation to do our duty is independent of the beneficiary of our duty doing theirs, so another’s failure is no excuse for our own.⁵

Before considering the duties these protagonists recognise, we will look at the individual bases on which they each accept the obligations of duty. We will also consider the extent to which they believe one should consider anticipated consequences and the promptings of conscience when discerning one’s duties. We

¹ It is important to bear in mind that a protagonist’s silence does not imply their disagreement. It is reasonable to assume that our protagonists—other than Whewell who, as a moral philosopher, made it his business to catalogue both duties and virtues—did not refer to particular duties or virtues unless they saw a need to do so.

² See *OED Online* s.v. “duty, n.” meaning 4(a). <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/58732?redirectedFrom=duty>; *OED Online* s.v. “virtue, n.” meaning 1(a). <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/Entry/223835?rskey=OARwhy&result=1>. For discussion of difference between virtue and duty see Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 97–98.

³ In this chapter ‘these protagonists’ refers to Whewell, Dickens, Gaskell, Newman and Spurgeon only. See Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 82; Speech at banquet in Dickens’s honour in Boston, 1 February 1842, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 21; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 336; Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 163, 245, 326; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:55; Newman, *Apologia*, 304. See also Spurgeon to his father, 6 April 1852, in *Autobiography*, 1:212; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:146, 2:471.

⁴ Speech at banquet in his honour in New York, 18 April 1868, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 380; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 438. See also Dickens to Mrs. Gore, 31 May 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:574; Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 217.

⁵ See Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 103; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 2 September 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:417; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 338. For Newman duty is the discharge of one’s reciprocal obligations of faith and obedience owed to Jesus. John Henry Newman, “Saving Knowledge,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 325. Spurgeon, too, sees duty as dependent on one’s obligations to God. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:55.

will find that, despite their different approaches to identifying one's duties, they all pay much more heed to conscience than consequences, and recognise, more or less, the same duties and virtues.

For Whewell, moral knowledge, like all knowledge, is cumulative, acquired by an iterative process over a very long time. All moralities contain 'something sound'. So, the moralist's task is to identify 'generally acknowledged' moral duties; to clarify, distil, organise, and critique them; and then arrange them in an order that is 'logical, methodical, [and] consistent'.⁶ Whewell arranges duties in 'concentric spheres' of concern, radiating out from the individual—from their 'person'; to their 'property'; to their 'family'; to their 'town', 'tribe' and 'nation'. It is the innumerable intersections of these spheres which give rise to tensions in human affairs.⁷ Given that humankind has, for aeons, relied on individuals getting along together, humankind has had to come up with ways—moral rules and laws—to resolve these tensions. Whewell distinguishes between law—comprising 'Rights and Obligations' which are positive and absolute and relate to 'Things and Actions' which are 'external and visible'; and morality—comprising 'Duties and Virtues' which are exemplary and relative and relate to 'Desires and Intentions' which are 'internal and invisible'. But, he finds law and moral rules to be not only coincident but interdependent—morality needing legal rights on which to operate; and law needing moral authority.⁸ For Whewell, actions, desires and intentions all belong to morality, so that virtue implies regulation of one's 'whole internal being'. This is a difficult task which can be achieved only by submission to the 'Supreme Rule'—'be benevolent, be just, be true, be pure, be orderly'.⁹

Whewell's project is to clarify the application of this Supreme Rule to all the activities of humankind. He devotes volumes to the task, and we cannot here even begin to consider his comprehensive analysis. In summary, Whewell identifies five moral principles: the principle of humanity—that each individual is to be loved as a human being; the principle of justice—that each individual is to have their own; the

⁶ Whewell to James Garth Marshall, 27 December 1842 in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 280; Whewell to Rev. Frederic Myers, 6 September 1845, in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 329; Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 19, 36, 76.

⁷ Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 80.

⁸ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 200–201.

⁹ Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 79, 83, 89, 132; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 68, 70; Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England* (London: John W. Parker, 1852), xv–xvi.

principle of truth—that one must conform to the universal understanding the use of language implies; the principle of purity—that the ‘Lower Parts of our nature are to be governed by the Higher’; and the principle of order—that one must obey positive laws as being necessary for morality.¹⁰ But Whewell’s morality is more subtle than these snippets suggest. He does not simply catalogue morality as he finds it. He also draws out the reciprocity of moral relations, both to demonstrate the order of the moral world and to highlight the moral dimension of encounters in the workaday world.¹¹

Dickens’s approach to morality is very different. It is practical rather than theoretical. He aims to clarify, and communicate, the ‘practical’ concern of ‘doing all the good we can’.¹² For Dickens, ‘the great commandments of our Saviour are distinct and plain, and comprise ... all the laws and rules’. For Dickens, the ‘only certain light’ illuminates the ‘path of duty’. And that light is the ‘Saviour’—the ‘model of all goodness’, sufficient for ‘every conceivable moral lesson’. So the ‘way ... is sufficiently clear and straight’. We must get on, ‘with a cheerful heart’ and ‘live our lives accordingly’.¹³

For Dickens, learning the path of duty and treading it is the whole of our moral obligation. And his emphasis is on treading rather than learning; getting on and

¹⁰ See William Whewell, *Additional Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co, 1862), 74, 116–117; Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 86, 108; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 36, 45, 74; Whewell, *History of Moral Philosophy*, xiii–xiv. In outline, Whewell first identifies the ‘Springs of Action by which [individuals] are impelled’—the desire for bodily safety and wellbeing; the desire for having; the desire for family society; the desire for civil society; and the desire for mutual understanding—and the relations of human society which the play of those springs requires. Compliance with law and moral rules may also be characterised as a spring of action (the ‘desire for civil society’). Whewell prioritises the springs of action to resolve tensions between them, the bodily desires being made subject to the affections, moral sentiments and reason. For Whewell, the rules of society, both its laws and moral rules, must accommodate the ‘tranquil gratification’ of ‘the springs of action’. Without such accommodation, life would necessarily become ‘disturbed, unbalanced, painful’; even ‘intolerable’. So, for Whewell, rules that both facilitate and govern the gratification of the springs of action are necessary for the very existence of society. Then Whewell identifies the kinds of rights and obligations in society. Broadly—those relating to property; those of contract; those relating to the family; and those relating to one’s position in society. Given the need for coherence, all of these rights must conform to the ‘primary and universal Condition, that they do not violate the Rights of others’. From these rights Whewell proceeds to the moral principles which are, as we have seen above, coincident with them. In this way, Whewell identifies the five moral principles: the principle of humanity—that each individual is to be loved as a human being; the principle of justice—that each individual is to have their own; the principle of truth—that one must conform to the universal understanding the use of language implies; the principle of purity, that the ‘Lower Parts of our nature are to be governed by the Higher’; and the principle of order, that one must obey positive laws as being necessary for morality. For Whewell, each of these virtues each give rise to a plethora of moral duties, which he documents comprehensively.

¹¹ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 130–134.

¹² Dickens to John Forster, 2 March 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:275. See also Dickens to Arthur Ryland, 13 August 1869, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:394. For a parody of making decisions on a theoretical basis, regardless of consequences, see Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 584–585. For an example of Dickens considering practical effects, see Dickens to John Forster, 27 January 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:259.

¹³ Dickens to Miss Emmely Gotschalk, 16 July 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:432; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 24 March 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:577; Dickens to The Rev. David Macrae, 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:557. See also Dickens to Frank Stone, 13 December 1858, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:718–719. See further Mr. Peggotty, an almost Christ-like figure. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 693, 719, 728.

doing one's duty rather than agonising over what it may be.¹⁴ Clear and close duty suffices to guide even the simplest individuals. Indeed, for Dickens, to discharge one's duties is to do God's will; and to faithfully discharge one's duties is to achieve unqualified merit.¹⁵

For Gaskell, life is, and needs to be, full of duties. Indeed, there is 'duty in the mode in which every action [is] performed'. And if one finds oneself bereft of duties, one must, through friendship or benevolence, forge relationships that will bring new duties in their wake. For without duties, individuals are ever vulnerable to the shattering realisation of the 'purposelessness' of their lives.¹⁶

Given that Spurgeon holds both that the unregenerate individual is fundamentally depraved and incapable of even desiring redemption and that the elect individual is, quite apart from any good works, certain of redemption—Spurgeon seems to leave little room for the operation of any morality.¹⁷ And while he holds that regenerate individuals must not be 'negligent concerning morals', moral living being a marker of their regenerate state, the primary function of Spurgeon's morality is to establish the natural depravity of the unregenerate and their consequent need for redemption. It is unsurprising, then, that Spurgeon's morality is both compelling and impossibly demanding.¹⁸ For Spurgeon, all morality is grounded in the Law of God, and the Bible is the authoritative source of that law. While the Ten Commandments are foundational, Spurgeon also points to the Bible more broadly—to Jesus in the Gospels and to the New Testament letters.¹⁹ Where the Bible does not directly address the morality of a particular activity, such as 'dancing parties' and 'games of

¹⁴ Speech to Mechanics' Institution in Leeds, 1 December 1847, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 82. See, for example, Dickens to Miss Emmely Gotschalk, 23 December 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:244. See also Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 846.

¹⁵ See Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 267. See also Dickens *Our Mutual Friend*, 105, 508; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 846; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 744, 747–748; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 902.

¹⁶ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 366. See also 191; Gaskell, *North and South*, 417. Regarding single women see Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 14 May 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 117.

¹⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Sin of Unbelief: a sermon delivered at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, 4 January 1855," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0003-The-Sin-Of-Unbelief.htm>, accessed 1 May 2017.

¹⁸ See Spurgeon, "A Clear Conscience"; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:224, 536. See also C. H. Spurgeon, "Secret Sins: a sermon delivered at The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, 8 February 1857," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0116-Secret-Sins.htm>, accessed 1 May 2017; C. H. Spurgeon, "Sins of Omission: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 25 October 1868," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0838-Sins-Of-Omission.pdf>, accessed 1 May 2017; Spurgeon, "The Danger of Unconfessed Sin"; C. H. Spurgeon, "Sins of Ignorance: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 25 November 1877," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/1386-Sins-Of-Ignorance.pdf>, accessed 1 May 2017; Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks*, 64–65; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:62; 2:237.

¹⁹ See, for example, Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks*, 8, 41. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:226; Spurgeon, "The Bible"; Spurgeon, "Sin's True Quality"; Spurgeon, "Sins of Ignorance"; Spurgeon, "Righteous Hatred: a sermon delivered at The Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, 4 August 1858," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0208-Religious-Hatred.htm>, accessed 18 June 2017.

chance’, Spurgeon advocates an imagined-Christ-approval test. If one cannot ‘take the Lord Jesus Christ with [them]’, if they go wherever or do whatever, then it is not right for them. If one has doubts one must err on the side of caution, and an activity is wrong if one has any doubts at all.²⁰

For Newman, each individual must act upon the knowledge they are given, and few can claim moral ignorance, because authoritative moral guidance is available to all comers through the Church.²¹ So while he holds the Bible to be the ‘chief guide’ to our duty, unlike Spurgeon, Newman rejects the Bible as a comprehensive source of moral guidance. Its purpose is to tell us ‘what to believe’; to record ‘matters of faith’ which have been revealed supernaturally. Matters of ‘moral duty’ are, for the most part, instead discovered naturally through one’s ‘conscience and divinely-guided reason’, but subject always to ‘tradition and long usage’ mediated by the Church.²²

All of these protagonists dismiss consequences as an indicator of duty.

Dickens sees moral choice as a question of ‘Plain Right and Wrong’—independent of consequences.²³ For Whewell, if something is right, one assents, whatever the consequences. One does what is right, ‘because it *is* right’. Any other reasons are superfluous, because being right ‘leaves us nothing to ask beyond’. It may be that ‘honesty is the best policy’; but the individual who is ‘honest only out of policy’ does not measure up to even the ‘vulgar notion of a virtuous man’.²⁴ For Newman, too, considering consequences is all very good, but such consideration falls a long way short of morality.²⁵

²⁰ Spurgeon keeps morality safe from vulnerabilities of conscience by asserting that such finer points of social behaviour, where the Bible is silent and one must rely on conscience, do not involving ‘morality or immorality’. C. H. Spurgeon, “A Christian’s Pleasures: a lecture delivered at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall, 29 December 1857,” in Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:119–121. One such matter of conscience, which Spurgeon roundly condemns, is vivisection. Spurgeon to Mrs. Eliza Spurgeon, 11 June 1850, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 28; Spurgeon to Unknown, 25 July 1881, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 154.

²¹ Newman to Mrs. J. Mozley, 22 December 1844, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:403–405; Newman, *Apologia*, 257. Unsurprisingly, Newman was apprehensive of the diminishing role of the Established Church in Victorian society. Newman to Mrs. J. Newman, 13 March 1829, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:178–179. See also Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 90.

²² John Henry Newman, “Secret Faults,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 38; Newman to Venerable W. R. Lyall, 16 July 1842, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:356–358; Newman, “Ceremonies of the Church,” 272. For the Bible guiding to duty by deterring from sin, see Newman, “Faith and the World”, 359. For the Bible guiding to duty by illustrating right living, see Newman, *Idea of a University*, 154. See also Newman, “Ceremonies of the Church”, 272; John Henry Newman, “The Apostolical Christian,” in *Selected Sermons*, 367–377; Newman, *Idea of a University*, 65–69.

²³ Dickens to John Pendleton Kennedy, 30 April 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:222.

²⁴ Whewell, Preface to *Dissertation on Progress* by James Mackintosh, xxvi, xxxvii; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 49. See also Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 116, 151, 152; Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 77–78; Whewell, *Additional Lectures*, 113–114; Whewell, *History of Moral Philosophy*, x.

²⁵ Newman, *Idea of a University*, 89.

Gaskell's *Ruth* plainly illustrates the wrong headedness of trying to determine what is right by anticipating consequences. When the Bensons anticipate Ruth's child suffering on account of its illegitimacy, they contemplate deception. Gaskell immediately signals their error—'Ah, tempter! unconscious tempter! Here was a way of evading the trials. ... It was the decision—the pivot, on which the fate of years moved; and [they] turned it the wrong way'. Benson soon repents, declaring it better 'simply to do right actions' and trust that 'no holy or self-denying effort can fall to the ground vain and useless'. For Gaskell, calculating consequences is worse than useless—'the sweep of eternity is large, and God alone knows ... the effect'.²⁶

Given Spurgeon's emphasis on the Law of God as the source of morality, and moral living as the marker of the regenerate, it is unsurprising that Spurgeon disclaims utility. For him, 'the path of duty is to be followed. ... Results are not to be looked at'.²⁷ Nevertheless, Spurgeon often seeks to persuade his audience by pointing to the practical benefits of virtue. This approach is particularly evident in Spurgeon's *John Ploughman's Talks*, addressed to less sophisticated working people. It is for their practical benefits that he advocates honesty in trade; work for the young; and activity for the ageing. Likewise, he advocates generosity because it is to one's 'own advantage to be liberal'—poor men should give that they may not be always poor. Rich men should give that they may not become poor. He concedes these are selfish motives; but asserts they are nevertheless worth mentioning. Spurgeon is happy to point to consequences, if doing so gets the right results.²⁸

Both Whewell and Gaskell comment on the relationship between law and morality. For Whewell, obedience to the law is the minimum standard of morality. Where a law, of itself, has no moral content—where it 'is arbitrary, and rests upon the Authority of the State alone'—the individual is morally required to conform merely to 'the Letter of the Law'. More commonly, however, the law will have inherent moral content. In that case, the individual ought to conform not only to its letter, but also to its spirit. Further, the individual may transcend the law, rising 'from legality to Virtue'.²⁹ So, if I pay the sale price for an apple begrudgingly, I will fully satisfy the requirements of the law, but will scarcely satisfy the requirements of morality.

²⁶ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 121–122, 128. See also Gaskell, *Sylvia's Lovers*, 334.

²⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:55.

²⁸ Spurgeon, "Sin's True Quality"; Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks*, 112, 149; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:389, 399. See also Spurgeon, "Right-Hand Sins".

²⁹ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 132; Whewell, *History of Moral Philosophy*, xvi.

Morality ‘must go deeper than this’.³⁰ If I pay the sale price cheerfully—with a smile; or politely—with a ‘thank you’; or graciously—with respect for the fruiterer; then I not only satisfy the requirements of the law but also demonstrate cheerfulness, politeness, graciousness, respectfulness. I demonstrate virtue. For Whewell, every legal right gives rise, in this way, to ‘an ascending series of Virtues’. Conversely, if I steal the apple, I not only disobey the law, I offend morality. By stealing I fail to satisfy the requirements of the law, but I also demonstrate meanness, covetousness, dishonesty and disrespect.³¹

Similarly, for Gaskell, the law is but a subset of morality. In *North and South*, when Margaret speaks to Thornton of social obligations to his employees, he hides behind the law, asserting that he is under no obligation to account for his use of his money. Like Margaret, the reader is unimpressed. Margaret agrees ‘there is no human law to prevent ... employers from ... throwing away all their money, if they choose’ but there are higher obligations, ‘the Bible ... would rather imply ... that they neglected their duty as stewards if they did so’. In any event, for Gaskell, the positive law is an unreliable indicator of what it is right. It is persuasive because of its might, but it can be morally wrong. Further, where a law is wrong, or wrongly applied, the conscientious individual ought to challenge it. In *Sylvia’s Lovers*, Gaskell shows the press-gangs, recruiting men ‘at any price of money, or suffering, or of injustice’, to be both lawful and immoral. ‘The discord between the laws of man and the laws of Christ’ is made plain.³²

For Gaskell, conscience is critical when determining one’s duties. This is a key theme of *North and South*. When Mr Hale laments the results of his decision to follow his conscience and leave the Established Church, Margaret reminds him we must always follow our conscience—‘It is bad to believe you in error. It would be infinitely worse to have known you a hypocrite’. And later in the novel, when the great cost of Mr Hale following his conscience has become all too apparent, the worthy Mr Bell reminds Mr Hale, and the reader, that the individual conscience is, despite all evidence to the contrary, the truest guide to right.³³ For Whewell and Newman, too, conscience is critical. To act against one’s conscience is, necessarily,

³⁰ Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 83.

³¹ Whewell, *History of Moral Philosophy*, xvi.

³² Gaskell, *North and South*, 117–118, 259; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 28–29, 67, 249–250.

³³ Gaskell, *North and South*, 56, 349.

to do wrong.³⁴ For Whewell, while the sensitivities of conscience vary, reflecting the stage at which one has arrived in their moral progress, it is always wrong to act in bad conscience.³⁵

But for each of Gaskell, Whewell and Newman, while a prohibitive conscience should never be disobeyed, a permissive conscience is not always a reliable guide to right conduct. In Gaskell's *Ruth*, Mrs Mason does wrong despite following her conscience. Her 'over-indulgence last night' is 'balanced by ... over-severity to-day'. She has 'ideas of justice ... but they [are] not divinely beautiful and true ideas'.³⁶ For Gaskell, for a permissive conscience to be a reliable guide, one must be both conscientious and sincere. For both Whewell and Newman, even for the conscientious, there are dangers in looking only inward, looking only to oneself, to guide one's conscience to right conduct. For Whewell, the conscience is the creation of the divine, and it is only religion—specifically, the revealed Christian religion—that can effectively inform the conscience. Indeed, the individual has a duty to so inform their conscience.³⁷ Newman goes further. For him, the Christian religion, as mediated by the Church, does not only inform, but ousts the individual's conscience as the ultimate authority as to what is right. So it is only when there is no 'external authority' to guide, that the truly conscientious rely on their conscience.³⁸

For Dickens, as a guide to right conduct, conscience is too vague a thing altogether. He refers to his own conscience as his 'Monitor' but he also knows its limitations.³⁹ It can be dulled; trained by habit. And even when it disturbs, it can be rationalised away, or simply ignored.⁴⁰ It can hound the guilty, but it can also misfire and besiege the innocent.⁴¹ For Spurgeon, too, the conscience is an unreliable guide to right conduct. But for very different reasons. He sees the conscience as fatally

³⁴ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 149–150; John Henry Newman, *A letter addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk: on occasion of Mr. Gladstone's recent expostulation* (London: B. M. Pickering, 1875), 74. See also Newman, "Human Responsibility, as Independent of Circumstances", 101; Newman, "On Justice", 82; Newman, *Idea of a University*, 47; Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 87.

³⁵ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 150. See also 47.

³⁶ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 19.

³⁷ Whewell, *Plurality of Worlds*, 51; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 152.

³⁸ Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 86. Regarding weakness of conscience as authoritative guide see Newman, "Secret Faults", 37. See also John Henry Newman, "Knowledge of God's Will without Obedience," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 29.

³⁹ Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 19 July 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:371; Dickens to W. W. F. De Cerjat, 3 January 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:495. See also Dickens to Robert Browning, 12 April 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:86; Dickens to Samuel Cartwright, 29 January 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:24.

⁴⁰ Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 519–520; Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 632. For all-too-fleeting pricks of conscience, see Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 508; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 142; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 588.

⁴¹ For evil doers hounded by bad conscience, see Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 402, 446; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 695–698, 724. For an innocent harried by conscience, see Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop*, 455.

desensitised by original sin, with the practice of sin thoroughly perverting its judgment.⁴² But a regenerate conscience, resensitised by the Holy Spirit, helps the elect to keep God's Law. Accordingly, the regenerate should cultivate their conscience by 'hear[ing] the gospel'; 'reading good books' rather than 'light literature'; spending time with other 'Christian people'; and praying regularly.⁴³

So, while for each of Whewell, Dickens, Gaskell, Newman and Spurgeon, the conscience plays a role—sometimes a very important role—the acknowledgment of substantive duties is critical for the moral life. So, bearing in mind that a protagonist's silence implies no more than a lack of emphasis, what are these duties?

We have seen that, for these protagonists, Providence has a life purpose for each individual, and fits them for that purpose. It is unsurprising, then, that, for each of them, the individual's primary duty is the diligent pursuit of their Providential purpose.⁴⁴

While Whewell, Dickens and Gaskell see one's Providential purpose as, more or less, the vocation for which Providence has fitted them in the circumstances in which Providence has placed them, for Newman and Spurgeon, one's Providential purpose is, what we may call, their *particular providence*—a comprehensive life plan for each individual. This conception of particular providence evokes a morality that is both prescriptive and unique for each individual. For Newman, the difficult, often arduous, part of one's duty is to discover one's particular providence.⁴⁵ This can be a monstrous difficulty. The right way is very narrow. And while the individual's conscience must always be obeyed, the individual must not rely on their own private judgment, they must instead rely on the authority of the Church. It is unsurprising,

⁴² Spurgeon, "A Clear Conscience"; Spurgeon, "Christians Kept From Sin"; Spurgeon, "Sins of Ignorance".

⁴³ See Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:57, 429, 489; Spurgeon, "Struggling Against Sin". Regarding need to avoid offending others, see C. H. Spurgeon, "The Clean and the Unclean: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington," [undated], <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0499-The-Clean-And-The-Unclean.htm>, accessed 19 June 2017.

⁴⁴ See Speech at banquet in his honour at Liverpool, 10 April 1869, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 388; Gaskell to Eliza Fox, February 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 107; Whewell to Archdeacon Hare, 19 October 1841 in Douglas, *Life and Selections*, 231–232; Lecture to the Young Men's Christian Association at Aberdeen, 12 March 1861, in Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:128–129. Although, for Spurgeon, Providential purposes are given only to the regenerate. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:271. See also Speech at banquet in his honour in Boston, 1 February 1842, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 19–20; Dickens to Thomas Adolphus Trollope, 11 December 1864, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:462. For our previous discussion of Providence's particular purpose for each individual see Chapter 6, pages 117–118.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Newman, *Apologia*, 28, 75, 163. 'Who shall say that a point of practice which is right in one man, is right even in his next-door neighbour?' Newman, "Private Judgment", 132; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:291, 504. See also John Henry Newman, "The Pillar of the Cloud," in *Verses on Various Occasions* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co), 156–157 at <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/verses/verse90.html>, accessed 13 June 2017.

then, that Newman is most comfortable obeying—relying on someone else’s conscience. Nor is it surprising that his own particular providence lies within the Church.⁴⁶

Given that Providence provides for the government of society through civic institutions, these protagonists recognise various civic duties. As a starting point, they recognise a duty of civil obedience. For Spurgeon, however, one is bound to comply with the laws of their country only to the extent they ‘are just and right’ as determined by the Law of God. For Gaskell, too, as we have noted above, one may have a duty to disobey a law that is at odds with ‘the laws of Christ’.⁴⁷

Whewell and Dickens each attest to the civic duties of ‘charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence’. Indeed, for Dickens, one has a broad duty to discharge one’s vocation so as to contribute, as best one can, to ‘the common welfare’. So, while Dickens writes because he needs an income, and writes so much because he needs so much income, he writes *what* he writes, at least in part, to discharge his duty to contribute what he can to the commonweal—by ‘[increasing] the stock of harmless cheerfulness’; diffusing faith in the existence of beauty, even among the most ‘degenerate, degraded, and forlorn’; and laying bare the ‘meanness, falsehood, cruelty, and oppression’ of the privileged.⁴⁸

Dickens also recognises civic duties of ‘sympathy and charity’. And, for Dickens, wilful ignorance of the circumstances of one’s fellows is a moral wrong because it precludes the discharge of these duties.⁴⁹ He bemoans society’s ‘extraordinary conceit’, which delights in its ‘stupendous ignorance of what is passing out of doors’.⁵⁰ For Dickens, the duty of charity should have as its focus those to

⁴⁶ See Newman, “Human Responsibility, as Independent of Circumstances”, 111–112. See also Newman, “Saving Knowledge”, 327–328. Regarding Newman’s own preference for obeying, see Newman, *Apologia*, 62. See also Newman to F. Rogers, Esq., 25 November 1840, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:284–285.

⁴⁷ See Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 130–132; Newman, “Human Responsibility, as Independent of Circumstances”, 105; Newman to Rev. R. H. Froude, October 1832, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:243; Spurgeon, “Sin’s True Quality”. Regarding Spurgeon’s condemnation of the Opium Wars, see Address to Young Men’s Christian Association at Exeter Hall, 4 January 1859, in Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:124.

⁴⁸ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 78, 83, 106; Dickens, “A Christmas Carol”, 49; Speech at banquet in his honour in Edinburgh, 25 June 1841, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 9; Speech at banquet in his honour in Hartford, 7 February 1842, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 24. See also Speech at banquet in his honour in Boston, 1 February 1842, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 19; Speech at banquet in his honour in Edinburgh, 25 June 1841, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 9–10; Speech to Administrative Reform Association, 27 June 1855, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 200–201; Speech at forty-eighth anniversary of Artists’ Benevolent Fund, 8 May 1858, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 268; Dickens to The Reverend Archer Gurney, 25 April 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:320.

⁴⁹ Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 631. See Dickens to Mrs. Rosher, 18 January 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:373–374. For parody of this wilful ignorance as ‘Podsnappery’, see Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 131–132.

⁵⁰ Dickens to John Forster, 15 March 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:74. For example of repentance of unquestioning ignorance see Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 806. For an explanation of this ‘stupendous ignorance’ Houghton points not so much to fear as to ‘a shallow and insistent optimism’ which ‘labelled anyone ... who

whom one is bound—by familial ties, by professional ties, or by community.⁵¹ Indeed, for Dickens, the duty of ‘sympathy and charity’ requires the privileged to use their privileges—which they hold ‘in trust, for the general welfare’—both by personally doing what they can to relieve the individual cases of need that cross their paths, and by advancing social reforms that improve the lot of the poor. For Dickens, the privileged have a duty to foster mutual societies which encourage ‘provident habits’, the ‘feeling of brotherhood’, and self-respect; to advance ‘comprehensive education everywhere’; and to advance housing reform, sanitary reform, hospitals, and work safety.⁵² For Whewell, too, the privileged hold their property ‘in trust’ for ‘the general benefit of mankind’.⁵³

Gaskell feels the duty of benevolence keenly. Her benevolence requires more than simply throwing money at the poor—it demands time, engagement, and empathy. For Gaskell, capitalism requires needy people ‘who ... must be acute sufferers for the good of many’. So the question is not so much whether some should be required to suffer, but rather whether ‘everything’ is done to ‘make [their] sufferings ... as small as possible’. Both *Mary Barton* and *North and South* focus on the sufferings of the needy and each makes plain the awful cost—both to the needy and to society as a whole—of averting the eyes.⁵⁴

Here, both Dickens and Gaskell advocate what Daniel Siegel calls ‘personal charity’—that ‘particular strain [of] Victorian ... philanthropy’ which takes as its aim

questioned the blessings of English liberty ... or doubted that change was entirely a progress ... upward—a pessimist’. Those who were well off, or in positions of power, could not face up to the ‘central charge that the poor were being exploited by the rich’, or risk ‘an honest examination of the facts and arguments that might cast shadow’ over their achievements. Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 414–415.

⁵¹ For criticism of ‘telescopic philanthropy’ which prioritises the often misapprehended needs of those far away over the all too evident needs of those close to home, see Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, 357; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 49–63, 65, 380–384, 482–483, 724.

⁵² Regarding Dickens’s response to begging letters, see, for example, Dickens to W. H. Wills, 29 April 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:654; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 20 March 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:296; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 29 October 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:449; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 14 January 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:24; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 11 March 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:391. Regarding social reform, see Speech to Mechanics’ Institution in Liverpool, 26 February 1844, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 56; Speech to Newsvendors’ Benevolent Institution, 21 November 1849, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 101; Speech at the Polytechnic Institution in Birmingham, 28 February 1844, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 60; Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 10 May 1851, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 129; Speech at anniversary dinner of Royal Hospital for Incurables, 5 June 1856, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 225; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 29 September 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:428; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 26 October 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:443–444. See also Speech to Gardeners’ Benevolent Institution, 14 June 1852, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 145; Speech at dinner of the General Theatrical Fund, 14 April 1851, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 122; Speech to Metropolitan Sanitary Association, 6 February 1850, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 106; Speech at dinner for Hospital for Sick Children, 9 February 1858, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 250–251.

⁵³ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 118.

⁵⁴ Gaskell, *North and South*, 69. Regarding giving money for the poor while averting the eyes, see Gaskell to Vernon Lushington, 9 April 1862, in *Further Letters*, 235–236; Gaskell to Mary Cowden Clarke, 23 May 1852, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 193. See also Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 18 November 1861, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 669.

the multiplication of ‘points of contact between rich and poor, a contact that had been increasingly attenuated by the stratifications of modern urban life’. For the advocates of personal charity, it was ‘through individual scenes of personal contact, each class would exert a salutary influence on the other’—the middle ranks advising the poor ‘on matters spiritual ... and temporal’, and the poor exemplifying to the middle ranks ‘the necessity of Christian charity’ and providing ‘examples of fortitude, dignity, and (paradoxically) independence’. But, as Siegel points out, ‘personal charity’ philanthropists were also keenly aware of the harmful effects of condescension, and of the ever-present need for mutuality of respect and sympathy at all points of contact between the philanthropist and the needy.⁵⁵

Spurgeon likewise recognises a duty of sympathy and charity, but his focus, as always, is on the elect. The regenerate have a duty to search out their fellows in need, to own them as brothers and sisters, and to help them—with funds, with prayers and with practical help. Further, all regenerate individuals have a particular duty of benevolence—to speak to others in their community of their redeeming faith.⁵⁶

All of our protagonists accept the institution of class as the provision of Providence for the proper governance of society and recognise certain duties referable to one’s class. Dickens criticises both the ‘negligent indifference’ of idle gentlemen, and the ‘trodden-down sentiment, and passionate revenge’ of the worker.⁵⁷ Spurgeon, too, recognises the duty of the privileged to those who are dependent on them—landlords having a duty to provide proper housing for their labourers, and social elites, more broadly, having a duty to contribute to the national estate that supports them.⁵⁸

For Whewell, individuals of the lower ranks have a duty of reverence for their superiors and governors—undeserving as those superiors may be. Conversely, the privileged have a duty of benevolence to those dependent on them. For Whewell, reverence in inferiors (rather than bare, or begrudging, obedience), and benevolence in superiors, are ‘ties of affection’ which bind superiors and inferiors together in a

⁵⁵ Daniel Siegel, *Charity and Condescension: Victorian Literature and the Dilemmas of Philanthropy* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2012), 38, 163.

⁵⁶ Spurgeon, “Duty of Remembering the Poor”; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:273; Spurgeon, “A Clear Conscience”.

⁵⁷ See Speech to the Administrative Reform Association, 27 June 1855, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 203; Speech at reading of ‘A Christmas Carol’ in Birmingham, 30 December 1853, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 167; Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 336–337. Regarding desirable attitude for working people, see Speech at Banquet to Literature and Art in Birmingham, 6 January 1853, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 160. See also Dickens to John Forster, 3 February 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:523; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 15 May 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:619–620; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 30 June 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:664.

⁵⁸ Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks* 14–15, 75, 165, 185.

community in ‘moral relations’ and so imply moral value into the social order. Further, where these ties of affection are properly developed, ‘the pride of rank and station, the capricious exclusions of fashion, the supreme regard of each class to its own comfort, the excessive jealousy of interference, the impatience of intrusion,’ disappear.⁵⁹

Whewell, Gaskell and Dickens each identify both a duty of obedience which servants owe to their masters and corresponding duties imposed on their masters. For Whewell, the employer has a duty to consider the powers and comfort of their servants when directing them in their work; a duty to avoid ‘a hard and repulsive demeanour’ which could contribute to ‘estrangement between the two classes’; and, remembering that ‘no class of men are superior or inferior to others in their moral claim to kindness in [their] intention and gentleness in [their] manner,’ they have a duty to be ‘frank, affable, and courteous’ in their intercourse with their servants.⁶⁰ Whewell highlights the reciprocity of the employment relationship, which gives it moral value for both the master and the servant. In *North and South*, Gaskell emphasises the complementary nature of the duties of factory masters and their hands. But Gaskell also makes it clear that the master’s duty to the factory hands is owed to them, *as men*. They are not ‘puppets of dough, ready to be moulded into any amiable form’. As Thompson notes, those Victorians who knew the factory system also knew that factory hands were not passive resources awaiting direction—‘The discipline of the overlooker and of the machinery’ sufficed to keep youngsters in line but, ‘for those “past the age of puberty” inner compulsions were required’. The factory system depended on the felt engagement of the factory hands. For Gaskell, it is the duty of both masters and servants to strive for an open understanding and mutual respect.⁶¹

Dickens, likewise, recognises the mutuality of the relationship between masters and servants—each sharing the same interests and depending on the other. But, while workers should order themselves ‘lowly and reverently towards [their] betters’, they should have an independent mind and speak out in the face of wrong. Further, workers should take the initiative in finding solutions for their individual and

⁵⁹ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 103, 118, 133–134.

⁶⁰ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 130, 133–134.

⁶¹ Gaskell, *North and South*, 117–118, 122–123; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 360–361. Regarding understanding and mutual respect between masters and hands, see, for example, Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 372–374. Regarding the need for both widely felt trust in the state and broadly accepted and internalized moral disciplines for the functioning of a liberal society more generally, see Peter Mandler, introduction to *Liberty & Authority in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2, 16–17.

community needs—reliance on patronage being a ‘perversion of their duty’.⁶² For Dickens, the duty of employers is clear—‘exact[ing] their proper service from [their employees] on the one hand, and treating them with all possible consistency and gentleness, and consideration, on the other’. And employers have a duty to temper their demand for labour—to adopt hours and systems of work that are compatible with employees pursuing ‘reasonable opportunities of self-culture and improvement ... as all rational creatures are intended to do, and have a right to do’.⁶³ Indeed, for Dickens, it is in the hands of the master to ‘render’ their servants ‘happy or unhappy; to make [their] service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil’. But not by any radical change in the power relationships between the master and servant, rather by ‘words and looks’; by ‘things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count ‘em up’. And while the employer’s duty is not dependent on the employee’s good conduct, that is its natural consequence.⁶⁴ For Dickens, as for Gaskell, tensions between employers and employees are not the inevitable consequence of one-sided exploitation. Rather they result from a lack of common understanding of their shared interests and mutual dependence.⁶⁵

All of these protagonists accept the institution of the family as the provision of Providence for the welfare of the individual. They each recognise a cluster of duties owed by family members to each other. In doing so, they accept a ‘domestic ideal’ which, as Karen Chase and Michael Levenson argue, is very much a creature of the middle classes—one that went largely unheeded by the working classes and the poor, and met with indifference among the gentry and aristocracy. While they have much in common, our protagonists’ conceptions of these duties vary, reflecting both

⁶² Speech at reading of ‘A Christmas Carol’ in Birmingham, 30 December 1853, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 167; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 667; Dickens to Dr Lyon Playfair, 20 December 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:230–231.

⁶³ Dickens to W. H. Wills, 2 September 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:417; Dickens to The Committee of the Metropolitan Drapers’ Association, 28 March 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:88. Regarding Dickens’s approval of cultural efforts of American mill workers, see Dickens, *American Notes*, 78. Regarding libraries for working people, see Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 2 September 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:752–753. Regarding Dickens’s public readings for working people, Dickens to The Hon. Mrs. Richard Watson, 13 January 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:243–244. See also Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 27 November 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:214; Dickens to Charles Knight, 17 March 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:294.

⁶⁴ Dickens, “A Christmas Carol”, 64; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 2 September 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:417. See also Dickens to Edward Dickens, 26 September 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:187; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 700; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 508–509.

⁶⁵ Speech at reading of ‘A Christmas Carol’ in Birmingham, 30 December 1853, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 167.

their conceptions of Providence, and their life experience. Indeed, rather than ‘expressing a stable orthodoxy’ this ideal ‘overlay[s] a moving ground’.⁶⁶

For Whewell, Gaskell and Spurgeon, a woman’s life is full of duties—naturally centring on her husband and home.⁶⁷ But they all stop well short of the unremitting self-sacrifice that we will see Dickens requires of women. Spurgeon, particularly, sees dangers in womankind’s dependency. For him, women ought not be ‘compelled’ to be the ‘drudges’ in the family. Indeed, he bemoans the lack of paid employment outside the home suited to single women of the middle ranks—‘indoor occupations’ such as ‘watchmaking, printing, telegraphing, bookselling’. For Spurgeon, the want of such opportunities for ‘female industry’ amounts to ‘a very great evil’, and leads to the moral degradation of single women both inside and outside the home.⁶⁸ Here Spurgeon echoes the concerns of a growing number of Victorian women who, finding ‘a “matrimonial career” shut to them’, were keen to find a meaningful place in society outside the home—one in which they could successfully exercise ‘a “masculine faculty” combined with the “woman’s temperament”’.⁶⁹ For both Spurgeon and Whewell, a husband has a duty to provide for his wife and children. He must be kind to his wife—showing her affection; taking pleasure in pleasing her; and sharing ‘life and fortune’ with her. Whewell stresses the duty of affection of both the husband and the wife, together with ‘their mutual obligations to community of life and fortune’. For Spurgeon, a wife should take pride in her home—keeping it clean and making it a happy place for her family. She should ‘care for her husband’—‘reverencing’ him, rather than ‘wrangling and railing at him’. And, while the husband may earn the money, it is up to the wife to save it—‘a thrifty housewife’ being ‘better than a great income’. Spurgeon’s dutiful wife is an eminently practical person. Both Whewell and Spurgeon stress the reciprocity of

⁶⁶ Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 6.

⁶⁷ Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks*, 94–97; Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 14 May, 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 117; Gaskell, *Ruth*, 191. Newman has little to say about duties within the family.

⁶⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:23. Regarding women, Spurgeon emphasises useful activity over ‘useless finery’. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks*, 121–122.

⁶⁹ Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 61–62. Houghton describes three conceptions of woman current in the Victorian period—‘the submissive wife’ whose life centred exclusively on the home and found all of its meaning there, ‘the “new woman” in revolt against her legal and social bondage’, and a ‘middle position’ which mediated between conservative and radical thinking’ and advocated the removal of legal disabilities and access to greater depth of culture, but balked at higher education, the vote and professional careers for women. Whewell, Spurgeon and Gaskell more or less adopt this middle ground. Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, 348–349.

family relationships—warning against the masculine self-centredness which is very apparent in Dickens’s conception of family duties.⁷⁰

For Dickens, the whole duty of a woman centres on her man, and the home she makes for him. Her home is the ‘world, in which a woman’s course of influence and action is marked out by heaven!’ In the normal course, a woman first owes this duty to her father.⁷¹ With time, and marriage, it transfers to her husband or, if she remains single and outlives her father, to her brother or guardian. Dickens fundamentally distrusts the independent woman.⁷² So, for Dickens, a woman’s first duty is to keep house for her man—be it her father, her brother or her husband—in much the same way as Sophie does for Tom Traddles.

She is ... the dearest girl. The way she manages this place; her punctuality, domestic knowledge, economy, and order; her cheerfulness! ... Bless my soul, when I see her getting up by candle-light on these dark mornings, busying herself in the day’s arrangements, going out to market before the clerks come into the Inn, caring for no weather, devising the most capital little dinners out of the plainest materials, making puddings and pies, keeping everything in its right place, always so neat and ornamental herself, sitting up at night with me if it’s ever so late, sweet-tempered and encouraging always, and all for me.⁷³

If any unfortunate girl slips through the cracks, and reaches womanhood unprepared for her duty, then it lies with her to seek out appropriate guidance and skill up for the task. For Dickens, wedding oneself to an incompetent housekeeper is worse than death. Sensibly, David Copperfield tells his soon-to-be-wed but completely incompetent Dora to ‘look about now and then at your papa’s housekeeping, and endeavour to acquire a little habit—of accounts, for instance. ... And if you would promise me to read a little—a little Cookery Book that I would send you, it would be so excellent for both of us’. Dickens delights in the newly wed Bella Wilfer’s determined efforts to transform herself into a competent housekeeper under the tuition of ‘a sage volume entitled *The Complete British Family Housewife*’. More broadly, a woman’s duty is one of self-denial, sacrifice and service—‘toiling on’ with

⁷⁰ Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 99, 101, 105; Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks* 94–97, 121–122, 127, 133. See also Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:23.

⁷¹ Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 17 May 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:542.

⁷² Miss Wade is the embodiment of the evils of independence—wilful, selfish and sceptical of respectable male motives. Dickens draws her as an evil temptress who lures Tattycoram from her grateful duty to Mr. Meagles. Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 348–351.

⁷³ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 851. For Dickens ‘goodness and charity abroad’ follow on after the ‘smiling untiring discharge of domestic duties at home’. Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 453. See also Dickens, *Bleak House*, 49–63, 83.

‘patience, self-denial, self-subdual, charitable construction’, ‘gentle’, ‘sweet-tempered’, and having ‘the noblest generosity of the affections’. Indeed, for Dickens, a woman is to be always ‘all bound up in’ her man. So Sophie is doing her duty when she makes Tom her ‘authority for everything ... the idol of her life; never to be shaken on his pedestal by any commotion; always to be believed in, and done homage to with the whole faith of her heart, come what might’.⁷⁴

And while worshipping her man, in this thankful dependency, Dickens’s dutiful woman also improves and sustains him, partnering him in ‘the toils and cares of ... life’, and providing a haven of ‘peace’ and ‘rest!’ She is a ready counsel—but urges no advice or duty, amenable always to the reasoning of her man.⁷⁵ Even when she is clearly more capable than her man, and he knows it and delights in it, Dickens’s dutiful woman happily resigns herself to his authority and takes care not to shame him by appearing more knowledgeable.⁷⁶ She fundamentally believes in her man—good, bad or indifferent. She glories in his achievements and, if he fails her, commends him to God. And for Dickens, this is a key duty of a woman—to be a ‘better angel’ for her man—‘ever pointing upward ... leading [him] to something better; ever directing [him] to higher things!’⁷⁷ It is unsurprising, then, that Dickens opposes intellectual pursuits that ‘unfit women’ for a ‘quiet domestic life’.⁷⁸ For Dickens, a woman’s duty is to live, selflessly, for her man.

While Dickens is prescriptive as to the duties of women and wives, he says very little of the duties of men and husbands. When David Copperfield, having discovered Dora’s inadequacies—not only as a housekeeper but also as a soulmate—doubts the wisdom of his marriage, Miss Trotwood spells out his duty to make the most of his wife.

⁷⁴ Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 752–753; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 284, 349, 833–834, 548; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 475; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 665–666. Regarding a woman’s deference to her man even in personal matters, see Dickens, *Bleak House*, 902, 959; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 859; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 373–375, 378; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 724.

⁷⁵ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 348, 573–574, 653–654, 822. See the flawed Dora’s protests at being ‘reasoned with’. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 643, 702. See also Dickens, *Bleak House*, 570, 988–989.

⁷⁶ Dickens, *Bleak House*, 438–439, 443, 544, 802. See also 575.

⁷⁷ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 822, 844, 848. See also 776. One imagines it is this sanctifying role that Dickens had in mind when, objecting to ‘the Bentham-notion of supplying convicts with women’, he suggested that, ‘when the professional criminal has been repressed and punished—years hence’, the question of supplying convicts with women ‘may be mooted reasonably’. Dickens to W. H. Wills, 26 December 1862, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:181–182.

⁷⁸ Dickens, “London Recreations”, 119. For Dickens’s condemnation of ‘an intellectual woman’, see Dickens, *Bleak House*, 908. See also 120, 476; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 284, 512; Dickens to Frederick Dickens, 7 October 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:400–401.

‘You have chosen ... and you have chosen a very pretty and a very affectionate creature. It will be your duty ... to estimate her (as you chose her) by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have. The latter you must develop in her, if you can. And if you cannot ... you must just accustom yourself to do without ’em’.⁷⁹

But while David is convinced by Mrs Trotwood’s admonition, it is not at all clear that Dickens himself is. Indeed, the paucity of references to the duties of married men in Dickens’s oeuvre as a whole, together with timing of the writing of *David Copperfield*—when the best years of Dickens’s doomed marriage were already well behind him, would suggest not. It is fortunate then, that when, after a failed attempt at motherhood, her faults prove irredeemable, Dora declines and dies, leaving David free to wed the ever patient and so very competent Agnes.⁸⁰

Dickens places responsibility for the success of a marriage squarely with the wife.⁸¹ It is unsurprising, then, that he has a very clear picture of a dutiful wife—skilful and diligent in keeping house for her husband; hardworking and patient, ‘the prime ornament’ of her home, and ‘the cause of happiness to others’.⁸² It is her duty to be unerringly loyal to her husband—‘if all the world were against him, she would be for him; that if all the world repudiated him, she would believe him’ and ‘devote her life to consoling him’. Further, she is not jealous of her husband’s affections.⁸³ Clearly, for Dickens, while it is the duty of a wife to be purity itself, she must be ever ready to cut her erring husband some slack. And here is a key difference between Dickens and both Whewell and Spurgeon. Whereas they stress the mutuality of duties within a marriage—including the duties of affection—Dickens’s conception of duties within a marriage is much more one-sided, emphasising the wife’s duty of unquestioning and self-sacrificing devotion to her man.

⁷⁹ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 645, 704. Miss Trotwood is fully cognizant of the difficulty of the duty she describes, being separated from her scoundrel of a husband who abuses her and her inheritance dreadfully.

⁸⁰ In his own life, Dickens gives up on the idea of ‘making the best’ of his marriage. No novelistic decline and death can respectfully rescue Dickens from his choice. Protesting that, after twenty-one years and ten children, ‘Nature has put an insurmountable barrier’ between himself and Catherine, Dickens declares he must leave her or ‘be driven mad’. In the event, Dickens finds a soulmate of sorts—if not a competent housekeeper—in Ellen, an eighteen year old actress. See Dickens to The Hon. Mrs. Richard Watson, 7 December 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:488; Dickens to The Rev. Joseph Hindle, 28 October 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:305.

⁸¹ Dickens to Mr. Syngé, 22 April 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:540. See also Dickens to Unknown, 14 August 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:689.

⁸² Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 3 August 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:280; Speech at Banquet to Literature and Art in Birmingham, 6 January 1853, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 159. See also Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 665–666; 724.

⁸³ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 740, 752–753; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 945. See also Dickens, *Bleak House*, 827, 928.

All of these protagonists recognise broader familial duties. Whewell identifies parental duties to support and educate their children, along with duties of affection. He also identifies duties of filial affection and obedience, noting that the child's duty of obedience stops short of marrying whom they cannot love.⁸⁴ For Spurgeon parents have a duty to train their children aright—insisting on obedience; disciplining when warranted; and 'inculcating Gospel Truths' in their minds.⁸⁵ Gaskell recognises a daughter's 'clear duty' to obey her father; and a single daughter's duty of care for her ageing father.⁸⁶ More broadly, for Dickens, each family member has a duty of care and financial support to other family members—with the recipient of such support having a duty to feel their obligations and act accordingly.⁸⁷

So, for all of Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon each individual is subject to various duties—vocational duties; civil duties, including duties referable to their class and as employers or employees; and familial duties owed to family members.

While these protagonists hold that the obligation to discharge one's duty is clear and constant—they all recognise that one's duties can be confused and competing.⁸⁸

In August 1859, Gaskell found herself caught up in an unwanted altercation with Mill. Gaskell had included in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* extracts from a letter in which Charlotte Brontë refers to Mill as having a 'head' which 'is, I daresay, very good', but feeling 'disposed to scorn his heart'.⁸⁹ Mill, as if to validate Brontë's assessment, took umbrage at Gaskell's inclusion of this reference to himself in the published biography. Gaskell corresponded with Mill in an effort to make amends.

⁸⁴ Indeed, for Whewell, given the duty of affection to one's spouse, it is wrong to marry where one cannot love. Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 131.

⁸⁵ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:225; Spurgeon, "A Clear Conscience"; Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks*, 95–96; C. H. Spurgeon, "Do Not Sin Against the Child: a sermon delivered at The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 8 November 1868," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0840-Do-Not-Sin-Against-The-Child.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 364; Gaskell, *North and South*, 322.

⁸⁷ Including, in the case of Dickens's dependent sister-in-law, taking an inconveniently senile mother off one's hands. Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 24 January 1862, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:22; Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 28 January 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:25. See also Dickens to John Forster, 3 August 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:280; Dickens to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, 24 January 1862, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:24; Dickens to Miss Georgina Hogarth, 1–3 April 1868, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:88; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 579, 844.

⁸⁸ See Spurgeon, "A Clear Conscience"; Spurgeon, "Sin's True Quality"; Spurgeon, "Satanic Hindrances"; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 177–178. For an example of a misconceived conflict of duties, see Dickens, *Dombey and Son* 232.

⁸⁹ See Gaskell, *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, 390.

Their correspondence focuses on deciding what is, in fact, one's duty, and Gaskell appears to get the better of the philosopher's somewhat pompous reasoning. The letter—which I quote at length—makes clear both Gaskell's unquestioning acceptance of the need to discharge one's duty and the difficulty of determining where one's duties begin and end.

Sir

You do me an injustice, I think ... in saying that 'in publishing letters not written for publication you disregarded the obligation which custom founded on reason has imposed, of omitting what would be offensive to the feelings and perhaps injurious to the moral reputation of individuals'. ...

I have expressed myself badly if you think that I intentionally disregarded the 'obligation which custom or reason has imposed &c'.—I certainly did not think that 'a foolish opinion',—a mere conjecture, obviously formed on insufficient grounds for having any weight affixed to it by the most careless reader could have been 'offensive to the feelings or injurious to the moral reputation'. That is the point on which we differ; not on the duty of a biographer to omit whatever can reasonably be expected to 'be offensive &c'. I acknowledge that duty; ... I tried to be very careful, and it was difficult to exactly tell where the limit (the necessity for which, let me say once again, I fully acknowledge—) was to be drawn. ...

I do *not* believe that a just and reasonable person ought to have been offended by the publication of such a mere conjecture as to possible character. As I said, I do not believe that this letter will alter your opinion of me, and of the transaction which has brought us thus unpleasantly into contact. But I write for the chance.

Yours respectfully & truly
EC Gaskell⁹⁰

Gaskell struggles to establish the appropriate priority of her various duties—and the proper balance between pleasure and duty. She tells Eliza Fox:

One thing is pretty clear, *Women*, must give up living an artist's life, if home duties are to be paramount. ... It is healthy for them to have a refuge [in] Art ... when too much pressed upon by ... peddling cares. ... Assuredly a blending of [home duties and the development of the Individual] is desirable. ... The difficulty is

⁹⁰ Gaskell to John Stuart Mill, 11 August 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 567–569.

where and when to make one set of duties subserve and give place to the other. ...

If Self is to be the end of exertions, those exertions are unholy, there is not doubt of *that*—and that is part of the danger in cultivating the Individual Life; but I do believe we have all some appointed work to do, [which] no one else can do so well; [which] is *our* work; what *we* have to do in advancing the Kingdom of God; and that we must find out what we are sent into the world to do, and define it and make it clear to ourselves, (that's *the* hard part) and then forget ourselves in our work, and work in the End we ought to strive to bring about.⁹¹

Here we see Gaskell owning her writing as her vocation, as her 'appointed work', rather than merely the indulgence, or even development, of her creative self. In this way, her writing can legitimately take its place, alongside her home duties, as one of the primary duties by which she meaningfully participates in the work of Providence. Elsewhere, Gaskell confesses that she writes because, if she left off writing, she would have to determine 'which of the two hundred duties I ought to do first and next' and perhaps 'begin to think', which 'would never do' because thinking brings the 'heart ache' of wondering 'whether I am doing right'. At times she despairs of ever, in this world, being able to judge 'what is right'. She feels 'in such a mist' and yearns for the time 'when in "His light we shall all see light" '. For Gaskell, her 'clear and defined duties' as a 'wife and a mother' are a refuge. At least in them, she has no doubt that she is doing right. At times, she longs for 'the old times where right and wrong did not seem such complicated matters'; when 'obedience was the only seen duty of women'. When the Gaskells move into a more expansive, more expensive, more impressive home, Elizabeth's conscience is uneasy. She tries to retreat to the past—'saying it's [her husband] who is to decide on all these things, and his feeling it right ought to be my rule', but this 'does not quite do'. The conflict remains unresolved. When friends advise her to get some country air for the sake of her health, she tells them she cannot leave Manchester, primarily because her husband's 'appointed' work is there. But, years later, when her writing has secured her the necessary funds, she purchases a house in the country without his knowledge. It was very nearly ready for her first round of house guests when she died.⁹² In her

⁹¹ Gaskell to Eliza Fox, February 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 106–107. See also Gaskell to Unknown, 25 September 1862, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 694–695.

⁹² Gaskell to Eliza Fox, April 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 108–109; Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 14 May 1850, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 118; Gaskell to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 12 December 1850 in *Letters of*

introduction to *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, Nicola Thompson asserts that ‘all Victorian women novelists, whether we now label them radical or conservative, were fundamentally conflicted in their own beliefs about women’s proper role’.⁹³ It seems then, that Gaskell was typical of her fellows.

Each of our protagonists feels this conflict of duties in their own lives, and each of them finds different ways to accommodate it. As we have seen, Gaskell retreats—sometimes to her writing, to simply avoid having to decide between duties; sometimes to the role of wife and mother—an irrefutable good; and sometimes to the direction of her husband—a conveniently incontestable duty. None of Whewell, Dickens, Spurgeon or Newman have husbands to retreat to, but Newman finds a retreat of sorts in the infallible authority of the Church.⁹⁴ Dickens prioritises vocation—which, for him, embraces all his contributions to the commonweal—and wears himself out in the resulting frenzy.⁹⁵ Spurgeon prays, trusting he will find rest through submission to our Lord’s will. But he, too, takes on too much and wears himself out.⁹⁶ Whewell may be the wisest of these protagonists. He recognises that duties will conflict, and trusts to the conscience to determine proprieties—knowing that one’s knowledge of one’s duties, like all knowledge, is a cumulative, iterative process; and that the sensitivity and maturity of one’s conscience is growing all the while. Whewell does not expect perfection, either of himself or of others; nor is he ignorant of, or disheartened by, his imperfections.⁹⁷

We have seen in Chapter 6 that these protagonists are alive to the self-deceiving use of Providence as a mask for an individual’s selfish will. Similarly, Dickens illustrates the ‘not uncommon’ phenomenon of individuals ‘[making] duties of their inclinations in matters of more doubtful propriety’.⁹⁸ Mr. Pecksniff is this phenomenon writ large. His frequently outraged sense of duty is a comically transparent mask for self-serving spite. But Dickens makes it clear that Pecksniff is

Mrs. Gaskell, 139; Gaskell to Edward E. Hale, 11 February 1857, in *Further Letters*, 166–167; Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell*, 566–567, 609–610.

⁹³ Nicola Diane Thompson, “Responding to the woman questions: rereading non-canonical Victorian women novelists,” in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

⁹⁴ Regarding Newman, see page 164 above.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 2, pages 30–31.

⁹⁶ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:486–487. Spurgeon, “Satanic Hindrances”. See Chapter 3, page 60.

⁹⁷ See Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 150–154.

⁹⁸ Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 114. See also Dickens, *Bleak House*, 607, 622–623, 625, 628–629. For examples of duty used as a mask for selfish desire, see Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 897; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 400–401, 442, 448, 500, 611, 635; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 35, 127, 144, 226, 351; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 657.

no aberration. Pecksniff is typical both of the privileged and of civil institutions—clutching at the supposed duties of justice as a cover for their failure to discharge their duties of care to the poor. When Pecksniff feebly points to ‘duty’, Dickens is merciless:

Oh, late-remembered, much-forgotten, mouthing, braggart duty, always owed, and seldom paid in any other coin than punishment and wrath. ... When will [we] acknowledge thee in thy neglected cradle, and thy stunted youth, and not begin their recognition in thy sinful manhood and thy desolate old age! Oh, ermined Judge whose duty to society is, now, to doom the ragged criminal to punishment and death, hadst thou never, ... a duty to discharge in barring up the hundred open gates that woo [them] to the felon’s dock, and throwing but ajar the portals to a decent life! Oh, prelate, prelate, whose duty to society it is to mourn in melancholy phrase the sad degeneracy of these bad times ... did nothing go before thy elevation to the lofty seat, from which thou dealest out thy homilies to other tarrriers for dead men’s shoes, whose duty to society has not begun! Oh! magistrate, ... had you no duty to society, before the ricks were blazing and the mob were mad; or did it spring up, armed and booted from the earth ... full-grown!⁹⁹

In addition to the above duties, our protagonists identify various virtues—including endurance; truthfulness; effort; humility; generosity, compassion and forgiveness; patience; and manliness.

Gaskell attests to one virtue as arising directly from a proper conception of Providence—the patient endurance of God’s will or, in other words, the patient endurance of the circumstances one is powerless to change. For Gaskell, virtue calls for the patient endurance of difficult circumstances rather than futile attempts to change them. Gaskell knows this is hard. Even her most angelic heroines struggle to achieve the requisite patience. Gaskell’s message is clear: we must all pass through ‘miserable times of endurance and waiting’ during the course of their lives, ‘when the heart, and the will, and the speech, and the limbs, must be bound down with strong resolution to patience’.¹⁰⁰

Truthfulness, together with the destructive allure of secrets and lies, is another key theme in Gaskell’s novels.¹⁰¹ For Gaskell, it is always right to tell the

⁹⁹ Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 470–471.

¹⁰⁰ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 346; Gaskell, *Sylvia’s Lovers*, 356, 498. See also Gaskell, *Ruth*, 276, 282; Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 140.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Gaskell, *Ruth*, 356–358; Gaskell, *North and South*, 285, 302, 396–397; Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, 299–300.

truth. Almost always. In *Wives and Daughters* Gaskell examines truthfulness closely—the plot is riddled with secrets and lies and the text is riddled with irony used, with great effect, to contrast the hypocritical sophistication of Mrs Gibson and Cynthia with the truthful naivety of Dr Gibson and Molly. But, while the whole tenor of *Wives and Daughters* condemns secrets and lies and those who connive at them, Gaskell condones one lie. When Molly and Dr Gibson consider how they may break the news of Osborne’s death to his young widow, they conspire to lie.

‘Suppose you write, and say he’s very ill; write to-morrow. ... I think she ought to know he is very ill—in great danger, if you like: and you can follow it up next day with the full truth’.

... Writing this letter was rather difficult work for Molly, and she tore up two or three copies before she could manage it to her satisfaction; and at last, in despair of ever doing it better, she sent it off without re-reading it. The next day was easier; the fact of Osborne’s death was told briefly and tenderly.¹⁰²

The lie is awkward, but it is not condemned. Molly’s virtue is preserved by her finding it very hard to lie, and so much easier to tell the truth.

Gaskell herself sought to be truthful. Gaskell was very hurt by those who, on the publication of the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, implied she had been less than truthful.¹⁰³ But, at times, she resorted to deception. Following the anonymous publication of *Mary Barton*, Gaskell was annoyed by people seeking to discover her identity, and reproached herself for ‘the deceit’ she practised ‘and into which [she was] *almost* forced by impertinent enquiry’. While Gaskell explains her deceit, she nevertheless holds it to be wrong.¹⁰⁴

Dickens likewise holds that it is right to tell the truth—or, at least, be ‘sufficiently steady’ to ‘what is true’. But Dickens is not averse to ‘a pious fraud’ to benefit others—to avoid offence; to protect anonymity; or to break grievous news gently. Nor is Dickens averse to his virtuous characters telling lies for the sake of

¹⁰² Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, 599–600.

¹⁰³ Gaskell to Ellen Nussey, 16 June 1857, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 454. See also Gaskell to William Fairbairn, June 1857, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 458.

¹⁰⁴ Gaskell to Edward Chapman, 7 December 1848, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 65. Emphasis added. Nevertheless, Gaskell was very much caught up in the enthusiasm of the discovery of the identity of George Eliot. See Gaskell to George Smith, 4 August 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 566–567; Gaskell to George Smith, 20 September 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 575; Gaskell to Eliot Norton, 25 October 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 582; Gaskell to George Smith, 2 November 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 586–587; Gaskell to Harriet Martineau, October 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 903; Gaskell to Maria Martineau, 4 November 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 905.

others—where ‘the object is a good one’ and deceit is unavoidable.¹⁰⁵ The conspiracy of deception in *Our Mutual Friend*—the ‘pious fraud’ by Mr and Mrs Boffin and John Rokesmith, to prove Bella’s worth and win her love—has authorial approval. Indeed, when Tom Pinch secretes his precious half-sovereign in Martin Chuzzlewit’s book and scrawls ‘I don’t want it, indeed, I should not know what to do with it, if I had it’ in pencil on the inside. Dickens declares—‘There are some falsehoods ... on which [we] mount, as on bright wings, towards Heaven’.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, for Dickens, as for Gaskell, the virtuous character is never entirely easy telling lies—the sensitive conscience jars, even if the mind is satisfied.¹⁰⁷

But, for both Whewell and Spurgeon, truthfulness is always required. Falsehood is ever wrong—no exceptions.¹⁰⁸ Newman is less decisive. After joining the Church of Rome, Newman found himself called on to defend casuistry. His public spat with Charles Kingsley was essentially about the validity of the casuistic approach, and focussed on the question of whether it can ever be right to deceive.¹⁰⁹ As Anger has noted, Newman’s all too technical definition of lying—using “words in a sense which they will not bear”—‘cuts meaning from intention’ so that a speaker does not lie even if they are ‘aware that [their] words can be understood in a sense that is not true and, further, *intends* that they should be’, so long as ‘there is also a sense in which the words count as truthful’.¹¹⁰ For Kingsley, the Roman clergy had shown themselves all too willing to deceive both their critics and their parishioners. And while Newman wrote his *Apologia* primarily to show himself to be fundamentally honest, his approach to truthfulness is essentially casuistic.

Almost all authors, Catholic and Protestant, admit, that *when a just cause is present*, there is some kind or other of verbal misleading, which is not sin. ... The Greek Fathers thought that,

¹⁰⁵ Dickens to John Forster, 9 June 1847, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:82. See Dickens to Thomas Beard, 18 December 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:396; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 31 March 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:54; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 17 April 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:356; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 247–248. See also Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 58, 71; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 234. For fictional examples of approved lies, see Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 63; Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 203, 212, 254; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 185; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 726–727. See also 651, 663; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 569; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 293.

¹⁰⁶ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 751, 754–755, 757; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 210.

¹⁰⁷ Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 214. See also Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 63; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 575.

¹⁰⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:270, 448; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 73, 120–124.

¹⁰⁹ In the January 1863 number of *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Charles Kingsley asserted: ‘Truth for its own sake, had never been a virtue of the Roman clergy.’ In the ensuing spat, Kingsley pointed to Newman’s “Wisdom and Innocence” sermon as evidence of Newman’s acceptance of Roman Catholic duplicity. See Ker, *John Henry Newman*, 533; John Henry Newman, “Wisdom and Innocence,” in *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902), 295–298.

¹¹⁰ Anger, *Victorian Interpretation*, 30.

when there was a *justa causa*, an untruth need not be a lie. St. Augustine took another view ... and, whether he is rightly interpreted or not, is the doctor of the great and common view that all untruths are lies, and that there can be no just cause of untruth. ... This doctrine has been found difficult to work, and it has been largely taught that, though all untruths are lies, yet that certain equivocations, when there is a just cause, are not untruths. Further, there have been ... all along ... other schools, running parallel with the above mentioned, one of which says that equivocations, &c. after all are lies, and another which says that there are untruths which are not lies.

And further,

In not ranging myself then with those who consider that it is justifiable to use words in a double sense, that is, to equivocate, I put myself under the protection of such authors as Cardinal Gerdil, Natalis Alexander, Contenson, Concina, and others [and] I say as follows:—Casuistry is a noble science, but it is one to which I am led, neither by my abilities nor my turn of mind. [Hence] I am very unwilling to say a word here on the subject of Lying and Equivocation. ... I can do nothing better, even for my own relief, than submit myself, and what I shall say, to the judgment of the Church, and to the consent, so far as in this matter there be a consent, of the Schola Theologorum.¹¹¹

As a basis for deciding what one ought to do, this is hardly satisfying. If the matter at hand were some esoteric point that one could, for practical purposes, overlook, then there would be little lost. But the question of truthfulness is fundamental to any morality, and Newman's submission to the Church, coupled with an inability to state the Church's view, weighs heavily in the context of Newman spurning private judgment and advocating submission to the direction of the Church.¹¹²

Each of Gaskell, Dickens and Spurgeon attest to the virtue of work. For Gaskell there is virtue in activity itself—in being useful, and making use of one's talents, even in the most menial tasks.¹¹³ For Dickens, the harder the work the more virtuous it is. Work is to be pursued with 'thorough-going, ardent, and sincere earnestness'. Dickens's one overt claim to personal virtue is his 'constant fidelity to

¹¹¹ Newman, *Apologia*, 308–310, 314. See also Newman, "Private Judgment", 132.

¹¹² See Newman, "Obedience the Remedy", 148; John Henry Newman, "Faith and Obedience," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 536; Newman, "Saving Knowledge", 325, 328. See also Newman, "Human Responsibility, as Independent of Circumstances", 111–112.

¹¹³ Gaskell, *Ruth*, 174–175, 186. Gaskell dreads redundancy. She greatly admired George Eliot's work but her admiration was not unalloyed—'after seeing what Miss Evans does I feel as if nothing of mine would be worth reading ever-more. And that takes the pith out of one'. But, when her daughter reminded her of 'the burying the one talent,' Gaskell resolves to 'cheer up' and 'do the best [she] can'. Gaskell to Edward E Hale, 22 April 1861, in *Further Letters*, 223. For the parable of the talents, see Matthew 25:14–30.

hard work'. Further, it is this commitment to work that brings 'self-respect', 'independence' and 'happiness' in its wake. Indeed, this self-respecting independence is itself a virtue. Dickens bemoans 'toadyism'—that self-imposed sycophancy of the idle which bespeaks a fundamental lack of self-respect.¹¹⁴ For Spurgeon, there is virtue in work. One must 'strive to get on, for poverty is no virtue'.¹¹⁵ But Newman takes a more measured approach. Certainly he holds that 'good works ... are required', but he stops short of self-sacrifice. For Newman, the individual has a duty to 'consult for one's health' and 'enlarge one's ideas' according to one's gender and station in life. Newman adjures the 'calm, full, reverent, contemplative, obedient' and self-denying; and abhors the 'tumultuous and passionate'.¹¹⁶ Newman finds a life of such contemplative obedience within the Church.

Dickens attests to the virtue of humility—not the false humility of toadyism, but true self-respecting humility which recognises and accepts one's station in life.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Gaskell identifies the virtue of selflessness or 'self-forgetting'.¹¹⁸

Whewell and Dickens each identify generosity, compassion, sympathy and forgiveness as virtues.¹¹⁹ For Dickens, 'no one is useless in this world ... who lightens the burden of it for any one else'.¹²⁰ Mr Peggotty in *David Copperfield*, is an almost Christ-like figure—a model of humility, compassion and practical Christianity. When his adopted daughter Emily is seduced by the charmingly genteel Steerforth,

¹¹⁴ Dickens to Mrs. Henry Austin, 7 October 1862, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:135; Dickens, Speech in his honour at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, 10 April 1869, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 388; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 612; Dickens to Miss Grace Barrow, 14 October 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:302; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 53; Dickens to Thomas Bayliss, 1 February 1862, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:28. Regarding need to preserve self-respect of the recipients of charity, see Dickens to The Rev. David Laing, 2 September 1847, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:157. See also Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 14 January 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:245–246; Dickens to Mrs. Henry Austin, 7 November 1862, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:157; Dickens to Mrs. Charles Dickens, 5 November 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:472; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 509.

¹¹⁵ Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Talks*, 151. Here 'striving' excludes working on Sunday. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:448, 531. Importantly, Spurgeon is no hard-nosed political economist. Like many Victorian evangelicals, Spurgeon calls for effort on the part of the needy individual but also for charity on the part of those with the means to give to the needy. See Spurgeon, "Duty of Remembering the Poor". For a discussion of evangelical attitudes to poverty and charity more broadly, see Hilton, *Age of Atonement*, 100–108.

¹¹⁶ John Henry Newman, "Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 9–10; Newman to Rev. R. H. Froude, 4 October 1832, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:243; Newman, "Religious Emotion," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 117; Newman, "Knowledge of God's Will without Obedience", 24; Newman, "The Duty of Self-Denial," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1470.

¹¹⁷ Toadyism is exemplified in the obnoxious Uriah Heep. See Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 243–245, 384–390. See also Dickens to W. H. Wills, 12 October 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:776; Dickens to The Rev. David Macrae, 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:556; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 332.

¹¹⁸ Regarding selflessness, see Gaskell, *Ruth*, 142, 164, 176; Gaskell, *North and South*, 400.

¹¹⁹ Dickens, Speech at anniversary of Royal General Theatrical Fund, 4 April 1863, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 316; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 752; Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 79, 107. Spurgeon likewise identifies compassion as a virtue. C. H. Spurgeon, "Christian Sympathy: a sermon delivered at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, 9 November 1862," <http://www.apibs.info/C-H-Spurgeon-Sermons/0479-Christian-Sympathy.htm>, accessed 5 May 2017.

¹²⁰ Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 511.

Peggotty leaves home to search for her, much like the Good Shepherd searching for the lost sheep. It is in Peggotty that Dickens most clearly illustrates the virtues of compassion and forgiveness.¹²¹

Whewell focuses on the virtues of civility, prudence, temperance, purity and self-culture—that is, the cultivation of both the affections and the intellect to foster habits of virtue and the discharge of one’s duties—as particularly applicable to men.¹²² Dickens’s conception of the virtuous man has a very different emphasis. As a ‘devoted admirer’ of ‘Muscular Christianity’, Dickens emphasises the virtue of manliness—the terms ‘manly’ and ‘manliness’ recurring over and over in his letters and novels.¹²³ For Dickens, this catch-all masculine virtue connotes vigour, frank truthfulness, honesty, generous compassion, moral courage, and good sense.¹²⁴ So, while he is not at all prescriptive about the duties of a man, Dickens has a very clear conception of the masculine virtues.

Both Whewell and Dickens hold that one should focus on the positive requirements of virtue, rather than formulating lists of prohibited vices.¹²⁵ More

¹²¹ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 479, 693, 719. See also Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 220.

¹²² Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 74, 79, 87, 110–117, 135–142. Regarding the irreparable harm of seduction and betrayal, see Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 85–87, 124–130.

¹²³ Speech at University College Hospital, 12 April 1864, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 326. See, for example, Dickens to George Hogarth, 20 June 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:514; Dickens to T. C. Newby, 29 June 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:153; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 30 May 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:342; Dickens to Mrs. Brown, 3 November 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:734; Dickens to W. H. Wills, 17 March 1865, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:27. See also Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 762; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 517, 591, 741; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 200; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 895; Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 191.

¹²⁴ See Dickens to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 29 December 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:407–408; Dickens to Macvey Napier, 21 January 1843, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:429; Dickens to Thomas Carlyle, 26 October 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:357; Dickens to The Countess of Blessington, 9 May 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:305; Dickens to Mrs. Sydney Smith, 11 November 1847, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:194; Dickens to John Forster, 17 April 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:91. See also Dickens to T. L. Cuyler, 26 October 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:357; Dickens to Thomas Mitton, 31 May 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:136; Dickens to John Forster, 12–17 May 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:310; Dickens to John Forster, 12 December 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:680; Dickens to Samuel Phelps, 14 December 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:672; Dickens to Benjamin Webster, 4 March 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:54; Dickens to Effingham Wilson, 7 March 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:58; Dickens to A. H. Layard, 3 April 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:583; Dickens to William Banting, 20 December 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:768; Dickens to John Forster, 24 October 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:141; Dickens to Lady Herbert, 25 October 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:483; Dickens to The Editor, *Eastern Province Herald*, South Africa, 12 November 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:503; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 19 February 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:215; Dickens to Dr Henry Danson, 5 May 1864, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:391; Speech at Metropolitan Rowing Clubs, 7 May 1866, Dickens, *Speeches*, 361; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 556.

¹²⁵ For Whewell, these lead, in turn, to the moral precepts ‘to be applied to the whole train of our affections, desires, thoughts, and purposes, and to the whole course of actions, internal and external, which make up our lives’. They are: ‘Be not angry. Bear no malice. Do not covet. Do not lie. Do not deceive. Do not lust. Do not desire to break Law’. In any event, Whewell helpfully identifies the five heads of vice—malice, injustice, fraud, lust, and lawbreaking and, with some diligence catalogues, along with the virtues, the corresponding vices. Whewell, *Systematic Morality*, 69, 78–93. Regarding Dickens’s condemnation of prudishness, see Dickens, Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 9 April 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:310–311; *Little Dorrit*, 339; Dickens, “The Bloomsbury Christening,” in *Sketches By Boz*, 537. See also Charles Dickens, “The First of May,” in *Sketches By Boz*, 202; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 180–181; Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 57–58. Regarding

broadly, Dickens bewails public protestations of rule-bound morality epitomised by Pecksniff—‘a most exemplary man; fuller of virtuous precept than a copy book’ who, like ‘a direction-post’, is ‘always telling the way to a place, and never goes there’.¹²⁶ But Spurgeon does not hesitate to identify vices. Debt is wrong—always wrong. Likewise gambling. Each is a symptom of discontent with one’s Providential lot.¹²⁷

We have seen that, for our protagonists with a world-view centred on Providence, each individual is under various duties which reflect their role within the Providential plan. Each individual has a Providential life purpose, and to fulfil that purpose is their first duty. Given that Providence provides for the government of society through civic institutions, the individual also has a duty to discharge their civic responsibilities—starting with civil obedience, but extending to charity and benevolence. Further, given that Providence provides for the proper governance of society through the institution of class, individuals have duties referable to their class—grounded on an acceptance of responsibilities of one’s own station, and respect for the station of others. Providence also provides for the welfare of the individual through the institution of the family and individuals have duties referable to their role within the family, determined largely by their sex and marital status. In addition, these protagonists broadly attest to certain virtues which help the individual to discern and discharge the various duties imposed on them by Providence—patient endurance; truthfulness; effort; humility; generosity, compassion and forgiveness; patience; and, for Dickens, manliness.

But we have also seen that a conception of Providence which requires duties of individuals is not without its tensions. Our protagonists are alive to the possibility of self-deception when identifying and prioritising one’s duties. Further, while the obligation to discharge one’s duty may be clear and constant—the duties themselves

Dickens’s condemnation of sabbatarianism, the temperance movement and teetotalism, see Dickens to Thomas Ross and John Kenny, 19 May 1856, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:121; Dickens to Jacob Harvey, 1 September 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:318. See also Dickens to Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, 28 December 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:403; Dickens to Theodore Compton, 26 January 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:31; Dickens to John Forster, 22–23 November 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:660; Dickens to John T. Sinnet, 18 February 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:604; Dickens to Mr. John Parker, 24 December 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:498; Dickens to L. W. Morley, 12 July 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:396; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 43; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 883. Regarding the temperance movement and teetotalism see Roberts, *Making English Morals*, 150–152, 202–204, 212–213.

¹²⁶ Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 23; Dickens to The Hon. Mrs. Edward Cropper, 20 December 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:825. Regarding the need for compassionate action rather than critical judgment see Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 339.

¹²⁷ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:25, 99. See also Spurgeon, *John Ploughman’s Talks*, 81, 82, 86, 90.

can be confused and competing. We have seen that our protagonists struggled in their own lives to establish the priority of competing duties, and each found different ways to accommodate that struggle—for Gaskell simple avoidance, or absorption in an unquestionable duty, or deference to a husband; for Dickens the frenzied activity of unrelenting effort; for Newman deference to Church superiors; for Spurgeon trusting in submission to God's will, sought through earnest prayer. It is only Whewell whose conception of Providence inherently accommodates the irresolvable conflicts of competing duties. For Whewell our understanding of Providence, and the duties Providence implies, is necessarily, like all knowledge, a cumulative process—gradually perfecting itself over aeons. Our current understanding is necessarily imperfect. Consequently, tensions are inevitable. It lies with each individual simply to do the best they can, in accordance with the knowledge afforded to them and in accordance with their conscience.

Chapter 9: Beyond duty

In Chapter 7 we examined the conceptions of the moral world held by each of Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot—none of which centre on Providence. In this chapter we will consider their moralities. We will find significant differences between them, but we will also discover significant commonalities between their moralities and the Providence centred moralities considered in Chapter 8.

John Stuart Mill

In Chapter 7 we saw that, for Mill, all that happens in the world is the inevitable result of all that has happened in the past. While Mill recognises the place of human volition within the succession of events that constitute the world, because his causation goes to predictability rather than compulsion, he sees events in the moral world as caused in much the same way as events in the material world.

For Mill, an act can be determined to be right or wrong only by the object toward which it works; by its intended effect.¹ To determine whether an action works toward a particular object is a matter of logic, but to determine whether that object is worthy is a matter of art for which there must be one overarching guiding principle.² As Schneewind has pointed out, broadly accepted agreement as to a ‘unifying doctrine’ of ‘notions of virtue’ is essential for Mill—for without it, says Mill, ‘there never was and never will be a virtuous people’.³ For Mill, that principle is the principle of greatest happiness—‘actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness’, and wrong as they tend to produce unhappiness’; where happiness is pleasure, and the absence of pain; and unhappiness is pain, and the privation of pleasure.⁴ But, for Mill, pleasure is not merely sensual enjoyment. There are pleasures which, while more subtle, count for more than the pleasures of ‘mere sensation’. These are ‘the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination,

¹ So, for example, ‘despotism is a legitimate mode of government [for] barbarians, [if] the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.’ Mill, *On Liberty*, 224. There are other measures of the worth of an act—its beauty and its loveableness—but they go to the character of the agent rather than the morality of the act itself. Mill, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, 93.

² Mill to John Venn, 14 April 1872, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 17:1881. See also Mill, “Sedgwick’s Discourse”, 63; Mill, *Logic*, 8:949, 951.

³ Schneewind, *Sidgwick’s Ethics*, 164–165.

⁴ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 210. See also 214. Mill gives no reason why the *general* happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as they believe it to be attainable, desires their own happiness. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 234.

and of the moral sentiments’—not only the cool pleasures of rational intellect that we find at play in the *Logic* but also the warmer pleasures of ‘the love of virtue’; the love of justice; sympathy and compassion. For Mill, the superiority of pleasures of mind over sensual pleasures is apparent to anyone in a position to compare the two.⁵ But there is not only one’s own happiness to consider, one must also take into account one’s character, and the happiness and character of others. Further, happiness is never achieved by aiming straight at it. Pleasures are fragile and cannot withstand a ‘scrutinizing examination’—they must be taken *en passant*.⁶

Clearly, some practical issues arise. If the morality of an act depends on its effects—not only on its immediate effects but also its consequential effects—how can one possibly determine the morality of any proposed act? Mill understands the impossibility of the task—‘human interests are so complicated, and the effects of any particular incident ... so multitudinous’ that any incident is likely to be ‘both good and bad’ in its effects.⁷

His answer is, firstly, that each individual—at least each British individual—be left to look after their own interests.⁸ For the happiness of each individual is a good to that individual, and the good of society comprises the goods of each individual. By working for their own happiness, and for the happiness of those in their immediate circle, individuals will, in aggregate, effect the good of society at large. Further, it is very rarely that anyone has it in their power to ‘be a public benefactor’, so that it is rarely that anyone need ‘consider public utility’. In nearly every case, one need only consider ‘private utility—the interest or happiness of some few persons’.⁹

Secondly, each individual ought to assess proposed acts using generally accepted rules of conduct, rather than by a consideration of the likely effects of each particular act. Else, everybody would be left uncertain as to what to expect of others,

⁵ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 211, 235, 255. See also Mill, *Autobiography*, 147.

⁶ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 218. The relevant happiness extending to that of ‘all mankind’, and even to that of ‘all sentient beings’. Mill, *Logic*, 8:951–952; Mill, “Sedgwick’s Discourse”, 55–56; Mill, *Autobiography*, 117. Regarding criticism of Bentham’s failure to give any weight to training of the affections and will, see Mill, *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, 71.

⁷ Mill, “Nature”, 387.

⁸ As Metcalf notes in respect of the British in India, Mill had ‘shrunk from a too ready application of the principle of *On Liberty* outside the British Isles, and had praised the East India Company’s government’. The imperial dominion in India was, for Mill, ‘justified only by the larger transformation that was inevitably to follow’ from the rule of an elite ‘able to command obedience and operate an efficient economical government’. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 57–58.

⁹ Mill to Henry Jones, 13 June 1868, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 16:1414; Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 220. See also Mill to George Grote, 10 January 1862, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:762.

inevitably giving rise to ‘perpetual quarrelling’. Nevertheless, for Mill, a general rule is only that. A ‘wise practitioner’ considers such rules of conduct ‘provisional’—pointing to the safest course where analysis of the particular circumstances is impractical or unreliable. In any event, where society adopts a general rule as law, or custom, and gives an individual certain rights, or reasonable expectations, those rights and expectations must be taken into account when determining the morality of an act, even when circumstances permit analysis of the particular case.¹⁰

Importantly for Mill, while we all experience often intense feelings of approbation or abhorrence aroused by both our own acts and the acts of others, those feelings are not determinative of what is right and wrong. They are merely sanctions. They may help us to adhere to our rational determination of what is right and what is wrong, but they can never replace it.¹¹

Matthew Arnold

In Chapter 7 we saw that, for Arnold, the moral world is a process, a movement forward. That movement is the august drama of human perfection, played out between reified influences—primarily, Culture and Anarchy; Hellenism and Hebraism. Further, as individuals advance, they become ‘aware of two lives, one permanent and impersonal, the other transient and bound to our contracted self’. Further, they learn that their ‘instinct ... truly to live’—their ‘desire for happiness’—is ‘served by following the first self and not the second’; by seeing themselves as part of something much bigger than themselves—as part of the collaborative perfection of humankind.¹²

Given that Arnold conceives of the individual as part of the perfection of humankind, it is unsurprising that he aspires to stoicism. In his own life, circumstances inflict very heavy blows. As his young sons die, one after another after another, we hear not one sound of protest against the lashings of fate. There is no ‘why me?’. There is, instead, the courage of genuine stoicism.¹³ But how, for Arnold, can the individual determine what they are meant to *do*? How should they conduct themselves so as to progress the perfection of humankind?

¹⁰ Mill to George Grote, 10 January 1862, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:762; Mill, *Logic*, 8:946.

¹¹ Mill to William George Ward, 28 November 1859, in *Later Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 15:649–650. See also Mill, “Sedgwick’s Discourse”, 51.

¹² Arnold, “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist”, 44–45.

¹³ See Arnold to Thomas Arnold, 24 November 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:294; Arnold to Julia Marshall, 6 September 1874, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:215.

Arnold holds that this is an ‘immense matter’. He asserts, over and over, that ‘conduct; is three-fourths ... of human life’. Much of life is ‘eating, drinking, ease, pleasure, money, the intercourse of the sexes’ expressing ‘one’s temper and instincts’ and guidance as to right conduct in these everyday matters is something individuals simply cannot do without. Further, for Arnold, for the individual who knows how to rightly conduct themselves, ‘it is a joy to be alive’ and, conversely, the life of a perplexed individual is a most miserable one.¹⁴ Arnold rejects each of metaphysics, liberalism, natural rights, Biblicism and Utilitarianism as inadequate guides to right conduct.¹⁵ Instead, he wholeheartedly embraces Wilhelm von Humboldt’s assertion that ‘one’s business in life’ is to ‘perfect one’s self by all the means in one’s power’.¹⁶

Arnold’s perfection has two aspects: perfection as *culture* conceives it—‘beauty, or sweetness and intelligence, or light’; and perfection as *religion* conceives it—complete obedience to God’s law, or freedom from sin.¹⁷ This perfection, in both its aspects, is a ‘growing and a becoming’ rather than a ‘having and a resting’; an ‘inward condition of the mind and spirit’ rather than ‘an outward set of circumstances’. Further, it is ‘the only absolute and eternal object prescribed to us by God’s law’, and which gives true meaning and direction to our actions. So, for Arnold, an action is ‘to be accounted good or bad’ only with reference to this perfection and ‘progress towards it’.¹⁸ And just as Arnold’s perfection has two aspects, the cultural and the religious, so it is to be approached in two ways, through culture and religion.

For Arnold, culture is an endeavour to come to perfection by ‘reading, observing, and thinking’—through deep thinking that engages with ‘the best which has been thought and said in the world’ and leads where it will. Importantly, when identifying ‘the best which has been thought and said in the world’ Arnold de-

¹⁴ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 380; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 173, 185. See also 181.

¹⁵ Regarding metaphysics, see Arnold, “Marcus Aurelius”, 134; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 173, 175, 192. For Arnold it is *poetry*, not metaphysics, that sustains us. Matthew Arnold, “The Study of Poetry,” in *Essays in Criticism: Second Series* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1895), 2; Matthew Arnold, “Wordsworth,” in *Essays in Criticism: First Series*, 149. In any event, poetry is no guide to right conduct. Matthew Arnold, “Amiel,” in *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*, 312–313. See also Arnold, “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist”, 41; Arnold, “A Psychological Parallel”, 132. Regarding liberalism, see Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 134–135. See also Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 379, 390, 379; Arnold, “Function of Criticism at the Present Time”, 28; Arnold to Harriet Martineau, 24 July 1860, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 2:13. Regarding natural rights, see Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 201; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 145; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 188; Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 9 July 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:332. Regarding Biblicism, see Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 208; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 160–161. Regarding Utilitarianism, see Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 233–234.

¹⁶ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 161.

¹⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 115, 167–169.

¹⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 94–95, 189–190, 219.

emphasises the contribution of minority ethnicities in Victorian Britain—arguing, as Peter Mandler observes, for ‘the desirability of greater national homogeneity’ and ‘the suppression of ethnic diversity’ by, amongst other things, ‘suppressing the Welsh language’.¹⁹ Culture works incrementally—changing the individual’s character rather than governing their conduct. But culture is no self-congratulatory enlargement of soul. Rather, because it is grounded in the love of perfection, it has not only a ‘scientific passion for pure knowledge’, but also a ‘moral and social passion for doing good’. So while culture changes the character of individuals, it also, through them, changes the character of society.²⁰

For Arnold, the object of religion, on the other hand, is conduct. And it is religion that guides to right conduct.

Religion, the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself,—religion, that voice of the deepest human experience—does not only enjoin and sanction the aim which is the great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail; but also, in determining generally in what human perfection consists.²¹

The Christian religion guides to right conduct in three ways—through its conception of the ‘eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness’; through the example of Jesus Christ; and through the liturgy and teaching of the Established Church.²²

For Arnold religion is, fundamentally, the embodiment of a moral law—‘a rule of conduct, not of our own making, into which we are born, and which exists whether we will or no’—and that moral law is a law of nature in much the same way as the law of gravity. Further, humankind became aware of this moral law and acquired ‘an irresistible intuition’ of this moral law, in much the same way as it became aware of the law of gravity—through experience. Experience taught humankind that ‘righteousness ... belongs ... to not ourselves’. Self-reflection is all that is needed to discover that ‘we did not make ourselves and our nature, or conduct as the object of three-fourths of that nature; we did not provide that happiness should

¹⁹ Peter Mandler, “‘Race’ and ‘nation’ in mid-Victorian thought,” in *History Religion and Culture: British Intellectual History 1750–1950*, eds. Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 241.

²⁰ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 91, 104, 112–113, 129, 233.

²¹ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 93. See also Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 173.

²² Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 191.

follow conduct, as it undeniably does'; or that the 'sense of succeeding, going right, hitting the mark, in conduct', should give such great satisfaction.²³ Experience shows, in the words of Thomas à Kempis, that 'left to ourselves, we sink and perish; visited, we lift up our heads and live', so that it makes complete practical sense to 'give ourselves, in grateful and devout self-surrender' to the eternal, not of ourselves 'by which we are thus visited'. And, for Arnold, this moral law of the 'eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness' is simply that something, other than ourselves—something 'grand and wonderful', something certain and enduring—that brings us joy when we do right, and pain when we do wrong, and so guides us aright—to perfection.²⁴

For Arnold, humankind's conception and clarification of what, in fact, brings joy and pain—that is, what is right and wrong—has occurred over aeons. It began as 'habit', then, by a process long forgotten, developed into 'fixed customs, rules, laws, and institutions'. Religion, then, 'consists in acknowledging and reverencing the awful sanctions' with which right conduct is 'invested by the mighty *not ourselves* which surrounds us'.²⁵ For Arnold, this 'eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness' is God. But here, as always for Arnold, 'God' is 'a term of poetry and eloquence, a term thrown out, so to speak, at a not fully grasped object of the speaker's consciousness, a literary term, in short' by which individuals 'mean different things ... as their consciousness differs'.²⁶ For Arnold, humankind's conception of what is right and wrong took a great leap forward with Jesus Christ. But, primarily because it proved so popular with common people, from the beginnings of Christianity—even in the minds of the apostles whose recollections formed the basis of much of the written Gospels—the teachings of Jesus Christ were, inevitably but unfortunately, confused and drenched in the preternatural so that it is no longer possible to be certain what Jesus actually said. For Arnold, reliance on the preternatural to validate religion is misconceived and demonstrates a 'want of intellectual seriousness'. Not only does such reliance make popular religion vulnerable to attack, it makes it awkward, if not impossible, for the intellectually

²³ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 181, 242; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 233.

²⁴ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 181–182; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 156, 191, 220.

²⁵ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 225. See 225–227 for examples of how the ten commandments developed in this way.

²⁶ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 171.

serious to maintain their credibility and self-respect along with their faith.²⁷

Nevertheless, Arnold identifies three aspects of the method of Jesus as keys to right conduct—self-examination, self-renouncement and sweet reasonableness. For Arnold, it is the practice of this method of Jesus, rather than faith in the atoning death of Jesus, that effects the perfection afforded by religion.²⁸

Firstly, for Arnold, Jesus taught *self-examination*. This consists ‘in the inward feeling and disposition of the individual [them]self, rather than in the performance of outward acts towards religion or society’. Jesus took the individual by themselves ‘apart’ and ‘made [them] listen for the voice of [their] conscience, and said ... in effect: “If every *one* would mend *one*, we should have a new world” ’.²⁹ For Arnold, ‘to please God, to serve God, to obey God’s will, means to follow a law of things which is found in conscience’. Further, one ‘should take [one’s] own course according to the ‘best convictions [one] can reach’, and should not be troubled if others take a different course.³⁰ For Arnold, the conscience, in its immediacy, gives strength, certainty and energy, and is a real power for righteousness.³¹ But the conscience does not operate in a vacuum. It ‘turns on experience’ and must be informed. For Arnold, the experience to inform the conscience is not so much the limited experience of the individual but the expansive experience of humankind—experience as to ‘what does really serve our instinct to live, our desire for happiness’. Anyone who supposes ‘vice and selfishness’ to be as advantageous as ‘virtue and benevolence’ must be brought to conscience through ‘right experience’. It is not simply a case of live and let live—without a conscience born of ‘right experience’ the individual ‘is lost’.³² And, for Arnold, this right experience is to be had by reading the Bible. The Bible is essential for ‘a sense for conduct’, in the same way as Homer and Shakespeare are essential for ‘a sense of poetry’. Arnold himself constantly turns to the Bible for guidance, encouragement and comfort.³³

²⁷ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 378, 381, 388–389; Matthew Arnold, “Count Leo Tolstoi,” in *Essays in Criticism: Second Series*, 296–297; Arnold to Thomas Henry Huxley, 8 December 1875, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:290; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 342, 377. For Arnold, the process of the story of Jesus becoming drenched with the preternatural occurred both before, during and after the writing of the Gospels. See Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 258–278.

²⁸ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 219–221, 375–376. Arnold uses the term ‘self-renouncement’, rather than the now more commonly used ‘renunciation’. I use both in this thesis.

²⁹ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 217, 223.

³⁰ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 190; Arnold to Charles Anderson, 3 November 1880, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 5:120.

³¹ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 390; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 190.

³² Arnold, “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist”, 43, 46.

³³ Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 201–202; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 198–199; Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 15 December 1877, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:387. See also Arnold, “The

Secondly, for Arnold, Jesus taught and exemplified *self-renouncement*.³⁴ This renunciation is to ‘die to one’s *apparent self*’ and ‘live to one’s *real self*’ by focussing on the example of Jesus Christ.³⁵ Arnold echoes St Paul’s advice—‘never mind how various and multitudinous the impulses are; impulses to intemperance, concupiscence, covetousness, pride, sloth, envy, malignity, anger, clamour, bitterness, harshness, unmercifulness. Die to them all and to each as it comes! Christ did’.³⁶

Thirdly, for Arnold, Jesus exemplified *sweet reasonableness*. Jesus had a ‘new and different way of putting things’—‘*epieikeia*’ or ‘sweet reasonableness’—with its ‘air of truth and likelihood’ that enables the listener to ‘take each rule or fact of conduct by its inward side’ so that it resonates for them, touching not only their minds but also their ‘heart and character’.³⁷ For Arnold, this method of Jesus—self-examination, self-renouncement and sweet reasonableness—is essential for right conduct.

The Christian religion also provides guidance as to right conduct through the Established Church. For Arnold, the Established Church is ‘a great national society for the promotion of what is commonly called goodness’ and the ‘business of the clergy’ is to both guide individuals to right conduct and help them in it.³⁸ But we mistake Arnold if we see his regard for the Established Church as uncritical or his role for the Established Church as conservative. As Collini has noted, many of his critics saw Arnold’s commitment to the Established Church as ‘damning’. But Arnold was more than aware that, in its actuality, the Established Church was failing in its mission.³⁹ For Arnold, the Kingdom of God is an earthly kingdom to be realised now, not a heavenly kingdom to be realised whenever, and the Established Church must revert to this ‘original gospel’ if it is to effectively guide individuals to right conduct. Establishing the Kingdom of God requires ‘an immense renovation and transformation of [the] state of things’ and falls in with the ideal—the ‘legitimate

Church of England”, 65; Arnold, *God and the Bible*, 201–202, 392; Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 142–143, 148; Arnold, “A Psychological Parallel”, 134.

³⁴ Arnold, “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist”, 44–45; Arnold, “The Church of England”, 72.

³⁵ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 294. Arnold remarks that this principle of self-renouncement, ‘to any one who has grasped [the] idea’, is utterly at odds with the Philistine ‘worship of property’. See Arnold, “The Church of England”, 72. See Matthew 16:25. Regarding saving one’s real self from being overborne, see Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 16 July 1867, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:160.

³⁶ Arnold, “St Paul and Protestantism”, 48.

³⁷ Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 219–220.

³⁸ Arnold, “The Church of England”, 65–66.

³⁹ Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait*, 105.

ideal’—of ‘the multitude everywhere’.⁴⁰ So when he speaks of the need for ‘moral and religious obedience’, Arnold has in mind not only the need for civil obedience of the Populace to avoid anarchy but, more importantly, the need for everyone—regardless of their class—to do what they can to progress this renovation and transformation.⁴¹

Arnold recognises that what one can, in fact, do to progress this renovation and transformation, and what it is right or wrong for an individual to progress or resist, depends, at least in part, on the zeitgeist—for no individual ‘determines what truths shall present themselves to this or that age or under what aspect’.⁴²

So, for Arnold, the yardstick against which right conduct is to be measured is the perfection of the individual—perfection as conceived by both culture and religion. It is religion that guides to right conduct—in the self-examination, self-renouncement and sweet reasonableness exemplified by Jesus Christ; and through the Established Church. However, for Arnold the function of the Established Church is not simply to ensure individuals behave themselves—its fundamental purpose is to realise the Kingdom of God on earth.

Thomas Hill Green

In Chapter 7 we saw that for Green, as for Arnold, the moral world is a process, a movement forward. But for Green, that movement is the realisation of the eternal consciousness, in and through the self-conscious self-realisation of individuals. Ben Wempe argues that Green developed this philosophy to answer various practical needs: political needs—by offering a consistent theory to defend political and social reforms aimed at mitigating the ‘social evils of unregulated industrialization’; religious needs—by providing an ‘interpretation of the world’ which made way for the reconciliation of ‘scientific insight’ and ‘established religious dogmas’; and moral needs—by offering a theory that ‘grasp[ed] the nature of moral conduct’ and accommodated the moral individual as both subject and object.⁴³ Our focus, here, is

⁴⁰ Arnold to Frances Bunsen Trevenen Whately Arnold, 24 February 1876, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 4:313; Arnold, “The Church of England”, 77–78.

⁴¹ Arnold, “The Church of England”, 80; Arnold, “Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist”, 61. See also Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 223.

⁴² Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 13 November 1869, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:378–379. See also Arnold to William Erle, 16 April 1869, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:331; Arnold to Mary Penrose Arnold, 13 June 1868, in *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, 3:259.

⁴³ Ben Wempe, *T. H. Green’s Theory of Positive Freedom: From Metaphysics to Political Theory* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), 6–9.

on Green's morality, but we will see that this morality necessarily touches on both the religious and political.

Green rejects Utilitarian morality as fundamentally flawed. His reasons are many—the essence of morality is the *ought*, and ‘to say that I *ought* to seek pleasure ... is absurd’; the notion of summing pleasures is misconceived; and Utilitarian morality erroneously conflates the desire to achieve an object and the enjoyment incidental to achieving it.⁴⁴ For Green, it is self-evident that the ‘wellbeing ... we desire’ is not ‘a succession of pleasures’ but ‘an abiding satisfaction of an abiding self’. In any event, seeking only pleasure is fundamentally opposed to the noble spirit which is so necessary for the betterment of self and society.⁴⁵ Having rejected the Utilitarian yardstick, how does Green determine the moral value of an action?

Green acknowledges that all idealistic ethics, including his own, must overcome a fundamental tension. On the one hand there is the human need to do what is right—‘to do something, quite irrespectively of ulterior objects, simply that it may be done’. On the other hand, there is the impossibility of determining ‘that anything *should* be, that there is a reason for desiring anything, or that it is *desirable* as distinct from *desired*’—except by reference to some ulterior good.⁴⁶

Green resolves this dilemma by taking the self-realisation of the individual as the ‘ulterior’ good by reference to which one determines what should be. To take anything else as that good (including the greatest happiness of the greatest number—which is not necessarily the greatest happiness of the individual) would be to measure good by something external to the individual, and to value the individual only as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves.⁴⁷ So, for Green, the individual's self-realisation is the key to morality. The moral quality of an individual's action depends on whether it accords with their idea of their best self. If I am averse to getting wet (because I believe it best for me that I stay dry and snug, stay well and so better realise my potential) then, all else being equal, it will be right for me to put up my umbrella. On the other hand, if I am keen to get wet (because I believe it best for

⁴⁴ Green, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant”, 2:122; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 183. For Green, no reflective individual can really ‘look forward to any millionth repetition of a pleasant feeling’ as bringing them any nearer to satisfaction than their first experience of the pleasure. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 265–266. Further, ‘the possibility of pleasure in the attainment of an object presupposes a desire directed not to that pleasure but to the object’. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 154. While seeking pleasure is, in itself, neither virtuous nor vicious, seeking *only* pleasure is self-defeating. Green, “Introduction to Hume”, 1:309.

⁴⁵ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 274, 445.

⁴⁶ Green, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant”, 2:110. See also Green, “Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation”, 2:335–336.

⁴⁷ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 223–224.

me to dance in the rain, shuffle off stress and so better realise my potential) then, all else being equal, it will be wrong for me to put up my umbrella—because to act in accordance with one’s idea of what is best for oneself is, for Green, the right thing to do. Whether a particular action accords with one’s idea of what is best for oneself will depend on what that idea is. The moral worth of one’s own actions is to be judged from the inside—by looking to the motives and desires they instantiate.⁴⁸

In any event, because the individual has both reason and will, they have the potential not only for self-realisation (the realisation of their potential as a person) but also for self-satisfaction (the vain effort to realise their potential in pleasure). So they may achieve virtue as they strive for self-realisation, but they may sink into vice in the pursuit of self-satisfaction. Both virtuous and vicious individuals are objects to themselves. But virtuous individuals see themselves as free, whereas vicious individuals see themselves as subject to pleasures and pains. Moreover, virtuous individuals are increasingly aware that there is, ‘over and above’ the experience of their ‘own acts and sufferings’, a ‘consciousness of an infinite potentiality’.⁴⁹

While, for Green, self-realisation is the ‘fulfilment of the capabilities of which [the individual] is conscious in being conscious of [themselves]’, it is self-realisation of the individual *as* a human being; as one belonging to humankind. This self-realisation is necessarily achieved in society. For ‘the perfection of human character’ is both a perfection of individuals which is also the perfection of society, and a perfection of society which is also the perfection of individuals. Such perfection is, for humankind, ‘the only object of absolute or intrinsic value’.⁵⁰

And, for Green, this process of perfection through self-realisation is a gradual approach toward the divine. The ‘human self-consciousness is in principle identical with the divine’—identical as to form, as self-consciousness, but ‘not in respect of the limited matter which [it] takes into itself, or of its development in time’. Further, for Green, the ‘perfection of persons in a perfect society’—‘towards which we are

⁴⁸ But the moral worth of the actions of others can be assessed only in their externality, so that our moral judgment of the actions of others is necessarily impaired. In any event, it is self-judgment, and the shame it gives rise to, which is the propeller of moral renewal. So, for Green, if an individual seeks to promote moral growth, their focus ought to be on the self-judgment of their own actions, and facilitating the self-judgment by others of their actions, rather than on the individual’s moral judgment of the actions of others. See Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 349–356.

⁴⁹ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 199–201; T. H. Green, “Notes on Moral Philosophy,” in *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, 189.

⁵⁰ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 222, 280, 293, 342, 369. ‘The goodness of [the individual] lies in devotion to the ideal of humanity, and ... the ideal of humanity consists in the goodness of [the individual]’. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 225.

perpetually struggling’, but cannot ‘under the conditions of human life’ completely realise—already ‘exists as eternally complete in God’. So, while morality is not self-abnegating obedience to divine law, because God does not exercise political power over the individual, it is nevertheless submission—because the individual perceives it as ‘a divine vocation’. Those who willingly submit to this vocation gradually, yet surely, approach ‘that union with God’ in which their own perfection is to be found’.⁵¹

This conception of morality as self-realisation, as an approach to the divine, can prove difficult to tie down. What, we may ask, is the content of this self-realisation; what does it mean, in a practical sense, in the workaday world? In one sense, for Green, it is impossible to say because ‘we can form no positive conception of what the ultimate perfection of the human spirit would be; what its life would be when all its capabilities were fully realised’. Indeed, ‘we can no more do this than we can form a positive conception of ... God’.⁵² So the content of the morality guided by the project of self-realisation cannot be determined by reference to its end.

But, for Green, this does not present any insurmountable difficulty for the sincere. Because humankind is, as a matter of fact, progressively realising its capabilities, the individual can safely assume that the content of the morality of self-realisation will be, more or less, ‘the requirements of conventional morality’—despite the many exceptions, arising from particular circumstances, to which those requirements are liable.⁵³ Here Green’s reasoning closely follows that of Whewell. Conventional morality is not only a good starting point but, for the many, a more or less reliable guide to right conduct.

Indeed, for Green, a *bona fide* ‘perplexity as to right conduct’—where ‘philosophy can serve a useful purpose’—is rare.⁵⁴ An individual will ‘seldom go wrong’ if they ‘loyally’ and ‘without shirking’ fulfil ‘the duties which would be recognised as belonging to [their] station in life by any one who considered the matter dispassionately’. Further, if the individual fulfils those duties, there will seldom be much more they can do. So the moral difficulty, for Green, is not determining what is

⁵¹ Green, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant”, 2:147–148. Importantly, Green’s perfection—the perfection of capacities fully realised—is attained by sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself is a partial realisation of the end to be achieved—the ‘realisation of the powers of the human spirit’. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 448, 462.

⁵² Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 432.

⁵³ However, the requirements of conventional morality will not be liable to any exceptions ‘for the sake of the individual’s pleasure’. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 226–227.

⁵⁴ Green uses ‘Do what is best for mankind’ as a ‘fair popular equivalent of Kant’s formula—Treat humanity, whether in your person or in that of another, never merely as a means, always at the same time as an end’. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 376. See also Green, “Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation”, 2:553.

right—that has, in the main, been worked out by humankind over time. Rather, it is ‘bringing home’ those duties to the individual conscience and helping them to be honest with themselves in recognising and interpreting their duties. And that, for Green, is not a matter of mind but of soul; the work of ‘the preacher’ rather than ‘the philosopher’.⁵⁵ Again, echoes of Whewell. Nevertheless, *bona fide* perplexities as to right conduct will occasionally arise. And when they do, whether a perceived new duty properly trumps the demands of conventional morality will depend on whether that duty is, indeed, a means to self-realisation. So that right actions are those that further ‘the arts and institutions and rules of life, in which the human spirit has so far incompletely realised its idea of a possible Best’.⁵⁶ His test is:

Does this or that law or usage, this or that course of action—directly or indirectly, positively or as a preventive of the opposite—contribute to the better being of society, as measured by the more general establishment of conditions favourable to the attainment of the recognised excellences and virtues, by the more general attainment of those excellences in some degree, or by their attainment on the part of some persons in higher degree without detracting from the opportunities of others?⁵⁷

Green does not define a moral code. However, he gives a definition of virtue, to put the individual on guard against ‘self-sophistications, which might otherwise obscure ... admitted duties’.⁵⁸ He follows the outlines of the Greek classification of the virtues:

It is the will to know what is true, to make what is beautiful; to endure pain and fear to resist the allurements of pleasure (*i.e.* to be brave and temperate) ... in the interest of ... human society; to take for oneself, to give to others, of those things which admit of being given and taken, not what one is inclined to but what is due.⁵⁹

On the negative side, Green speaks of ‘selfishness, indolence [and] impatience’. But, for Green, moral flaws do not prevent self-realisation. Rather, they

⁵⁵ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 376.

⁵⁶ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 227, 372. Green recognises that the notion that one ought to ‘aim at the best and highest in conduct’ will not, for the practical purposes, suffice to determine whether a perceived new duty properly trumps conventional morality. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 431.

⁵⁷ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 434.

⁵⁸ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 369.

⁵⁹ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 303.

can give rise to shame which serves as a ‘spring for the endeavour after a higher goodness’ and propels the individual towards self-realisation.⁶⁰

For Green, ‘sin is the effort to actualise one’s possibilities in that in which they cannot be actualised, viz. in pleasure’. So that sin is a failure; a wrong footing. It is the identity of consciousness between God (as perfected) and the individual (as yet to be perfected) that gives rise to the consciousness of wrong doing; the consciousness of *sin*. And sin is overcome, gradually, by the moral discipline that ‘lies in the perpetual sense of failure and disappointment, in the remorse and despair, in the self-contempt and self-reproach’, to which the individual, as ‘a self-seeking subject is susceptible’. Through these ‘moral yearnings’ the effort to self-satisfaction is gradually displaced by the effort to self-realisation. So that sin ‘is no final reality’. Rather, it is the expression of the possibility of the self-realisation of the individual; the possibility of an individual in which sin is overcome.⁶¹

We have noted that Green’s self-realisation is effected in society. This both confines and refocuses self-realisation. Society confines self-realisation because it requires individuals to ‘fulfil the duties of [their] station’. Their ‘capacity for action beyond ... those duties is ... bounded’. It follows that their ‘sphere of personal interests’, their ‘character’ and their ‘realised possibility’ are likewise bounded.⁶² Further, the fact that self-realisation is effected in society moves its focus from the self-realisation of oneself to facilitating the self-realisation of others. The conscientious individual bumps up against ‘a multitude of persons’ whom they perceive to be no better than ‘slaves of an ancient state’, but who are, in potentiality, all that the individual is. This unrealised potentiality imposes a burden of obligation upon the perceiving individual—an obligation to sacrifice one’s own pleasure to the claims of one’s enslaved fellows. So that, while Green values the freedom of being able ‘to shift for [oneself]’, he urges the conscientious to acknowledge ‘the

⁶⁰ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 367. For Green, it does not much matter how far the individual travels along this path or, indeed, whether they are seen by others to be moving toward perfection at all. Rather, what matters is the individual’s ‘direction of [themselves] to the realisation of a conceived or imagined object’, regardless of whether or not circumstances permit that direction to show itself in actions perceived by others. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 162.

⁶¹ Green, “The Word is Nigh”, 3:226. For Green, there is an unrealised identity between the individual consciousness and the eternal consciousness; between the individual and God. Further, it is the realisation of this identity that is the fundamental driver of moral life. Green realises that this concept of the identity of God and the individual will be difficult for many to accept. But, for Green, to say that ‘God is the final cause of the moral life, the ideal self which no one, as a moral agent, is, but which everyone, as such an agent, is, however blindly, seeking to become, is not to make [God] unreal’. Rather, it is to *identify* God with humankind; and ‘not with an abstract or collective humanity but with the individual.’ Green, “The Word is Nigh”, 3:225.

⁶² Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 209.

responsibility of every one for every one’—an acknowledgment that will necessarily leave the conscientious with ‘no leisure’ in which to develop ‘in due proportion’ their own ‘faculties of enjoyment’.⁶³

The practical outworking of this acknowledgment of responsibility for others varies with one’s circumstances and idiosyncrasies.⁶⁴ For Green, the valid measure of the worth of one’s actions is whether they ‘take their place as permanent contributions to an abiding social good’. Through worthy actions, individuals carry themselves ‘forward in thought along the continued life of a family or a nation, a state or a church’ and anticipate ‘a lasting and accumulating possession’ which they cannot achieve in ‘successive enjoyments’. The worthy actions of individuals together constitute ‘the motive power of true moral development’. For Green, it follows that, through actions that express their responsibility for others—whether those actions are inspiring in their exceptionality or banal in their ordinariness—individuals are indeed ‘coming nearer to an absolute good’.⁶⁵

So, for Green, morality comprises the self-realisation of the individual; the perfecting of the individual; and the approach toward the divine. Although the individual can have no picture of human perfection at hand to apply as a moral yardstick, they have, for all practical purposes, the requirements of conventional morality. Green recognises that, on occasion, perplexities as to right conduct will confound conventional morality. In those cases, Green’s test for right action is that which contributes to the more general establishment of conditions favourable to the attainment of the recognised excellences and virtues.

Green holds that all true morality is necessarily religious—in the sense of resting upon the consciousness of God. And this is unsurprising given that, as we have seen, Green holds that morality is the developing relationship between the

⁶³ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 320–322.

⁶⁴ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 276. It may express itself ‘in the advancement of some branch of knowledge, or the improvement of the public health, or the endeavour after “personal holiness”’; it may express itself in ‘the production of a system of philosophy’; or in ‘the absorbed religious devotion of the saintly recluse’. Or the individual’s responsibility for others may express itself in the more ordinary concern for the ‘well-being of a family’; or simply by diligently performing the tasks required of them in their everyday employments in the workaday world. How the individual’s conviction of their responsibility for others expresses itself will depend, in no small part, on their own preferences. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 268, 275, 281, 371.

⁶⁵ Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 275, 371. Green’s focus on facilitating the self-realisation of others in society necessarily implies a political philosophy. Green’s political philosophy (as such) is outside the scope of this thesis. Two of its foundational principles reflect Green’s focus on facilitating the self-realisation of others. First, the principle of fairness. Second, the principle of rights—to effectively foster the self-realisation of others, the individual must conceive their own good as the good of others, and this conception is the foundation of rights. T. H. Green, “Lecture in Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract,” in *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, 3:372; Green, “Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation”, 2:353, 526.

individual consciousness and the eternal consciousness. Green is plainly aware of the diversity of views held by those who claim to rest their morality ‘upon the consciousness of God’. He rejects dogmatic theology, holding instead a theology tempered by a philosophy which is, for him, ‘the reasoned intellectual expression of the effort to get to God’. But Green does not reject the morality of the dogmatically religious, nor is he in any hurry to dissuade them from their dogmatism. For Green, to quibble with the language ‘habitual to the religious conscience’ on the grounds that it is not factually correct, is a little beside the point. Such language will be ‘a legitimate expression’ of the relation between the human soul and God ‘by means of metaphor’—being ‘the only possible means, except action, by which the consciousness of spiritual realities can express itself’—if two criteria are satisfied. First, if the infinite Spirit communicates itself to the human soul so as to ‘yield ... the idea of a possible perfect life’—with a ‘consequent sense of personal responsibility’ on the part of the individual ‘to make the best of [themselves]’. Second, if the individual is conscious of responding to ‘a conscious being, who is in eternal perfection all that [the individual] has it in [them] to come to be’—so that the individual feels shame, as in the presence of infinite Spirit, for omissions or violations of duty which are incognisable by their fellows. For Green, the value and, indeed, the truth of religious belief is not in the factual correctness of the literal expression of the belief, but ‘whether it worthily expresses the emotions of a soul in which the highest moral ideas have done their perfect work’.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Green holds that the individual’s answers to the big questions—‘about God, freedom, and immortality’ do make a difference. For Green, an *affirmative* answer to certain questions—questions such as: Is there a character which I ought to form for myself, irrespective of my inclinations or others’ expectations? Is there a God with whom, as the imperfect with the perfect, yet as spirit with spirit, I may converse? Am I partaker of an eternal life, so that what I *am*, and not merely what I *do*, survives my physical death?—may not have much practical effect (especially when held indifferently), but a *negative* answer is certain to have a ‘serious effect’. That effect is not necessarily an effect on the individual’s outward course of action, or on the character they present to their fellows. Rather it is an effect, in the longer term, ‘on the inner life, on the character which [they] would

⁶⁶ Green to Henry Scott Holland, 6 October 1872, in *Miscellaneous Writings, Speeches and Letters*, 442; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 113, 383–385. See also Green, “The Witness of God”, 3:239.

present to one who could see it from within'. For Green, an individual whose morality rests upon a consciousness of God will be consciously aware of their 'infinite potentiality,' and they will engage in a virtuous spiral as they adopt, as the objects of their actions, those objects that are aligned with the realisation of that infinite potentiality.⁶⁷

So, for Green, it is the very essence of humanity that humankind—as individuals in society—engages in an iterative progress toward the realisation of its potential. To this end, individuals must be given all that they require to fully realise their potential in society. For Green, society is not just a way of getting along; a way of tolerating each other as we each get about the business of pursuing our own happiness. Rather society is the means to facilitate, not our own happiness, or even the happiness of others, but the realisation of each individual's potential. A potential which is realised through the eternal consciousness realising itself in the individual as the individual, as a citizen in the here and now, approaches the divine.

George Eliot

For George Eliot, the moral world is grounded in the mystery beneath the real and consists of the so many connections—both visible and invisible—that link individuals to each other. Those connections reflect the mystery beneath, but they also echo a providence—providing purpose and great joy to those who both accept their place in the world and strive to make life better for their fellows.

George Eliot rejects the Utilitarian pursuit of happiness as a basis for morality. Like Green, she has many reasons—it confuses prudence and morality; we cannot discern the effects of actions with any certainty; the 'completeness and beauty' of life comprises all shades of both 'joy' and 'suffering', not only happiness; and, in any event, pains and pleasures cannot be summed in 'arithmetical proportion'.⁶⁸ Further, improving the lot of the greatest number may be a noble pursuit, but the individual must remain available to 'the unapplauded heroism which turns off the

⁶⁷ Green, "The Word is Nigh", 3:222; Green, "Notes on Moral Philosophy", 189. For Green, the enemy of morality is the 'slow sap of an undermining indifference which does not deny God and duty, but ignores them ... and finds in our acknowledged inability to know them, as we know matters of fact, a new excuse for putting them aside.' Green, "Faith", 3:270–271.

⁶⁸ See George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 817; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 498; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 15 March 1843, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:159. Regarding Utilitarian morality as folly, see Tito in George Eliot, *Romola*, 167–169; George Eliot, "Brother Jacob", 58. See also George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such", 323. Regarding the conscience as guide, see George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 517. Regarding suffering as source of sympathy, see George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 315. See also George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 430; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 518.

road of achievement at the call of the nearer duty whose effect lies within the beatings of the hearts that are close to us'.⁶⁹ George Eliot likewise rejects unthinking conformity to the expectations of others and the religious fear of judgment as bases for morality.⁷⁰

For George Eliot, the truly moral life requires 'recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self'; some form of 'believing love'.⁷¹ And that 'believing love', while it takes many names—including 'love', 'affection' and simply 'feeling'—is sympathy.⁷² This sympathy of fellow-feeling is foundational to a truly moral life—for we can achieve a higher moral life only by developing 'a delicate sense of our neighbour's rights, an active participation in the joys and sorrows of our fellow[s]' and 'a magnanimous acceptance of privation or suffering for ourselves when it is the condition of good to others'.⁷³ And for George Eliot, this sympathy—which seeks to understand others and see their world through their eyes—extends not only to those we encounter every day, but also to those we encounter transiently, with whom we have no tie but our common humanity. So, what one ought to do, 'in every human relation', is that which 'would follow from the fullest knowledge and the fullest sympathy'.⁷⁴ Anger asserts that George Eliot assumes sympathy to be an 'unquestioned good', but 'in the end ... is unable to provide any but intuitive grounds for accepting this view'. That may be. Nevertheless, her novels convincingly illustrate the moral unmeaning—what she calls the 'moral stupidity'—of

⁶⁹ George Eliot, "Leaves From a Note-Book", 249; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 604–605.

⁷⁰ Regarding conformity, see George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 342–343; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 537; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 258–259; George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 4 September 1855, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:214. Regarding religious fear, see George Eliot, "Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming", 114; George Eliot, "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young," in *The Essays of George Eliot*, 49–50. Regarding sympathy as a basis for morality, see George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 619. See also 366, 695.

⁷¹ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 264–265; George Eliot, *Romola*, 586. Regarding internality of duty and externality of dread, see George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 415.

⁷² See George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 835; George Eliot to Maria Lewis, 31 July–2 August 1841, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:101; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 736; George Eliot to Alexander MacMillan, 11 September 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:434.

⁷³ George Eliot to John Sibree, Jr., February 1848, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:251; George Eliot, "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness", 51. George Eliot recognises that this sympathy of the higher moral life is not within the powers of all 'our stumbling, falling' fellows. But by simply living in society most come to understand 'more or less' that their interests lie with those of their fellows, so that even the most ordinary can experience some measure of fellow-feeling and moral development. George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 82, 255; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 193–194; George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such", 316; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 501–502.

⁷⁴ George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 24 December 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:232; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 13 July 1864, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:158–159; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 454; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 293; George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such", 392–393. Regarding sympathy as a measure of moral progress, see George Eliot to Charles Bray, 15 November 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:403. Regarding sympathy for strangers, including those out of reach in the past or future, see George Eliot to Richard Holt Hutton, 8 August 1863, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:97; George Eliot, "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness", 50.

a life lived without sympathy.⁷⁵ The reader has little need for rational exposition to be convinced of the essentiality of human sympathy. The reader feels, along with so many of George Eliot's characters—with Hetty, with Esther, with Rosamond, with Bulstrode, with Gwendolen—the devastation of its lack. Through her novels George Eliot brings the reader to understand, that to live without sympathy is to live in moral stupidity—with 'no supreme sense' to guide one aright. Conversely, our moral understanding grows as our sensibility to our connections with our fellows grows.⁷⁶

Further, for George Eliot, individuals need sympathy. In *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen yearns to disclose more and more of her true self to Deronda, so that he can sympathise with her more fully. In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea aches for a sympathetic companionship in which she can 'repose'. In *Romola*, the faltering heroine recovers 'a firm footing' in 'works of ... sympathy'. And in her own life, George Eliot feels the need both to sympathise with others and to have others 'feel with' her.⁷⁷

George Eliot is keenly aware that many of our fellows do not evoke our natural sympathies.⁷⁸ But, for her, sympathy is a moral act. We are to express sympathy for our fellows because we *ought*—not because our fellows are so deliciously charming that, given half a chance, we will naturally take their part.⁷⁹ In her novels, George Eliot endeavours to draw the reader on—to stand beside not only her worthy characters but also those the reader would, ordinarily, criticise or condemn.⁸⁰ In *Middlemarch*, she anticipates the reader's natural sympathies will exclude Casaubon, and berates them accordingly.

Dorothea—but why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage? I protest against all our interest, all our effort at understanding being given to the young skins that look blooming in spite of trouble;

⁷⁵ Suzy Anger, "George Eliot and Philosophy" in *Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 80; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 567.

⁷⁶ Emily Davies to Annie Crow, 24 September 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:287; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 385; George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such", 392–393. Regarding sympathy as an adventure, see George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 236. See also George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 266–267; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 409; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 299.

⁷⁷ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 485; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 197, 361, 475; George Eliot, *Romola*, 463; George Eliot to Charles Bray, 6 August 1856, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:260. Following Lewes's death, it was the 'lack of ardent sympathy' that George Eliot felt as the 'worst privation'. George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 14 October 1879, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:210. Regarding human need for sympathy of others see, George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 264; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 763; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 275; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 505; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 158.

⁷⁸ See, for example, George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 141.

⁷⁹ See George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 430. See also 193.

⁸⁰ See, for example, the narrator's sympathy for Bulstrode. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 619.

for these too will get faded, and will know the older and more eating griefs which we are helping to neglect. In spite of the blinking eyes and white moles ... Mr. Casaubon had an intense consciousness within him, and was spiritually a-hungred like the rest of us.⁸¹

For George Eliot, sympathy requires both time and effort—to listen to our fellows as individuals rather than as types; to listen to their very ordinary chatter, often devoid of ‘revelations’ and ‘witticisms’; to imagine their life as they live it; and catch some understanding of their motives.⁸² In *Adam Bede*, the rector appears to have an easy life, with a bevy of women to fuss over him. But when we learn how difficult his life really is, the narrator chides the reader.

See the difference between the impression a man makes on you when you walk by his side in familiar talk, or look at him in his home, and the figure he makes when seen from a lofty historical level, or even in the eyes of a critical neighbour who thinks of him as an embodied system or opinion rather than as a man.⁸³

Further, we cannot discover the beauty in others unless we approach them sympathetically. But this is not to say that each of our fellows has some undiscovered beauty that we need only approach with a sensitive sympathy to discern. Not at all. There may be reasons our fellows are the way they are, but it is not the discovery of the undiscovered in our fellows that will amend our relationship with them. Instead, it is the growth of sympathy in us—our realisation that we are not the centre of the world; our realisation that the experiences of our fellows are valid too; our realisation that we can learn from our fellows and, by learning from them, explore and develop our own humanity.⁸⁴

George Eliot identifies various factors which build an individual’s sympathy for one’s fellows—experience; self-knowledge; acceptance of others, despite their differences and weaknesses; and, sometimes, courage.

First, the individual learns to sympathise with others through the pain of their own experiences—‘our keen feeling for ourselves’ giving us ‘a keen feeling for

⁸¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 278.

⁸² George Eliot, “Theophrastus Such”, 302.

⁸³ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 111–112.

⁸⁴ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 281. And it is understanding their story—a story which is ‘hardly ever told even in their consciousness’, so often a story of heartbreaking compression, of ‘coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross’—that enables the individual to more fully sympathise with their fellows. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 144–145. Regarding need to understand as a peer rather than judge as a superior, see George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 12 May 1863, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:85.

others'. Conversely, individuals who have had a 'generally easy' life will lack sympathy, even if they are otherwise 'good-natured'. Being 'ill acquainted with disaster' they have 'no power of imagining' the pathos of another's lot. Dorothea's sympathy grows through pain. She once 'had no notion of [how] trouble comes, and ties our hands, and makes us silent when we long to speak'. Indeed, in her experiential innocence, she 'used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more, and doing better'. But no longer. Through her painful experience of marriage Dorothea learns to sympathise with women whom she once despised.⁸⁵ Given that sympathy is born of experience, it is, at least in part, sustained by memory. So, when Mr. Cadwallader's friends condemn Dorothea's choice of Ladislav, he protests—"If she likes to be poor, that is her affair. ... Elinor ... vexed her friends by me: I had hardly a thousand a-year—I was a lout ... all the men wondered how a woman could like me. Upon my word, I must take Ladislav's part".⁸⁶

Second, sympathy is linked to self-knowledge, to being realistic about oneself. By recognising the advantages of our circumstances, we are less likely to 'think much of small offences' from those whose circumstances make them less able to bear trials. And by simply being aware of how little it takes to trip us up, we can learn to sympathise with those, often younger and less experienced in life, who find themselves facing 'the labyrinth of life' with 'no clue'.⁸⁷ Those who are honest with themselves can best sympathise with the limitations and eccentricities of others. It is in this way that Farebrother escapes even 'the slightest tincture' of hypocrisy. By 'admitting to himself' that he is no better than his fellows, he can 'excuse others for thinking slightly of him', and 'judge impartially of their conduct even when it [tells] against him'.⁸⁸

Third, for George Eliot, sympathy is linked to acceptance—acceptance which sees through the different forms our lives take and finds fellowship in our shared humanity. Sympathy endeavours to look at actions individually—as seen by the acting individual, looking from the inside out. In *Middlemarch*, the reader learns with

⁸⁵ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 213–214, 507; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 423, 545. See also 179; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 201; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 472, 531.

⁸⁶ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 818. See also George Eliot to Charles Bray, 19 March 1861, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:391; George Eliot to The Hon. Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 10 December 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:98–99; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 334.

⁸⁷ George Eliot, "Leaves From a Note-Book", 247; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 367; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 317. See also George Eliot, *Romola*, 665.

⁸⁸ George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such", 254–255; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 187. For an illustration of an individual finding the self-knowledge necessary for effective sympathy, see George Eliot, *Romola*, 650–651.

Dorothea, that none of love, loyalty or living together guarantees sympathy. As a new bride Dorothea is ‘as blind to [Casaubon’s] inward troubles as he to hers’, for she has not yet learned his hidden conflicts. She has ‘not yet listened patiently to his heartbeats, but only felt that her own was beating violently’. Sympathy asks us to put ourselves aside and, for a time at least, see life as another.⁸⁹

Fourth, sympathy sometimes calls for courage. Individuals must, at times, dig deep to find the wherewithal to demonstrate sympathy for the estranged who have brought judgment upon themselves. George Eliot explains in *The Mill on the Floss*, in relation to the outcast Maggie:

To have taken Maggie by the hand and said, ... ‘I, too, am an erring mortal, liable to stumble, apt to come short of my most earnest efforts; your lot has been harder than mine, your temptation greater; let us help each other to stand and walk without more falling,’ ... would have demanded courage ... would have demanded a mind that tasted no piquancy in evil-speaking, that felt no self-exaltation in condemning. ... The ladies of St. Ogg’s ... had their favourite abstraction, called society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism—thinking and speaking the worst of Maggie Tulliver.⁹⁰

What then, for George Eliot, is the work of this sympathy? How does it change individual lives?

By sympathising with others, individuals learn to see the world as others see it—others ‘who believed falsities as well as truths, and did the wrong as well as the right’. In seeing the world as others see it, they learn from them. Through sympathy, the individual learns new ways of seeing good in life, and becomes alive to the good in the world, even when there is very little good in their own experience of it. Importantly, by sympathising with others, individuals become more forgiving. Seeing another’s actions as they see them, fosters understanding and compassion. And critically, sympathy drives action—the sympathetic individual, motivated by understanding and compassion, seeks out opportunities to ‘make life less difficult’ for others.⁹¹

⁸⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 200. Regarding George Eliot’s response to Newman’s *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, see George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 13 July 1864, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:159. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 24 June 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:90.

⁹⁰ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 525.

⁹¹ See George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 702; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 733–734, 809; George Eliot, *Romola*, 395–396. Regarding value of sympathy in old age, see George Eliot to Bessie Rayner Parkes, 15 June 1852, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:35–36. See also George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 781; George Eliot, *Romola*, 463; George Eliot,

By experiencing the sympathy of others individuals find courage. Through the sympathetic fellowship of ‘a noble nature’ even the weakest can be saved from their baser selves and grow, in the face of painful self-revelation and punishing trial.⁹² In *Middlemarch*, Bulstrode’s story does not end with his public shaming. His ultimate redemption is effected through the sympathy of his wife’s unrepublishing fellowship. We catch a glimpse of this sympathy when Harriet Bulstrode learns, from her brother, of her husband’s public disgrace:

That moment was perhaps worse than any which came after. It contained that concentrated experience which in great crises of emotion reveals the bias of a nature, and is prophetic of the ultimate act which will end an intermediate struggle. ... Along with her brother’s look and words there darted into her mind the idea of some guilt in her husband—then, under the working of terror came the image of her husband exposed to disgrace—and then, after an instant of scorching shame in which she felt only the eyes of the world, with one leap of her heart she was at his side in mournful but unrepublishing fellowship with shame and isolation.⁹³

And another, when Harriet first meets Bulstrode following his disgrace:

He raised his eyes with a little start and looked at her half amazed for a moment: her pale face, her changed, mourning dress, the trembling about her mouth, all said, ‘I know’; and her hands and eyes rested gently on him. He burst out crying and they cried together, she sitting at his side. They could not yet speak to each other of the shame which she was bearing with him, or of the acts which ... brought it down on them. His confession was silent, and her promise of faithfulness was silent.⁹⁴

Having established that sympathy is foundational to a truly moral life, George Eliot shapes this moral life in terms of duties, some of which look very like the duties identified in the Providence centred moralities examined in Chapter 8. For George Eliot, as for Gaskell, a worthy and fulfilling life is dependent on a role in life from which one can derive clear duties.⁹⁵ For some, that role may be a recognised

Adam Bede, 503; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 760–761, 795–796; George Eliot to Mrs. Elma Stuart, 1 January 1877, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:327.

⁹² George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 768, 803; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 158.

⁹³ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 748.

⁹⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 750.

⁹⁵ See George Eliot to Charles Lee Lewes, 10 August 1871, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:177; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 7 February 1875, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:123; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 322. See also 567, 819; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 319; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 41, 44–45, 78.

station in the community or the family. But for others, especially for women alone in the world, that role may need to be negotiated, if not discovered or created, for oneself. Some duties are born of the past. Others arise simply by undertaking to do something—by promising another, in words or actions, or by one’s own resolve.⁹⁶ George Eliot identifies various kinds of duties—duties to oneself; duties to one’s family; and duties to the community.

George Eliot remarks two duties which are self-directed. The duty to take care of oneself—to maintain ‘calmness and bodily strength’, for one’s own sake and for the sake of others, and the duty of ‘finding happiness’—not a fleetingly impulsive hedonism but the happiness of a felt connection with that ‘truer omnipresence’; the happiness of the ‘inexhaustible world of delights’ of the ‘thoughts of the good and great’; the happiness of ‘the felt desire to be one in will and design with the Great Mind’ that has laid the world open to us. And here we see a foreshadowing of Green’s wellbeing which is not ‘a succession of pleasures’ but ‘an abiding satisfaction of an abiding self’.⁹⁷

Within the family, it is the marriage relationship that is, for George Eliot, the focal point of ‘mutual influences, demands [and] duties’.⁹⁸ And it is in marriage—so long as that marriage is a ‘state of higher duties’ in which two lives are ‘passed together under the hallowing influence of a common faith’ as to those duties and their basis—that a woman finds both purpose and duty. So it is, in *Middlemarch*, that Dorothea, having stooped to marry Will Ladislaw, has ‘no ... feeling that there was ... something better which she might have done’. For in her marriage she finds ‘a life filled ... with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for herself’. Her husband’s is a noble undertaking and she can do no better than to ‘give him wifely help’. For George Eliot, any who think it ‘a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another’ miss the point entirely. For no woman, no matter how ‘substantive and

⁹⁶ Regarding duties of station, see, for example, George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 33; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 516; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 103, 458. Regarding negotiated duties, see, for example, George Eliot to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bray, 25 December 1852, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:74; Hughes, *The Last Victorian*, 180–181. Regarding duties from past, see, for example, George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 427, 496; George Eliot to Oscar Browning, 21 January 1869, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:5. Regarding duties from actions, see, for example, George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 120; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 851–852.

⁹⁷ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 15 March 1843, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:159; George Eliot to Mrs. Mark Pattison, 9 November 1869, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:66; George Eliot to Mrs. Abijah Hill Pears, 31 March 1842, in *George Eliot Letters*, 1:133. See also George Eliot to François D’Albert-Durade, 21 September 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:310; Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 274.

⁹⁸ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 342.

rare', can do better than to share, in marriage, the duties of a noble purpose. Indeed, the best marriage is one in which we become our best selves, because the other demands our best.⁹⁹ But the duties of marriage survive the failure of one's spouse to be their best. Lydgate does no more than his duty when, having failed to bend Rosamond to his noble purposes, he 'accept[s] his narrowed lot with sad resignation'.¹⁰⁰ Duties to one's family more broadly take many forms—protecting each other, standing with, supporting, and encouraging our parents and our children; and a myriad of minor duties which, taken together, 'make others glad that they were born'.¹⁰¹

George Eliot identifies various duties outside of the family circle—duties of friendship; duties arising from one's station; and duties to one's weaker fellows. But, her duties range much more widely, the question of where one's duties lie having been answered in the parable of the Good Samaritan—with '“a certain man” who was found in trouble by the wayside'. Duties arise whenever one finds oneself in circumstances which present a particular opportunity to do some good; a particular opportunity to be of some use to others.¹⁰²

For George Eliot, as for Green, community is critical.¹⁰³ And one must be realistic about duties to the community—accepting the duties of the world in which they find themselves rather than imagined duties of some other world which may better suit their taste. As Savonarola reminds Romola—'a Florentine woman, should live for Florence'.¹⁰⁴ Many civil duties are banal—telling the truth in court; listening to others.¹⁰⁵ But they can also be of great moment. When Deronda discovers his true community, he discovers a life-changing motivating purpose:

⁹⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 41, 242, 835–836; George Eliot to Mrs. Nassau John Senior, 4 October 1869, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:58. But where there is no such understanding of reasonings and beliefs, married individuals may drag each other down—defeating the other's purpose and emptying their life of its meaning. The other marriages in *Middlemarch* are instructive here. George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 139–140, 192–193, 242, 274, 343, 365, 374–377, 563, 576, 584–586, 667, 748–750, 758, 768, 834–835.

¹⁰⁰ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 800. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 2 January 1871, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:132–133.

¹⁰¹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 41, 298; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 839–840. See George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 86, 93; George Eliot to Mrs. Edward Burne-Jones, 18 November 1878, in *George Eliot Letters*, 7:78; George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 5 June 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:339.

¹⁰² George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 526. See Luke 10:25–37. See, for example, George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 324; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 559; George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 22 March 1873, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:395. See also George Eliot to John Blackwood, 30 May 1867, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:366; George Eliot to Mme Eugène Bodichon, 12 December 1868, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:493.

¹⁰³ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 726–727.

¹⁰⁴ George Eliot, *Romola*, 431.

¹⁰⁵ George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 248, 444.

his judgment no longer wandering in the mazes of impartial sympathy, but choosing, with that partiality which is [our] best strength, the closer fellowship that makes sympathy practical ... drawing shoulder to shoulder with [others] of like inheritance.¹⁰⁶

George Eliot approves of the institution of class in much the same way as Whewell, Dickens and Gaskell, and holds it to be each individual's duty to discharge the obligations of their rank. And like them, she stresses the mutuality of obligations between the classes—the landlord's duty to provide decent housing to their tenants; and the cottagers reciprocal 'duty to their betters'. And, like Spurgeon, she holds that the privileged ranks cannot discharge their duty by luxuriating in their privilege. They must act in the interests of society as a whole.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Avrom Fleishman argues that *Daniel Deronda* can be read as a critique of class echoing, in some respects, Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. In Gwendolen, George Eliot realises the ignorant egoism and social ambition of Arnold's Philistines, and in Grandcourt she realises the passion for 'doing as one likes' of Arnold's Barbarians—ratcheting up his moral corruption by transferring his 'passion for field sports' from the pursuit and destruction of more traditional game to the pursuit and destruction of the recklessly ambitious Gwendolen.¹⁰⁸

For George Eliot, everyone has a duty to 'do the right thing, and to leave the world a bit better than [they] found it ... whether ... gentle or simple', whether they set the work going and find the money, or whether they do the work 'with [their] own hands'.¹⁰⁹ Even the very lowest ranks have duties—to discharge their allotted work with effort and diligence; to participate in their community; and show appropriate regard to 'their betters'.¹¹⁰ Like Dickens, George Eliot condemns unreservedly ambitious social climbers who scorn the duties of their class and affect the manners of the superior ranks. Indeed, as we have noted, it is Hetty's disdain for her allotted work, along with her fantasy of marrying the squire and breaking class, that leads to her disgrace and death.¹¹¹ But, for George Eliot, class is not the only ground of duty in a community. Duties of support arise wherever 'things don't lie level'. The

¹⁰⁶ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 814. See also 724-725, 792.

¹⁰⁷ See George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 31, 71, 472; George Eliot, *Romola*, 413. See also George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 98; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 739, 745.

¹⁰⁸ See Fleishman, *George Eliot's Intellectual Life*, 194-197.

¹⁰⁹ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 314-315.

¹¹⁰ George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 472. See also 31; George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 104; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 335.

¹¹¹ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 196. See also George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 124, 289-290; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 435.

powerful have a duty to protect the more vulnerable; the stronger have a duty to help the weaker; and the older have a duty to help the younger—‘to help them forward’.¹¹²

For George Eliot, as we have seen for Whewell, Dickens, Gaskell, Newman and Spurgeon, duties are often difficult to discern and, even when clearly discerned, can compete with each other. Duties admit of degrees—severe duties, strict duties, primary duties, first duties—so that, to the extent they are incompatible, an individual must rank duties in order of priority. Further, the individual’s selfish, and sometimes unrecognised, motives often cloud the prioritising of duties.¹¹³

Competing duties are sometimes insincerely cast up to avoid duties one has selfishly taken on. In *Adam Bede*, Arthur Donnithorne, the landlord’s heir, establishes a relationship with Hetty, a naive dairymaid, in breach of the duties of his rank. He then seeks to avoid the duties he creates by encouraging Hetty’s affections, claiming that marrying Hetty would offend his duty to his lord. Similarly, in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Captain Wybrow, having accepted Caterina’s affection, seeks to avoid resulting duties to her by pointing to his long-standing obligations to his uncle.¹¹⁴ For George Eliot, as we have seen for Dickens, duty is often used as a veil, to make an ‘ought’ of what one most desires—to justify one’s desires to oneself and to others.¹¹⁵ But George Eliot also observes that a certain kind of individual—one ‘not given to inquire subtly into [their] own motives any more than into other matters of an intangible kind—may use duty not as a veil of justification, but unknowingly, as an impenetrable opacity, born of a genuine lack of self-awareness. In *The Mill on the Floss*, it is with a lack of self-awareness, rather than with self-deception, that Tom insists on duty. Tom does ‘not know how much ... personal pride and animosity’ are ‘concerned in the bitter severity of the words by which he meant to do the duty of a son and a brother’. It is simply not in Tom’s character to inquire into his own motives. And when Maggie, having some measure of self-awareness, tries to explain her own motives to Tom, he dismisses them with scorn—‘“Nonsense! ... Your duty was clear enough. Say no more.”’. And, again like Dickens, George Eliot also observes that,

¹¹² George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 93, 353; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 563, 565.

¹¹³ See George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 376, 565, 807; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 433, 724, 792, 851; George Eliot, *Romola*, 540, 552; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 163; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 554; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 61, 270; George Eliot to Charles Bray, 16 April 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:97; George Eliot to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, 4 March 1872, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:252.

¹¹⁴ George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 378; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 103.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 133, 164, 172; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 272; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 61, 120; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 128, 308, 421, 754, 801–802; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 178–179; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 151.

while some are inclined to see their ease as their duty, more conscientious souls ‘are apt to see their duty in that which is the most painful course’.¹¹⁶ So duty, even for the sincere, is not always easy to discern.

George Eliot, like Whewell, falls back on the conscience. When faced with conflicting duties, each individual must follow their own conscience.¹¹⁷ But unlike Whewell, George Eliot rejects the notion that the conscience is the voice of God within—‘an inner deliverance of fixed laws’. For her it is ‘the voice of sensibilities as various as our memories’.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, even in its most mangled form—as a ‘fear which is the shadow of justice’ and a ‘pity which is the shadow of love’—it does a power of work for good in the world. For those who have made the effort to develop their sensibilities, by thinking their way ‘into the experience of others’, the conscience is a tool by which they can, in the face of conflicting duties, be guided aright.¹¹⁹

Like our protagonists in Chapter 8, George Eliot identifies certain virtues in addition to the above duties—including truthfulness; what we may call ‘thinkingness’; faithfulness; diligence; tolerance; and active resignation.

For George Eliot, ‘the constant preference of truth, both theoretically and practically’ is the ‘highest moral habit’. If the truth cannot be told, one ought to avoid the conversation altogether. And, while one is ‘not bound to say’ all one thinks, one should not stay silent where doing so creates a false impression.¹²⁰ But George Eliot also accepts that ‘a little unpremeditated insincerity’ is sometimes necessary ‘under the stress of social intercourse’. One cannot always meet the conflicting demands of strict truthfulness and amiableness in the scurry of many-sided conversations.¹²¹ So we should not be too hard on our fellows if we detect some duplicity on their part.

Another, more peculiarly George Eliot virtue, is ‘thinkingness’—the open watchful seriousness which informs the truly moral life; a life of ‘plain living and

¹¹⁶ George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 357, 533.

¹¹⁷ See George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 139; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 517; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 552, 553–554; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 254; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 31 October 1854, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:182.

¹¹⁸ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 570. For examples of differing sensibilities, see Daniel Deronda, Mr. Lyon in *Felix Holt* and Mr. Cadwallader and Bulstrode in *Middlemarch*. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 570; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 82; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 71, 617. See also George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 280. George Eliot, *Romola*, 168–169.

¹¹⁹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 455, 570. See also George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 353.

¹²⁰ George Eliot, “Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming”, 112; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 435; Emily Davies to Annie Crow, 24 September 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:286–287. Regarding dangers of duplicity and virtue of openness, see, for example, George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, 114, 119; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 445, 672–673, 726–727.

¹²¹ George Eliot, “Theophrastus Such”, 301.

high thinking'.¹²² For George Eliot, 'the intense enjoyment which accompanies a spontaneous, confident, intellectual activity' is, of itself, a moral good.¹²³ Further, there is a necessary link between thinking and being truly 'alive to high and generous emotions'. While moral sensibility is much more than simply knowing, one cannot attain moral sensibility without thinking. For George Eliot, the lack of 'some real knowledge ... is the curse of ... so many'—their passion being spent in the narrow round of personal desires 'for want of ideas and sympathies to make a larger home for it'.¹²⁴

For George Eliot, faithfulness is critical—faithfulness to both spoken and silent promises 'on which others build because they believe in our love and truth'. This faithfulness requires the renunciation of 'whatever is opposed to the reliance others have in us—whatever would cause misery to those whom the course of our lives has made dependent on us'.¹²⁵ Tolerance, too, is essential—tolerance comprising not only a respect for and acceptance of all the good in others but also an understanding of, and respect for, their 'enduring beliefs'. For George Eliot, accepting others requires accepting them as they are—and accommodating ourselves to the fact that some 'have only a very limited range of music, and will not vibrate in the least under a touch that fills [us] with tremulous rapture or quivering agony'. We must strive to see things from their point of view—recognising, all the while, that we likely make as little sense to them as they do to us. As George Eliot explains—we are all of us 'enveloped in a common mist, we seem to walk in clearness ourselves, and behold only the mist that enshrouds others'.¹²⁶

For George Eliot, another key, but much overlooked, virtue is diligence—doing well whatever we undertake to do in the workaday world. 'Thoroughness of workmanship' and 'care in the execution of every task undertaken, as if ... a trust' is a moral obligation touching on the practitioners of each 'calling, art, or industry'. Whatever one's work, one ought to discharge it diligently; with a view to making the

¹²² George Eliot, "Theophrastus Such", 320.

¹²³ George Eliot to Mrs. Charles Bray, 3 August 1871, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:173. See also George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 737.

¹²⁴ Emily Davies to Annie Crow, 24 September 1876, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:287; George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 507. For references to 'moral stupidity' see also George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 658; George Eliot to The Hon. Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 10 December 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:98–99.

¹²⁵ George Eliot, *Romola*, 354; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 496. See also 468.

¹²⁶ George Eliot to Charles Bray, 1 May 1855, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:199; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 24 February 1857, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:301; George Eliot to John Chapman, 4 January 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:3; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 141; George Eliot, "Leaves From a Note-Book", 247. See also George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 111.

world a better place—for one’s fellows and for the future. In *Middlemarch*, Caleb Garth delights in ‘the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle . . . that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for’. And for George Eliot, diligence is not only a moral obligation but also a moral need—‘how can [one] bear to be fit for nothing in the world that is useful?’¹²⁷

Following Comte, and like Gaskell, George Eliot holds that the moral life is one of both resignation and activity. George Eliot’s resignation is as much about accepting oneself as accepting one’s circumstances. But in neither case is this acceptance a denial of the ‘evils which lie under our own hands’ or the need to work for change.¹²⁸ Resignation and activity operate both in parallel and in continuous succession—to sustain our moral development and pick out a path through the perplexities of this world. But here, and not without some difficulty, George Eliot draws a line between the nobility of deliberately chosen *resignation* and the moral degradation of, what we may call, imposed *submission*—one that has particular application for capable women. As Pauline Nestor makes clear, while, in her novels, George Eliot whole-heartedly approves women resigning personal ambition when assuming the role of ‘wifely help’, we nevertheless find in her work tellingly persuasive examples of both the difficulty of choosing resignation and the moral degradation wrought by resisting resignation on the one hand, and imposed submission on the other.¹²⁹

Like Dickens and Whewell, George Eliot is averse to ‘denouncing [her] fellow-sinners’ and she condemns very little. It is gambling that she finds most obnoxious.¹³⁰ She remarks other vices in passing, but it is more often the tolerance of the vice than the vice itself that irks her.¹³¹

¹²⁷ George Eliot, “Theophrastus Such”, 391; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 255, 403, 562. George Eliot, “Leaves From a Note-Book”, 233; George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 529. See also George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, March 1854, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:147; George Eliot to James Thomson, 30 May 1874, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:53; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 410, 475, 539, 562; George Eliot, *Felix Holt*, 62.

¹²⁸ ‘Notre vraie destinée, se compose de resignation et d’activité.’ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 25 November 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:127; George Eliot to Mrs. Henry Horton, December 1853, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:134; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 389.

¹²⁹ Pauline Nestor, *George Eliot* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 125–127; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 836. For examples of ennobling resignation see Dorothea and Mary Garth in *Middlemarch*; Dinah in *Adam Bede*; Esther in *Felix Holt*. For examples of the moral degradation of resistance to resignation and of imposed submission see Hetty in *Adam Bede*, Gwendolen and Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein (Daniel’s mother) in *Daniel Deronda* and Mrs. Transome in *Felix Holt*. See also George Eliot, “Armgart,” in *The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems*, 92–93, 95, 102.

¹³⁰ George Eliot to Mrs. William Cross, 25 September 1872, in *George Eliot Letters*, 5:312. See also Deronda’s denunciation of gambling. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 383.

¹³¹ See George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 278; George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, 15 May 1877, in *George Eliot Letters*, 6:371. See also George Eliot, “Theophrastus Such”, 309, 324; George Eliot to John Blackwood, 21 May 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:69; George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*, 291.

So, while George Eliot's morality is grounded in a sympathy that traces the many connections between individuals in the moral world, that sympathy is, as a practical matter, expressed in the duties to which those connections give rise—duties to oneself, to one's family and to one's community. These duties, for the most part, look very like the duties recognised by Whewell and Gaskell and by the other protagonists whose Providence centred moralities we considered in Chapter 8.

We have seen that, although Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot have very different conceptions of causation in the moral world—different from each other and different from the Providence centred conceptions of causation in the moral world discussed in Chapter 6—as a practical matter, their moralities have much in common.

We have seen that, for Mill, the only true measure of right and wrong is the extent to which an action promotes the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But as the extent to which an action promotes such happiness is, as a practical matter, too difficult for most of us most of the time, Mill relies firstly on each individual looking out for their own happiness and, failing that, on the 'generally accepted rules of conduct'. Only the expert need wade in the waters of greatest happiness. For Arnold, the only true measure of right and wrong is the extent to which an action advances humankind's progress to perfection. But this is the work of Culture and, for most of us, is beyond reckoning. So Arnold, much like Whewell and Dickens, points to religion as the authoritative guide to right conduct. Like Whewell, he places great weight on the durability of Christian morality; and like Dickens, he places great weight on the example and teachings of Jesus. As well as the Bible and the liturgy, Arnold emphasises the method of Jesus—comprising self-examination, self-renouncement and sweet reasonableness. For Green, the only true measure of right and wrong is the extent to which an action advances the realisation of the eternal consciousness by and through the self-realisation of the individual in community. Again, for most of us most of the time, the extent to which an action advances the realisation of the eternal consciousness is beyond reckoning. Green, echoing Whewell and in much the same way as Mill, points to conventional morality. Only the philosopher need trouble with the eternal consciousness. George Eliot's morality is grounded in a sympathy that traces the so many connections between individuals. But her sympathy, as a practical matter, is expressed in duties—duties to self, family

and community. Duties that look very like the duties we explored in the Providence centred moralities of Chapter 8.

So, as a practical matter, while Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot modify, de-emphasise, or deny altogether, the notion of Providence in their conception of moral causation, and Green and George Eliot also rail against Utilitarianism; looking on from the outside, there would be very little to distinguish between conscientious individuals acting in accordance with any one of the moralities of Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot or the other protagonists whose Providence centred moralities we considered in Chapter 8. In the practical doings of the workaday world, what they have in common is of much greater moment than anything that distinguishes between them.

Chapter 10: Snags, knots and gaping holes

We have now considered our protagonists' webs of belief as they touch on conceptions of moral causation and their moralities. As we noted in Chapter 1, rational beliefs must be consistent—but there is no reason to suppose them to be 'especially reflective, self-critical, or concerned with the evidence'.¹ In this chapter we will examine some of the tensions in our protagonists' webs of belief—the awkward combinations; the snags, knots, and gaping holes. We will also consider how our protagonists sought to resolve or, at least, accommodate these tensions. We will focus on those tensions that bear on the matters within the scope of this thesis—that is, conceptions of moral causation and moralities. How well our protagonists' webs of belief accommodate related matters—such as individual responsibility for character and actions; moral sanctions and punishment; and the role of the law—falls outside the scope of this thesis.

In the first part of this chapter, we will look at some of the tensions inherent in the conceptions of Providence discussed in Chapter 6—including some relating to the concept of particular providence—and how our protagonists sought to accommodate them. We will also consider a key practical tension to which Providence centred moralities of duty give rise—the difficulty of prioritising conflicting duties. We will then take a closer look at tensions inherent in Dickens's conception of the duties of women and consider whether those tensions point to a rogue pro-attitude in relation to women which distorts his conception of their duties.² In the second part of this chapter, we will look at the practical tensions inherent in the ambitious moralities of Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot, and consider how they seek to overcome them.

All of our protagonists with Providence centred conceptions of moral causation—Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon—are, to some extent, aware of one fundamental tension in their conception of Providence. They all recognise, to some degree, the inherent tension in the concept of an unerring Providence realised through the willed and effortful action of often erring individuals.

¹ Bevir, *Logic of the History of Ideas*, 168. See also our earlier discussion of rationality as internal consistency at Chapter 1, page 15.

² For the concept of 'rogue pro-attitude', see Chapter 1, pages 15–16.

For these protagonists, the individual's life is circumscribed by Providence. All is subject to *Deus Volente*. But Providence is realised through individuals. When Dickens asks his fellow Londoners to do their duty and contribute to the Hospital for Sick Children, he pleads with them to assist and not contravene the ways of Providence.³ Such a plea implies not only the need of assistance but also the risk of contravention. Seen in this light, Providence takes on the appearance of a vulnerable and uncertain thing—lacking the inexorability in which one may find certain rest.

Newman spells out the tension. What happens 'depends, in a way unknown to us, both on ... Providence and on human agency. Every event, every course of action, has [these] two faces'. The Bible 'represent[s] the world on its providential side; ascribing *all* that happens' to Providence. But this is not the complete picture.⁴ Individuals are 'free agents' and God has 'committed [their] destinies ... to [their] own hands' making them 'a first cause ... in the moral world'.⁵ Clearly, the willed actions of individuals will vary both in intent and effectiveness, so that they will have varying consequences—some good, some better, some bad, and some very bad. And, as a matter of fact, it is evident to all that bad things do happen. Yet the aggregate effect of all our varying efforts, and all that happens—including the bad—constitutes Providence, which is, at the very least, a movement toward the collective best.

Whewell, Gaskell and Dickens respond to this inherent tension differently—Whewell with an open mind, waiting for humankind to approach the Divine Mind; Gaskell with an anxious mind, waiting to be illumined by the Divine Presence; and Dickens with an open mind, trusting to his own learning.

Michael Ruse has suggested that 'Whewell ... had trouble harmonizing his beliefs in human [agency] with his philosophical beliefs about the binding necessity of laws'.⁶ Ruse's observation is a valid one, but it overlooks what is, for me at least, the greatest strength of Whewell's mind. To understand how Whewell accepts the tensions inherent in the concept of Providence without working out a resolution, we need to understand that he sees all knowledge as cumulative and iterative. He acknowledges that there are necessarily gaps in, and paradoxes within, human knowledge. We see this in the way he deals with the doubts cast by Darwin's 'speculations' on his views of the antiquity of humankind. Whewell writes:

³ Speech at dinner for Hospital for Sick Children, 9 February 1858, in Dickens, *Speeches*, 249.

⁴ John Henry Newman, "The Glory of the Christian Church," in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 279.

⁵ Newman, "On Justice", 84.

⁶ Michael Ruse, "William Whewell: Omniscientist," in Fisch, *A Composite Portrait*, 106.

I cannot see without some regrets the clear definite line, which used to mark the commencement of the human period of the earth's history, made obscure and doubtful. There was something in the aspect of the subject, as Cuvier left it, which was very satisfactory to those who wished to reconcile the providential with the scientific history of the world. It is true that a reconciliation of the scientific with the religious views is still possible, but it is not as clear and striking as it was. But it is still a weakness to regret this; and no doubt another generation will find some way of looking at the matter which will satisfy religious men. I should be glad to see my way to this view, and am hoping to do so soon.⁷

So, for Whewell, tensions in one's conception of Providence are cause for personal regret, but not despair. The developing understandings of humankind are themselves Providence. And that development is enduring; necessarily remaining unfinished during one's lifetime. So Whewell is not unduly concerned about the incomplete state of his own knowledge, nor the tensions to which that incompleteness give rise—those tensions are the necessary steps to their own resolution. Whewell does not overlook them, dismiss them, or try to argue them into a corner. Instead, he looks forward to their ultimate resolution as the understanding of humankind approaches, ever so gradually, that of the Divine Mind.

Gaskell despairs of ever understanding the workings of Providence in this life—'I used to fancy when I was a child, that when I grew older I should understand the sad and mysterious things of this life; but somehow the older I grow, the more the sadness and the mystery deepen'. But Gaskell does not give up on Providence. She cannot. It is only by holding onto Providence that she can hold on at all.⁸ Gaskell does not resolve the tensions inherent in Providence. Instead, she looks beyond them to a time when all tensions will be resolved; reassured that 'the night is darkest before the dawn' and we will 'see Light in God's Light when that time comes!'⁹

Dickens takes another approach. One striking characteristic of Dickens's conception of moral causation is its open texture. He is enchanted by the curious, and trusts his own experiences and observations ahead of the speculations of others—'positively object[ing], on most matters, to be thought for'.¹⁰ Dickens is not worried

⁷ Whewell to Forbes, 4 January 1864, in Todhunter, *William Whewell: An Account of His Writings*, 2:435–436.

⁸ Gaskell to Charles Bosanquet, 20 April 1859, in *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, 551.

⁹ Gaskell to Mrs. Emma Wilmot, 25 June 1864, in *Further Letters*, 264.

¹⁰ Dickens to William Howitt, 6 September 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:116.

by the inevitable gaps. He does not explain them away or paper them over.¹¹ He is happy to observe the inexplicable—and leave it unexplained. Indeed, he provokes curiosities.¹² He attributes some events, otherwise unexplained, to unseen physical forces—primarily, electricity and magnetism.¹³ Dickens, like many of his fellow Victorians, is a ‘believer, in earnest’ in the unconventional medical art of mesmerism (where the mesmeric practitioner induces a hypnotic state in a patient by the exercise of ‘animal magnetism’, effected by repeated passes of the practitioner’s hand over the body of the patient)—convinced by what he has seen ‘with [his] own eyes and observed with [his] own senses’.¹⁴ Similarly, Dickens links his repeated dreams of Mary Hogarth to the ‘influence’ of ‘her spirit’.¹⁵ Dickens is not intimidated by authoritative opinion or conventional wisdom. He relies on his own wits and, for the most part, trusts his own judgment.¹⁶ He is open-minded—but his convictions are evidenced based.¹⁷ And it is on the basis of his observation and experience of this

¹¹ Dickens remarks ‘those strange psychological mysteries in ourselves, of which we are all more or less conscious’. Dickens to Sir Edward Bulmer Lytton, 12 May 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:412. See, for example, Dickens to John Forster, 17 September 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:457–458; Dickens to The Rev. G. R. Gleig, 19 September 1861, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:460; Dickens to John Forster, 30 May 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:256; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 12 February 1864, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:356; Dickens to Miss Tennent, 13 March 1869, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:312.

¹² See Dickens to John Forster, 28 June 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:573–574.

¹³ See, for example, Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 10 February 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:264; Dickens to Edward Chapman, 13 March 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:518; Dickens to F. M. Evans, 25 September 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:614; Dickens to Miss Burdett Coutts, 8 August 1852, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:736; Dickens to Charles Kent, 18 January 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:139; Dickens to John Forster, 6 September 1866, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:243.

¹⁴ Dickens to The Countess of Blessington, 2 June 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:292; Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998). See also Dickens to Dr R. H. Collyer, 27 January 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:23; Dickens to John Overs, 24 August 1841, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 2:369; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 1 April 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:174; Dickens to W. C. Macready, 30 May 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:342. Regarding Dickens’s own practice of mesmerism, see Dickens to John Forster, 1–4 April 1842, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:180; Dickens to J. S. Le Fanu, 24 November 1869, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12:443. See also various letters from Dickens to Emile de la Rue in January and February 1845, 4:253–267; Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 29 June 1845, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:323; Dickens to Douglas Jerrold, 24 October 1846, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:645; Dickens to Mowbray Morris, 24 March 1850, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:73; Dickens to John Forster, 26 September 1849, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 5:615. For a fascinating examination of the phenomenon of mesmerism in Victorian Britain, see Alison Winter’s *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*.

¹⁵ Dickens to Mrs. Charles Dickens, 1 February 1838, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1:366. Regarding Dickens’s attitude to ‘disembodied spirits’, see Dickens to Mrs. Elliot, 12 September 1867, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 11:425. See also Dickens to William Howitt, 6 September 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:116.

¹⁶ See for example, his stoush with George Lewes over the possibility of spontaneous combustion. See Dickens, *Bleak House*, 532; Dickens to Dr John Elliotson, 7 February 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:22–23 and editor’s note (3); Dickens to G. H. Lewes, 25 February 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:28–31. Regarding scepticism as to the authority of generally accepted opinions, see Dickens, “The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain”, 125. For disparagement of unimaginative rationality see Dickens, “The Last Cab-Driver,” in *Sketches by Boz*, 177; Dickens, “The Parlour Orator,” in *Sketches by Boz*, 274, 277.

¹⁷ Dickens embraces Hydropathy with enthusiasm; accepts phrenology ‘in the main and broadly’; rejects all of Homeopathy (as useless), table turning (as slightly ridiculous), ‘Diabolical Agency’ as (‘nonsense . . . best left alone’), and spirit rapping (as positively harmful). See Dickens to Douglas Jerrold, 23 January 1844, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 4:28; Dickens to Henry Austin, 14 October 1851, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 6:520; Dickens to John Leech, 23 May 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:92; Dickens to George Strutt, 13 January 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:243; Dickens to Emile de la Rue, 9 March 1854, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:288; Dickens to Mrs. Winter, 11 June 1855, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:647; Dickens to Charles Lever,

world that Dickens is certain of the reality of the world beyond and certain that, although the great work of Providence is sometimes frustrated in this world, it will be fully realised in the next.

Dickens holds various beliefs that enable him, as a practical matter, to accommodate the inherent tension of an unerring Providence realised by erring individuals. For Dickens, all individuals are providentially made—on the whole, more inclined to good than evil; more inclined to do right than wrong. In any event, the minds of virtuous individuals are touched by Providence so that, by simply endeavouring to do what is right, they often unknowingly effect the purposes of Providence. Further, Providence has a particular purpose for each individual, and fits them with the capacities needed to fulfil that purpose—capacities that often come at a cost. So what looks like a failure or frustration of Providence is often the means by which Providence is effected. When Lizzie Hexam is denied any education and is made instead to row her father about, under cover of night, to pick a living from dead bodies floating in the Thames, Providence looks to be frustrated. But when her beloved Eugene is bashed and left for dead in the river, Lizzie thanks ‘merciful Heaven’ that she learned to row her father’s boat and retrieve bodies from the river. Similarly, Dickens saw his own restlessness and vague unhappiness as the flipside to the imaginative life and immense energies that fitted him for his Providential purpose. So both one’s capacities and one’s curses are part of the ‘wise ... ordering’ in which ‘all works to the doing of what is to be done’. And, for Dickens, effort is the individual’s natural response to understanding that Providence depends on them. When they realise they have been fitted by Providence to play their part in achieving its purpose, individuals delight in the effort.¹⁸

Importantly, for Dickens, Providence is flexible and responsive. It works around blockages. Society may frustrate Providence by ‘keeping down thousands upon thousands of God’s images’, but individuals can help to realise Providence by working to put things right. The whole of Dickens’s efforts in the public sphere can be read as efforts to set a wronged Providence right. Dickens also adopts the Christian concept of victory in defeat—illustrated most vividly in the crucifixion of Jesus—by which events that appear to be an irredeemable frustration of Providence

21 February 1860, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 9:215–216; Dickens to Henry Morley, 9 January 1863, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 10:192–193.

¹⁸ Dickens to Mrs. Brown, 28 August 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:422; Dickens to John Forster, 5 September 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8:434. See also Chapter 6, page 117, notes 38 and 39.

prove to be the means to a great good. A key example, recurring throughout Dickens's oeuvre, is the death of a child. For Dickens, the death of a child is an early, and certain, escape from the troubles of this world, and its moral dangers, to the far better world beyond. More than that, a child's death leaves virtue in its wake.¹⁹

But, most critically, Dickens does not expect much of Providence. He sees the purposes of Providence simply as the lightening of the individual's load as they tread their way through this life to the next. So every sunrise, every smile, every kindness—indeed, every good thing, is accepted as Providence. And every trial, every setback, every loss, is accepted as an opportunity for overcoming, as a call to further effort. Even when all effort is futile, grief is accepted—because there can be moral victory, even in the face of resounding defeat. Woven together, these various beliefs enable Dickens to look beyond the frustration of Providence in this world to its certain realisation in the next.

We have seen that for both Newman and Spurgeon, the individual has a duty to align themselves with, what we have called, their *particular providence*—God's comprehensively prescriptive life plan for them. This requirement gives rise to a cluster of tensions in their webs of belief. Most fundamentally, while it is the individual's duty to conform to their particular providence, it is next to impossible to determine what one's particular providence is—except in hindsight.

For Newman, this impossibility arises, at least in part, from another tension in his web of belief—the tension between a duty requiring each individual to conform to their own particular providence, which necessarily brings with it the notion that what is right for one individual may not be right for the other, and his insistence that individuals rely on authority because they cannot, of themselves, determine what is right for them. But, rather than resolving this tension, Newman's resort to authority transforms it. He sees the supremely moral individual as one who submits to authority; who obeys. And yet, on Newman's reckoning it is, as a practical matter, next to impossible to identify the proper authority. The conscientious individual is guided 'by Conscience as authority, by the Bible as authority, by the Church as authority, by Antiquity as authority'. And this order is telling. The authority of the Bible trumps the authority of Conscience; the authority of the Church trumps the authority of the Bible; and the authority of Antiquity (embodied in the traditions of

¹⁹ See Chapter 2, pages 44–45.

the Church) trumps the authority of all other teachings of the Church. So, on Newman's reasoning, there is a direct correlation between the weight of moral authority and its remoteness from the individual. The immediate resource of Conscience—God's representative within us, accessible to all sincere individuals, irrespective of their intellectual prowess—is unreliable, to the extent that it is inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible, Church and Antiquity. Likewise, the Bible, which is available to all literate individuals, is unreliable to the extent that it is inconsistent with the teachings of the Church and Antiquity. Further, the teachings of the Church, which are available to all attending parishioners, are unreliable to the extent that they are inconsistent with the teachings of the Church Fathers of Antiquity. Unfortunately, whether or not the teachings of the Church are, in fact, inconsistent with the teachings of Antiquity is, almost always for the parishioner and often for their clergy, beyond telling. It follows that, for Newman, moral authority is inherently esoteric. It lies with the few—not only confined to the Church, but cloistered in Antiquity, accessible only to antiquarian divines. It would seem that, on Newman's reasoning, the conscientious individual will experience as much difficulty in identifying the proper moral authority as they experience in identifying what, in any particular circumstances, is the right thing to do. They dare not trust their feelings, their reasoning or their Conscience. Indeed, they dare not trust their Bible or even their Church.²⁰

This tension is compounded by Newman's notion of divine judgment and salvation. For Newman, the concept of 'divine vengeance' is essential to 'true religion' and he is certain of the reality of eternal punishment.²¹ While this judgment will take account of the individual's motives, knowledge and circumstances, Newman nevertheless finds the prospect of divine judgment 'awful', even 'overpowering'.²² And while Newman holds that the Christian faith provides a means of salvation, he sees this salvation as always contingent—appropriated only until the next time the individual loses their path and slips into sin. Indeed, the individual moves between 'a state of grace, and a state of wrath' in a way akin to a very serious game of snakes and ladders. If they sin in the state of grace, they fall easily and immediately into the state

²⁰ Newman, *Apologia*, 256. See also Chapter 8, page 161; Chapter 9, pages 181–182.

²¹ Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 414–415; Newman, *Apologia*, 27.

²² Newman to Mrs. Jemima Newman, 27 August 1830, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 1:205; John Henry Newman, Memorandum dated 21 February 1875, in *Letters and Correspondence of Newman*, 2:431; Newman, "Human Responsibility, as Independent of Circumstances", 103–104.

of wrath. But, if they have fallen into the state of wrath, they ‘cannot receive pardon . . . freely and instantly, merely on faith’, they must instead extricate themselves by both ‘direct and formal means’—self-examination, repentance, confession and penance—to clamber back into a state of grace. Faced with a moral decision, the key question for Newman is—‘Am I in safety, were I to die tonight? Is [this] a mortal sin in me?’²³ There is inescapable practical tension between the individual’s inability to know they are doing right and the immeasurable harm that results from doing wrong. And, for Newman himself, this tension is, at times, overwhelming.

As a preliminary matter, as a fierce Biblicist, Spurgeon must accommodate the tensions inherent in a Biblicist’s approach to scripture, which precludes privileging one text over another. When Spurgeon encounters Biblical concepts that appear to be inconsistent, he cannot acknowledge the inconsistency—the fault lies in ‘our weak judgment’, to be resolved ‘in eternity’.²⁴ This approach to resolving tensions in his beliefs—can we say, swallowing them whole—is a hallmark of Spurgeon’s thinking. It is in this way that he accommodates a plethora of tensions.

There is a cluster of tensions in Spurgeon’s web of belief around finding one’s particular providence. As we have noted in Chapter 6, because the temptations of Satan and the promptings of the Holy Spirit are both effected by the unmediated actuation of the individual’s mind, it can be difficult for the individual to spot the difference between divine guidance pointing to their particular providence and Satanic enticements to leave it. Further, ordinarily, an individual will experience tasks for which Providence has fitted them, and for which they consequently have a natural aptitude, as a *pleasant* impediment on their providential path which, on Spurgeon’s reckoning, is a temptation to be avoided at all costs. Conversely, they will experience tasks for which they have no natural aptitude as an *unpleasant* impediment which, on Spurgeon’s reckoning, is a trial to be battled through.²⁵

We can identify further tensions, both inherent and practical, in Spurgeon’s conception of Providence—comprising, as it does, the predestination of all events; the election of certain individuals for salvation; and dooming other individuals to destruction.²⁶ Spurgeon sometimes speaks of individuals having no choice but to act

²³ John Henry Newman, “The State of Salvation,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 1079–1081; Newman, *Apologia*, 208.

²⁴ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:174.

²⁵ See Chapter 6, pages 120–121.

²⁶ See Chapter 6, page 112.

when acted upon by Providence. Other times he calls for immense effort—to overcome temptation; to keep God’s law; and to pray, believing. But, at the same time, he advocates complete dependency on God.²⁷ There is tension here—between submission, and effort, and trying not to try. Spurgeon seeks to accommodate this tension by asserting that the individual’s submission, and effort, and trying not to try are themselves predestined events. Nevertheless, Spurgeon exhorts his listeners to be diligent in their submission, and their trying, and their trying not to try. His exhortation implies the possibility of failure, while predestination precludes that failure. Spurgeon does not acknowledge this tension. Tensions in Spurgeon’s web of belief around his conception of prayer have been considered at length in Chapter 6.

There is a cluster of tensions in Spurgeon’s web of belief around the notion of election. For Spurgeon, as a consequence of original sin, everyone is necessarily sinful and deserving of eternal punishment in Hell. Further, even without actively committing any sin, individuals are doomed, by the sin of their unbelief. And here is the difficulty. For Spurgeon, because of original sin, everyone is born not only in the sin of unbelief but without the power to believe—unless God intervenes. So no one can meaningfully be said to be responsible for their unbelief. To punish an individual for something for which they are not responsible is, ordinarily, unjust. Spurgeon does not acknowledge this. Further, given that *all* individuals are necessarily sinful and deserving of eternal punishment, on Spurgeon’s reasoning, God choosing *any* particular individual for salvation is unjust. Spurgeon acknowledges there is tension here—tension between our concepts of justice, which require individuals to be treated fairly, and choosing only some individuals for salvation, without regard to merit. Spurgeon tries to accommodate this tension in two ways. First, he implies that God is untrammelled by justice—choosing the elect, and only the elect, simply because He ‘would have it so’.²⁸ Second, Spurgeon asserts that Christ dying for the elect only must be just because, if Christ had ‘died for all’, then he would also have ‘died for [the damned] in hell’, in which case, ‘God, having first punished the Substitute’ for the sins of the damned, would have ‘afterwards punished the sinners themselves’—which would be unjust.²⁹ This reasoning is shamelessly circular, plainly begging the question. We can identify one further tension around election. If everyone inherits

²⁷ See Chapter 3, pages 57–58; Spurgeon, “Struggling Against Sin”; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 2:395.

²⁸ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:164. See also 1:90, 167; Spurgeon to Miss Susannah Thompson, 11 January 1855, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 55.

²⁹ Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:172.

original sin which renders them liable to eternal damnation, all individuals, so long as they remain unregenerate, are, by virtue of their humanity, condemned to eternal punishment. Yet Spurgeon denies that infants are condemned to Hell and is outraged that anyone would think he holds such an ‘insane’ position.³⁰

In addition to these logical tensions inherent in Spurgeon’s conception of election, there are two, more practical, tensions to which it gives rise. For Spurgeon, individuals can *never* be certain that they are, indeed, one of the elect. Regenerate individuals—even those ‘whose love is fervent, whose faith is constant, whose hopes are bright’—remain vulnerable to temptation and must, unless God preserves them, ‘decline and *prove an apostate after all*’.³¹ In parallel, and in addition to, this enduring uncertainty as to election, there is the possibility of a felt uncertainty as to belief. For Spurgeon, while a virtuous life is the marker of faith, without faith all virtue comes to nought.³² And yet, by its nature, belief can be a very indeterminate thing. Belief is a mental conviction and can be verified only by the introspection of the believing individual. Putting aside the vexed issue of the content of the requisite belief, experience tells us that an anxious believer is rarely certain of their belief. By rejecting any causal nexus between virtue and belief, Spurgeon’s conception of election leaves the anxious believer bereft of any means by which to be sure of their belief.

While they each represent to the other the very opposite of right thinking, Newman and Spurgeon have very similar approaches to accommodating the tensions inherent in their conceptions of Providence. They simply hold tight. Both are dogmatists. Both privilege authority. And while Newman is comfortable articulating tensions and Spurgeon more inclined to paper them over, both accommodate the tensions inherent in their conception of Providence in the same way—by deferring to an external authority and privileging faith in that authority over any rational reservations. For Spurgeon, that authority is the Bible. His conception of Providence is grounded in his understanding of the Bible, and he is convinced of the timelessness of that understanding. Any apparent tensions arise from his imperfect understanding of the Bible and will be resolved ‘in eternity’.³³ For Newman, that authority is,

³⁰ Spurgeon to Unknown, 12 June 1869, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 150.

³¹ Spurgeon, “Presumptuous Sins.”

³² See Chapter 8, page 160.

³³ Spurgeon to The Rev. Alexander Whyte, 13 September 1884, in *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, 91; Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 1:174.

ultimately, the Church. Any tensions are given up—given into the keeping of the infallible wisdom of the Church.³⁴

We noted in Chapter 8 that Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens, Newman and Spurgeon all recognise a practical tension around conflicting duties—it can be difficult for an individual to decide which of their duties ought to take priority. Further, we have noted that each of these protagonists feels this difficulty in their own life, and accommodates it in different ways. Gaskell retreats—often to the unquestionable duty of wife and mother; sometimes to the direction of her husband. Newman finds a retreat of sorts in the infallible authority of the Church. Both Dickens and Spurgeon prioritise their Providential vocation and wear themselves out.

Whewell trusts to his conscience to determine the right priority—and accepts that his conscience may get it wrong. Whewell understands that individuals inevitably muddle their priorities sometimes, and individuals with insensitive or underdeveloped consciences—being disadvantaged in their family life, community or education—will muddle them often. Whewell’s solutions are practical and straightforward. For those individuals who are concerned that their sensibilities or reasoning may not be quite up to the mark, and for those who, in blithe ignorance, think themselves quite right while others think them quite wrong, Whewell is most encouraging. His morality does not require perfection. Rather, it requires each individual to act according to their own conscience, which necessarily reflects how far they have travelled in their moral progress. Each must *strive* for moral perfection. None will achieve it in this life, because it is achieved only in the next. So the individual is not responsible for the rightness, in any objective sense, of the priority they give their conflicting duties. They are responsible only for the conscientiousness of their decision.³⁵

We also noted in Chapter 8 that Whewell, Gaskell, Dickens and Spurgeon identified duties referable to the individual’s role within the family. Further, while, for Whewell, Gaskell and Spurgeon, a woman’s life is full of duties centring on her husband and home, her duty stops well short of the unremitting self-sacrifice that, for Dickens, constitutes a woman’s duty. For Dickens, a woman is to be always ‘all bound up in’ her man. He is to be her ‘authority for everything ... the idol of her life; never ... shaken on his pedestal; ... always ... believed in, and done homage to with

³⁴ Newman, *Apologia*, 224–225, 254; Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine*, 5, 23.

³⁵ See Whewell, *Elements of Morality*, 194–195.

[her] whole faith ... come what might'. While she is his ready counsel, she urges no duty. She is amenable always; believing in her man—good, bad or indifferent.³⁶

Does Bevir's concept of a rogue pro-attitude help us to understand Dickens's excess here? Is Dickens so keen to see women mirror how he would like women to be that he believes his conception of women, despite knowing that it does not reflect how women are or, indeed, ever could be?

Dickens has a curious conception of young women. His experience of Mary Hogarth's death left him with a fanciful idea not only of Mary, but of young women generally; and a persistent conviction that, if they are 'beautiful, and good', when they 'are visited with sickness' they will die—their 'pure spirits' turning to 'their bright home of lasting rest'.³⁷ It is unsurprising then, that, as the years and the births roll on, Dickens finds himself disappointed with his stubbornly ageing wife and attracted to much younger women.³⁸

Dickens's ideal women are invariably young. Agnes, in *David Copperfield*, is essentially selfless. She is diligently attentive to the needs of the men in her life. She is totally undemanding, always sweet-tempered and gentle. She is so 'quiet and good' that she hesitates to advise her beloved, even when she knows it is necessary. She is the 'peace and happiness' to whom David can return 'like a tired traveller' to rest. Her tears are tears of compassion, her words are of hope and peace, her face bends down 'as from a purer region nearer Heaven'. She never demands, nor even asks, she 'urge[s] no duty'. She simply trusts her man to be the best he can be.³⁹ In short, she is an angel.⁴⁰ Dickens's novels are littered with angels. Lucie in *A Tale of Two Cities*, who has the 'magic secret' of 'being everything to all of us'. Kate in *Nicholas Nickleby*—'who ... could be insensible to the unremitting attentions of gentle, tender, earnest Kate'? Miss Rose in *Oliver Twist*—'not past seventeen; ... so mild and gentle; so pure and beautiful; ... made for ... fireside peace and happiness'.

³⁶ See Chapter 8, pages 172–173.

³⁷ Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 287. Regarding Mary Hogarth see Chapter 2, pages 28–29 and page 44, note 142.

³⁸ He tells Sir Alexander Duff Gordon 'You play the Devil with me on my weakest point, when you mention the dear delightful little German girl [Mathilde, the 15 year old Janet Duff Gordon's friend]. Her feelings on the night of the play were nothing to mine. I have loved her, ever since, distractedly.' Dickens to Sir Alexander Duff Gordon, 21 May 1857, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 8: 328. For Janet's age see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., s.v. "Ross [née Duff Gordon], Janet Ann (1842–1927)" (by Rosemary Mitchell), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50475>, accessed 17 May 2017.

³⁹ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 284, 373–375, 573–574, 776, 822. See also 848.

⁴⁰ Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell, 13 April 1853, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 7:62; Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 844. Some of the statements regarding Dickens and his angels included here have appeared previously at Di Sylvester, "The Lamentable Lessons of a Litter of Angels, 8 March 2015," <http://misfitimagnings.wordpress.com/2015/03/08/the-lamentable-lessons-of-a-litter-of-angels/>.

Amy in *Little Dorrit*—‘so faithful, tender, and unspoiled ... so Angelically comforting and true!’ Florence in *Dombey and Son*—‘precious, unattainable, unchangeable, and indefinite—indefinite in all but [her] power of giving ... pleasure, and restraining [her man] like an Angel’s hand from anything unworthy’. Lizzie Hexam in *Our Mutual Friend*—ever loving and faithful to her unworthy father, undeserving brother and scarcely more worthy lover cum husband. Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*—forever ‘busy, busy, busy—useful, amiable, serviceable, in all honest, unpretending ways’.⁴¹

At times, Dickens’s novels depict a crazily romantic notion of the sacrificial nature of a daughter’s love for her father.⁴² This phenomenon reaches its apotheosis in *Nicholas Nickleby* where Dickens attempts to paint a credible picture of the ‘not nineteen’ Madeline Bray agreeing, at the behest of her worthless father, who ‘lay in some secret place to avoid his creditors’, to marry Arthur Gride, a criminally disgusting old lecher, on condition that Gride meet the costs of her father living out his remaining days in comfort. She declares, much to the horror of her young would-be lover, ‘if I cannot, in reason or in nature, love the man who pays this price for my poor hand, I can discharge the duties of a wife: I can be all he seeks in me, and will’. Dickens condemns the selfish father and the scheming Arthur Gride, but approves the dutiful daughter’s willingness to destroy her own life to buy her father’s comfort. Madeline is saved only by her father’s opportune death.⁴³

But, for angels, sexuality is problematic. Here the tension in Dickens’s conception of the ideal woman is palpable. In both *David Copperfield* and *Little Dorrit*, the angel spends almost all of the novel hovering in the background while the hero’s passion for her less-than-angelic rival plays itself out.⁴⁴ Dickens simply does not know what to do with the sexuality of his angels. In *Little Dorrit*, Amy is cast as a child-like angel; regarded by Arthur Clennam (already in his middle years) as a

⁴¹ Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities*, 221; Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 680; Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 235; Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 789–790; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 243; Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, 36–39, 77–82, 732–735; Dickens, *Bleak House*, 693. In his own life, as a young man, Dickens saw Catherine as his would-be angel, who would afford him ‘much delight’. Dickens to Miss Catherine Hogarth, 19 November 1835, in *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1: 95.

⁴² See Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 501; Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 546.

⁴³ Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 566, 579, 659, 666–677.

⁴⁴ In *David Copperfield*, David pursues and marries Dora, who proves to be an incompetent housekeeper, lacking character and purpose and unable to provide the companionship David had hoped for. David is released from the marriage by Dora’s early death. Only after Dora’s death is Agnes’s continuing devotion to David realised. She proves to be the best of wives and mothers. See Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 653–654, 866–871. In *Little Dorrit*, Clennam is fascinated by Miss Pet Meagles who marries a worthless gentleman. Clennam gives up on ever finding himself a wife while, all along, Little Dorrit adores him. Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 327–329, 404.

child—*his* child.⁴⁵ It is a very awkward moment, then, when Dickens begins to steer all this innocence towards sexual love.

As he embraced her, she said to him, ‘They never told me you were ill,’ and drawing an arm softly round his neck, laid his head upon her bosom, put a hand upon his head, and resting her cheek upon that hand, nursed him as lovingly, and GOD knows as innocently, as she had nursed her father in that room when she had been but a baby, needing all the care from others that she took of them.⁴⁶

Soon we hear Clennam speaking to his ‘dearest Little Dorrit’ as one he has ‘loved and honoured’ formerly as a ‘poor child’ but now as ‘a woman whose true hand would raise [him] high above [him]self and make [him] a far happier and better man’. The story moves on, somewhat unconvincingly, to its happily married conclusion.⁴⁷ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that—for the Victorian middle classes, especially in the upper ranks—the earlier ideal of the useful, often older, wife had gradually given way, over the course of the eighteenth century, to the ideal of the younger, dependent wife. By the early decades of the Victorian period almost a third of upper middle class husbands were at least five years older than their wives.⁴⁸ Even so, in *Little Dorrit*, Dickens’s delight in feminine dependency appears to push that age gap beyond its limits, so that naive dependency and awkward sexuality stain his ideal of angelic domesticity.

In *Dombey and Son*, Dickens wrestles awkwardly with the sexuality of Miss Florence Dombey—‘a child in innocent simplicity; a woman in her modest self-reliance, and her deep intensity of feeling; both child and woman ... as if the spring should be unwilling to depart when summer came’. For most of the novel, Dickens sublimates this angel’s passion. Florence desperately loves her cruel father, her dying brother, and her adoring dog—a love gift from the unfortunate Toots. It is not until

⁴⁵ Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 110, 205.

⁴⁶ Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 790. For another awkward transition from innocent to sexual love see Dickens, *Bleak House*, 691. Esther Summerson (in her very early twenties) and Mr. Jarndyce (‘nearer sixty than fifty’) are engaged to be married despite a similar age mismatch, Esther having accepted Jarndyce’s offer out of grateful duty rather than passionate love. In that case, however, Jarndyce is moved by Esther’s unspoken love for Mr. Woodcourt (much nearer her in years) and graciously gives her, as ‘a willing gift’, to Woodcourt. Dickens, *Bleak House*, 32, 39, 140, 965–966.

⁴⁷ Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, 793. In *Nicholas Nickleby* Dickens draws a truly shocking picture of a much older Arthur Gride scheming to entrap the nineteen year old Madeline Bray—‘what should you say to me if I was to tell you that I was going to be married?’ | ‘To some old hag?’ said Ralph. | ‘No, No,’ cried Arthur, interrupting him, and rubbing his hands in an ecstasy ... to a young and beautiful girl; fresh, lovely, bewitching, and not nineteen. Dark eyes, long eyelashes, ripe and ruddy lips that to look at is to long to kiss, beautiful clustering hair that one’s fingers itch to play with.’ Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 579.

⁴⁸ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), 323.

the very end of the novel that Florence accepts the ever-adoring Walter Gay as her lover. Tellingly, Dickens accommodates Toots's undying worship of the angelic Miss Dombey in his marriage to the more sensible Susan Nipper by painting Susan as a fellow-worshipper—selflessness itself.⁴⁹

But not all of Dickens's young women are angels. Some—like Pet Meagles in *Little Dorrit*, Dora in *David Copperfield*, Dolly Varden in *Barnaby Rudge*, and Bella Wilfer in *Our Mutual Friend*—are very attractive to the authorial eye, but thoroughly spoiled by doting fathers and too self-indulgent to pass as angels. Estella in *Great Expectations*—written after Dickens's separation from Catherine and during his relationship with Ellen—is anything but angelic. She is chillingly passionless yet irresistible, having been 'brought up by' the jilted Miss Havisham solely 'to wreak revenge on all the male sex'.⁵⁰ As Ella Westland has noted, 'there is no way of neatly categorizing Dickens's cast of some four hundred female characters. ... There are many ... comic and tragic, who do not fit the blueprints'.⁵¹

There is inherent tension in Dickens's conception of the ideal woman. There is inherent tension between the moral perfection the angel demands of herself and the moral degradation she uncritically tolerates in her man. Further, because she is a child-woman, sexuality is problematic.⁵² Dickens never recognised these inherent tensions in his conception of the ideal woman.

Mary Poovey reads Dickens's angelic portrayal of the ideal woman as a defensive response to the developing mid-Victorian consciousness of women as economic agents—a consciousness evidenced by increasing female participation in the waged workforce and in the 1850s campaigns for married women's rights to property surrounding the defeated *Married Women's Property Bill 1857*. For Poovey, Dickens's 'treatment of women is a conservative, even nostalgic, recuperation of the domesticated female in defiance of some contemporary feminists' claims that sexuality was not the determinate characteristic of women'. He seeks to reinforce their role in the domestic sphere by discrediting the possibility of a meaningful role in

⁴⁹ Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, 706, 945.

⁵⁰ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 177. See also 362.

⁵¹ Ella Westland, "Women and Women's Issues," in *Oxford Readers Companion to Dickens*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press Print, 2011).

<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662532.001.0001/acref-9780198662532-e-0473>, accessed 22 May 2017.

⁵² This sublimated sexuality is sometimes uncomfortably close to the surface. See Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, 341, 352.

life for financially and emotionally independent women.⁵³ Ella Westland asserts that, ‘with the development of sophisticated models for the analysis of gender in literature, a strong case has been made that Dickens’s fiction explores the constrictions and contradictions of women’s roles rather than merely inscribing the dominant patriarchal ideology’. She notes that more recent critical readings of Dickens’s novels ‘expose ambivalence in Dickens’s fictional treatment of women’. Further, Dickens’s oeuvre is being ‘increasingly read as evidence not of Victorian certainties but of discontinuities and conflicts lying deep in 19th-century culture’.⁵⁴ This is unsurprising. Dickens’s novels are deliberately didactic tools, intended to illustrate his conception of the duties of women. His angels epitomise his conception of those duties and, predictably, the tensions inherent in that conception become apparent on a close examination which considers not only what is supposed to be expressed in the novel, but what is also expressed by the words without being intended.⁵⁵

But, to unravel the inherent tensions in Dickens’s conception of the ideal woman, we need to consider Dickens himself. As Margot Finn has pointed out, much can be lost by ‘distancing the production of literary texts from their authors’ biographical and familial contexts’. While considering the social and political context of the writing of a novel can alert us to the many ideas circulating in the ‘intellectual air “breathed” by’ an author, it nevertheless ‘begs the vexed question of how and why any one ... of the many competing [ideas] ... available’ was ‘selected, reformulated and re-presented’ by that particular author. Finn notes that ‘Dickens’s imaginings of the body economic’ are, at least in part, ‘informed by ... his father’s repeated run-ins with the debtors’ prison’.⁵⁶ Similarly, Dickens’s conception of the nature and duty of women are informed by his own experiences of women.

Given the often fraught nature of Dickens’s relationships with women—his rejection by the young Maria Beadnell; the death of young Mary Hogarth; his disappointment with the ageing Catherine; his disappointment with the mature Maria; the eventual failure of his marriage and his separation from Catherine; and his ongoing liaison with the very much younger Ellen—we can only imagine that Dickens would have much preferred his women not only to be eternally young, but to be all that goes with it—emotionally as well as financially dependent; virtuous yet

⁵³ Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 173.

⁵⁴ Westland, “Women and Women’s Issues”.

⁵⁵ See discussion of the two aspects of interpreting hermeneutic meaning in Chapter 1, page 8.

⁵⁶ Margot Finn, “Analogies, Homologies and the Body Economic,” in *Journal of Victorian Culture* 2007:104–105.

naively unquestioning as to their man's virtue; and eternally accepting and grateful for whatever their man chooses to give them. This pro-attitude as to the nature of the ideal woman becomes a rogue pro-attitude in respect of Dickens's conception of the duties of women. It distorts the rationality of his conception of those duties by denying its inherent contradictions. Identifying this rogue pro-attitude helps us to explain both the contradictions and the irrational excesses in Dickens's conception of the duties of women.

In Chapter 9 we considered the moralities of Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot. These moralities are ambitious. Instead of accepting, as given, the duties implied by an unquestioningly wise Providence, they venture to establish alternative criteria for right conduct—for Mill, the greatest happiness of the greatest number; for Arnold, humankind's progress to perfection; for Green, the realisation of the eternal consciousness through the self-realisation of the individual; and for George Eliot, sympathy for one's fellows. Given that Arnold, Green and George Eliot each explicitly rejected Mill's greatest happiness principle, their moralities not only seek to take as their measure something other than Providence, they also seek to displace Mill's greatest happiness principle as that alternative measure.

The moralities of Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot each establish an ambitious measure for right conduct, and each of them acknowledges that determining whether particular actions are right or wrong against that measure is, as a matter of fact, beyond the reckoning of the most conscientious individual. They each accommodate this difficulty by falling back on a more prosaic measure of right conduct.

For Mill, given that whether a particular action tends to the greatest happiness of the greatest number is, as a matter of fact, beyond reckoning, the conscientious individual ought to instead use their own happiness as a measure. If each individual's actions tend to their own happiness, then the aggregate activity of all individuals in society will tend to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Further, if determining whether a particular action tends to one's own happiness is likewise, beyond reckoning, the individual ought to fall back on 'generally accepted rules of conduct'. With each individual focussing on their own happiness, Mill's measure of morality takes on an achievable proximity. But there are tensions here. Whether the aggregate activity of a society in which each individual is working to

secure their own happiness will, as a matter of fact, tend to the greatest happiness of the greatest number will depend on the effectiveness, or specifically, the *relative* effect of each individual's activities. This will, in turn, depend on various factors—including the quantity and quality of each individual's resources, and the interaction of all individual activities. One can only imagine that the more unequal the distribution of resources, the more unlikely the aggregate activity will tend toward the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Further, as a practical matter, it is likely that those individuals who—for whatever reason—cannot determine whether a particular action tends to their own happiness, will likewise be unable to discern that they cannot make such a determination, so that they may blithely proceed to act in ways that are detrimental to their happiness, rather than fall back on 'generally accepted rules of conduct'.

For Arnold, the perfection of humankind has two aspects: the perfection of character, through culture, and the perfection of conduct, through religion. The latter is achieved by individuals practising the method of Jesus—self-examination, self-renouncement and sweet reasonableness—and by practising the liturgy and teachings of the Established Church. But, for Arnold, before the Established Church can effectively guide individuals in the perfection of their conduct, it must revert to the original gospel—the gospel of a Kingdom of God *on earth*. In this light, Arnold's perfection of conduct through religion begins to look almost as ambitious as a morality that takes as its measure humankind's progress to perfection.

For Green, right conduct is that which advances the realisation of the eternal consciousness through the self-realisation of the individual in community; actions that 'take their place as permanent contributions to an abiding social good'.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, as a practical matter, when deciding what one ought to do, the conscientious can do no better than be guided by conventional morality. But for Green, knowing *what* one ought to do is rarely the problem. What is lacking is motivation to do it; motivation to be the best one can be. So, for Green, what is needed is not a clearer exposition of what one ought to do, but social infrastructure to help individuals to do it. That is, social infrastructure to help individuals best realise their potential—by removing obstacles; by broadening horizons; by helping them find a better way. In this light, Green's measure of morality takes on an achievable

⁵⁷ See Chapter 9, page 201, note 65.

solidity—houses, schools, hospitals, access to universities. It is unsurprising then, that Green himself worked diligently to extend access to education; to foster temperance in the community and to secure better housing and wages for working people.⁵⁸

For George Eliot, the conscientious properly express their sympathy in duties that look very like the duties of the Providence centred moralities discussed in Chapter 8—duties to oneself, to one’s family, and to one’s community. But, by falling back onto these duties, George Eliot, like our protagonists with Providence centred moralities, bumps up against the individual’s need to prioritise conflicting duties. Like Whewell, George Eliot relies on the individual’s conscience to prioritise duties. She acknowledges the risk here, but is undeterred. For George Eliot, despite the consciences of individuals being as ‘various as [their] memories’, those who have made any effort to develop their sensibilities by thinking their way ‘into the experience of others’ can, when faced with conflicting duties, trust to their conscience to guide them aright.

We have identified some awkward combinations, a few snags and knots, and one or two gaping holes in our protagonists’ webs of belief.

Our protagonists who hold a Providence centred conception of moral causation recognise the key tension inherent in such a conception—that an unerring Providence effected through the willed actions of often erring individuals takes on the appearance of a vulnerable and uncertain thing and, in any event, bad things happen. These protagonists respond to this tension differently—Whewell content to wait for humankind to approach the Divine Mind; Gaskell anxious to be illumined by the Divine Presence; and Dickens taking heart from his own reasoning—trusting that, while Providence can be frustrated by recalcitrant individuals in this world, it will be fully realised in the next. For both Newman and Spurgeon, Providence comprises particular providences; eternal punishment for those who die in sin; and, for Spurgeon, the election of only some for salvation. We have noted the additional tensions, including some gaping holes, that this conception of Providence brings. Newman and Spurgeon accommodate these tensions by holding tight; by unreservedly

⁵⁸ Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 29; Ward, *A Writer’s Recollections*, 133–134.

privileging authority—for Spurgeon the Bible, for Newman the Church—over any rational reservations. Our protagonists who hold a Providence centred conception of moral causation also recognise a practical tension around the concept of duties—where they conflict, it can be difficult to decide which ought to take priority. In their own lives they accommodate this tension in different ways. Gaskell retreats—being a wife and mother, she has the benefit of clear duties that trump all others. Newman likewise retreats—to the authority of the Church. Dickens and Spurgeon frantically prioritise their Providential vocations. It is Whewell who seems best able to accommodate this tension. He trusts to his conscience, accepting that his conscience may get it wrong. But for Whewell it is not getting it right that matters. What matters is acting in accord with one’s conscience.

We have also examined Dickens’s conception of the nature of women to see whether Bevir’s concept of a rogue pro-attitude can help us explain Dickens’s conception of unremitting self-sacrifice as a woman’s duty. We have confirmed that Dickens’s pro-attitude as to the nature of women functions as a rogue pro-attitude in relation to his conception of their duties, and helps explain its irrational excesses.

We have identified tensions in the moralities of Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot and identified how they have sought to accommodate to those tensions—with varying success. We have seen that, in each case, their moralities both establish an ambitious measure for right conduct and acknowledge that determining whether particular actions are right using their measure is beyond the reckoning of even the most conscientious individual. Each of these protagonists accommodates this difficulty by falling back on a more accessible measure of right conduct. Mill falls back, firstly, to each individual having regard to their own happiness. And for those unable to determine what will promote their own happiness, he falls back to conventional morality. The first measure may be palatable, but it ignores the inequalities in society which defeat its purported effect. The second overlooks the likelihood that those who cannot judge what promotes their own happiness are unlikely to know they cannot. Arnold falls back on the guidance of the Established Church—but a very different Established Church to the one at hand. Green falls back to whether actions constitute permanent contributions to the social good. In this way his measure becomes very practical; very political—houses, hospitals, access to education, fair wages and sobriety. And George Eliot falls back on conventional

duties and relies on the individual's conscience—honed by the practice of sympathy—to prioritise conflicting duties.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

I set out to discover what nine individual Victorians were thinking when they decided what is the right, and what is the wrong, thing to do. My strategy has been to examine my protagonists' works—their treatises, lectures, sermons, essays, novels, letters and diaries—to recover their moral beliefs. I have focussed on two key themes—their conceptions of providence and their conceptions of duty.

It may be that we are each a profound secret and mystery to each other, holding, at least in some of our imaginings, secrets inscrutable—but by endeavouring to re-think the thoughts of my protagonists, I have, it seems to me, been able to catch something of their world as they experienced it, albeit with alternating familiarity and strangeness. For each of my protagonists I have been able to recover moralities that are, in Bevir's terms, rational because they demonstrate internal consistency indicative of rational webs of belief. (Some aspects of my protagonists' conceptions of moral causation underpinning those moralities—most notably Spurgeon's conception of Providence—display internal inconsistencies which, on Bevir's reckoning, compromise the rationality of those conceptions. But, as to the moralities themselves, I have been able to verify my understanding of the moral beliefs of each of my protagonists by establishing that those beliefs are rational.)

I have found my protagonists' works to be surprisingly rich sources of evidence of their moral beliefs. But my protagonists rarely expound their own moralities. Certainly in their letters and novels, but also in their treatises, essays, lectures and sermons, they instead address themselves to the task at hand—to comforting, to entertaining, to exhorting, to critiquing, to inspiring, to evoking sympathy, to stimulating independent thought or action and, sometimes, to simply prodding. So I have had to interrogate their works to uncover their moralities or, to use Benjamin's phrase, had to brush their works against the grain. Consequently, the moralities I have recovered have been woven with threads often implied incidentally rather than the deliberately explained. It is unsurprising then, that I have found some to contain the occasional snag, knot or gaping hole.

In his seminal work, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, Houghton identifies various traits of mind he believes to be characteristic of the Victorians—including

moral earnestness, a critical spirit and a will to believe. And, while the works of some of my protagonists are more overtly earnest than others, I have found all of my protagonists to have their fair share of moral earnestness. I have likewise found each of them to have a critical spirit—critical, sometimes in very different ways, of their society, both its practices and its assumptions and, excepting Spurgeon, critical of their own inherited assumptions and beliefs. Similarly, I have found each of them, here excepting Mill, to have a sincere, and sometimes desperate, will to believe. Reading their works I have not only seen but felt them—particularly, Whewell, George Eliot, Arnold and Green—working very hard to accommodate their deep spiritual needs to their uncompromising intellectual integrity.

I have focused on two themes—conceptions of providence and conceptions of duty. And while my protagonists’ conceptions of providence differ markedly, their conceptions of duty, which are grounded in them, are nevertheless remarkably similar. This finding corroborates Collini’s assertion as to the lack of moral dispute among the educated classes in Victorian England. But, given their sometimes markedly different conceptions of providence, I have found it nevertheless surprising.

We have found that some of our protagonists—namely, Whewell, Dickens, Newman, Gaskell, and Spurgeon—look to God and God’s Providence for their meaning, purpose and duties. Their conceptions of Providence are all grounded in the Christian religious tradition, but they are both various and contested, being mediated by differing strands of that tradition—namely, the Church of England (for Whewell and Dickens); Anglo-Catholicism (for Newman); and Protestant Dissent (Unitarian for Gaskell and Calvinist for Spurgeon). For Whewell, Providence is the power, wisdom, and goodness of God regulating both the material world, through the laws of nature, and the moral world, through the willed efforts of individuals constrained by the laws of moral causation. Any perceived calamities are insignificant in the eternal scheme of things, and arise solely from our limited perspective. For Gaskell, Providence fills the gap between all we can control and all we experience—it determines events beyond our power. We may do as we will, but the consequences of our actions are necessarily bounded by God’s will. So while we find many perplexities in our experience of Providence, we must resign ourselves to its trials. Dickens adds to this traditional conception of Providence, a vulnerability to frustration by the moral failure of individuals through whom it is effected. For both

Newman and Spurgeon, Providence is the outworking of an ongoing war between evil and good; between Satan and God. And, while the ultimate victory of good and God is assured, the eternal well-being of the individual is not—that depends, for Newman, on their being judged worthy and, for Spurgeon, on their being predestined to be one of God’s elect. Further, for Spurgeon, all that happens, every event in all its detail, is predestined beforehand by God—actively predestined, not merely foreknown by an omniscient mind. So that everything that happens must, in the end, be for the best. So while their conceptions of Providence have much in common, there are some significant differences not only in their conceptions of Providence, but also how they accommodate the irrefutable reality that bad things happen.

Further, our protagonists’ conceptions of prayer enrich our understanding of their conceptions of Providence. For Gaskell, true prayer is always a shift in mind—a resignation to the Providence of God which brings grace in its wake. For Dickens, effective prayer aligns itself with the purposes of Providence. Prayer does not, of itself, change anything. Rather, it echoes the unerring purposes of Providence and the individual’s willing effort to effect those purposes. For Newman, supplicatory prayer is effective where the supplicant has attained sufficient holiness—consistent obedience, mature, habitual, lifelong holiness—so that unanswered prayer is a marker of unholiness. For Spurgeon, prayer can secure the good things we desire—and the greater the faith and the number of the supplicants, the more effective the prayer. But prayer must be made subject to God’s will and aided by divine interposition—so that, practically speaking, prayers will be effective only if they anticipate what God has already decreed. Here we see echoes of Spurgeon’s conception of Providence—unerringly unchangeable decree experienced, at least by some, as responsive to their needs.

Both Dickens and Gaskell are alive to the hazards of a Providence-centred world view—the lazy, the selfish, the irresponsible, the incompetent, and the just plain bad, often paint their own moral failures as the unavoidable outworking of Providence. Further, the self-righteous can use Providence as a mask for their selfish will. George Eliot tellingly critiques popular conceptions of Providence. She sees the notion of the divine direction and control of our individual lives—a notion characteristic of both Newman’s and Spurgeon’s Providence—as mere egoism. She draws strong links between a self-interested notion of Providence and self-righteousness, and holds that an Evangelical theology inevitably gives rise to a

conception of Providence which places oneself at the centre. George Eliot resolutely rejects the comfortable assumption that whatever satisfies one's interests is the provision of Providence and, consequently, not to be ruffled.

Each of Whewell, Dickens, Newman, Gaskell, and Spurgeon accept duties as obligations, not options—so to acknowledge a duty is to undertake to perform it. Further, although duties are born of relationships and are consequently reciprocal, the obligation to do our duty is not dependent on anyone else doing theirs, so another's failure is no excuse for our own.

While each of these protagonists see their duties as given by Providence, they have differing approaches as to how they are given and where they are to be found. For Whewell, moral knowledge is acquired iteratively, by humankind over time. So our duties are broadly those which are generally acknowledged, as clarified and critiqued using reason. For Dickens, the New Testament is our only guide to duty—Jesus being the model of all goodness, sufficient for every need. For Gaskell, as a practical matter, life is full of duties. If one finds oneself bereft of duties, one must, through friendship or benevolence, forge relationships that will bring new duties in their wake. For Spurgeon, all morality is grounded in the Law of God, and the Bible is the authoritative source of that law. But Newman rejects the Bible as a comprehensive source of moral guidance and points instead to one's conscience and divinely-guided reason, subject always to the authoritative guidance of the Church. All of these protagonists dismiss consequences as an indicator of duty. For some, while a prohibitive conscience should never be disobeyed, a permissive conscience is not always a reliable guide to right conduct. For others, as a guide to right conduct, conscience is too vague a thing altogether.

These protagonists accept the duties of their familial and economic relationships and, more broadly, their station in life, as the provision of Providence for their individual well being and for the well being of society. They all recognise the duty to fulfil the vocation for which Providence has fitted them. They also recognise civic duties, including charity, sympathy and benevolence; duties referable to one's station in life; and duties owed to family members. They each embrace their lot in life as given to them by Providence; as their moral duty. More than that, fulfilling their Providential vocation gives their lives deep meaning and, often, deep joy.

We have found that our other protagonists—Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot—have developed world views that de-emphasise, modify or deny altogether

traditional conceptions of Providence and look elsewhere for both meaning and morality. For Mill, all that happens is the infallible result of all that has happened in the past. And while, at times, Mill emphasises the place of human volition within the succession of events, at other times he emphasises the manipulation of the succession of events by human volition. Mill both embraces and modifies the Utilitarian morality he inherited from his father—taking the greatest happiness of the greatest number as both his mission in life and his moral measure. But, importantly for Mill, happiness is no merely sensual pleasure, it also embraces both the cool pleasures of the intellect and the warmer pleasures of feeling and imagination.

Arnold's conception of the moral world is centred on a notion of providence as the august drama of human perfection. The governing principle of this drama is the eternal moral law—righteousness is salvation; they that will save their life shall lose it, and they that will lose their life shall save it. Further, each of us has a central clue in our moral being, which resonates with this eternal moral law and hooks us into the universal moral order. The key players in the drama of human perfection are Culture and Anarchy; Hebraism and Hellenism. These players are motive forces, moving, over time, in and out of counterpoise—nudging us toward a more perfect humanity. Arnold looks to both culture and religion for meaning and morality. His providence is an unfolding drama of human perfection effected, over time, by the interplay of the Hellenism that is the spontaneity of consciousness (the work of culture) and the Hebraism that is the consciousness of sin (the work of religion). For Arnold, participating in the process of the perfection of humanity—the realisation of the Kingdom of God in the here and now by promoting both culture and religion—gives him both his meaning and his moral touchstone.

Green's conception of the moral world is grounded in the unifying principle of the eternal consciousness. The eternal consciousness is the means by which we experience our world. For Green, causation in the material world and causation in the moral world are essentially distinct—the critical difference between necessarily deterministic causation of the material world, which precludes freedom, and causation in the moral world, which is freedom, is self-consciousness. The will is the self-conscious individual, realising itself; and the world is the coherent experience, grounded in the eternal consciousness, by which individuals realise themselves. Green, like Arnold, looks to the longer term for both meaning and morality. He finds it in the realisation of the eternal consciousness through the self-realisation of

individuals in community. This self-realisation is a gradual approach of humanity to the divine, achieved in community; very pragmatically—by temperate living, by access to education, by sanitation, by adequate housing, by mutual respect. For Green, taking practical steps to foster the self-realisation of our fellows is necessarily to do right. George Eliot also looks to community for both meaning and morality, but hers is a community realised through sympathetic connection with all our all-too-human fellows, rather than an approach to the divine. George Eliot is ever conscious of the sublime to be found among us, in the community of our humanity. This mystery can be traced in the invisible pathways of feeling and thought that fundamentally and necessarily connect us to our fellows. And while our entanglements and collisions with others often appear as a point of origin, they always fall within a course of action which—despite its dependency on the mutual effects of others—is the slowly-prepared outworking of our own character. It is through our sympathetic connection with others that we learn to both know ourselves and accept others. For George Eliot, it is this sympathetic connection that gives life meaning.

But we have also found that while Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot each look beyond Providence to find a ground for their morality—and find that ground in very different conceptions of causation in the moral world—each circles back to the moral duties recognised by our protagonists who look no further than Providence. For Mill, the only true measure of right and wrong is the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but—because determining which action best promotes such happiness is, practically speaking, next to impossible—Mill points, for the purposes of the everyday, to the ‘generally accepted rules of conduct’. Similarly, for Arnold, the only true measure of right and wrong is the extent to which an action advances humankind’s progress to perfection. But this too, for all practical purposes, is beyond reckoning. So he points instead to religion—to the religion of the Church of England—as an eminently useful guide to right conduct. For Green, the only true measure of right and wrong is the extent to which an action advances the realisation of the eternal consciousness by the self-realisation of the individual in community. Again, practically speaking, this is beyond reckoning and Green points instead to conventional morality. Likewise, George Eliot’s morality is grounded in sympathy, but, as a practical matter, this sympathy is expressed in duties very like the duties of conventional morality. So, as a practical matter, while Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot each look beyond Providence to find a ground for their morality, there is

very little to distinguish between the duties they acknowledge and those acknowledged by Whewell, Dickens, Newman, Gaskell, and Spurgeon.

There is irony here certainly. But there is something more. When Mill, Arnold, Green and George Eliot each point, respectively, to the greatest happiness, the august drama of human perfection, the realisation of the eternal consciousness, or the development of sympathetic community, as the pole star of their morality, they have no radical moral shift in mind. Rather—and this is particularly evident when we consider the human perfection of Arnold and the self-realisation of Green—each is striving to reinterpret the moral development of humanity over aeons, the process of civilisation itself, in a way that retains congruency between the conventional morality they, for the most part, accept and an evolving world view that looks beyond the conceptions of Providence on which that conventional morality has traditionally been grounded.

We have identified various tensions in our protagonists' webs of belief. It seems to me that three particular clusters of synchronic tension indicate likely drivers of diachronic change in moral thinking.

We have found tensions in our protagonists' Providence centred moralities around the duties of women. We have considered Dickens's unrealistic conception of the duties of women at length and found Bevir's concept of a rogue pro-attitude helpful in understanding its excesses. We have also noted that, for both Whewell and Spurgeon, women—both as single women and within a marriage—are vulnerable to disrespect, mistreatment and sometimes abuse. Whewell's morality stresses the need for mutual respect between individuals who owe each other reciprocal duties, including husband and wife. For both Whewell and Spurgeon, a husband's duties respond to the vulnerability of his dependent wife, and accordingly include kindness, showing affection, taking pleasure in pleasing her, and sharing his 'life and fortune' with her. Both Whewell and Spurgeon warn against the moral dangers of masculine self-centredness. We have noted too, that Spurgeon urges practical solutions for vulnerable women, including suitable paid work outside the home.

But it is from Gaskell—being herself a wife and a mother and a writer—that we gain insight into the subjective experience of a married woman, with a firmly held conception of Providence, prioritising her conflicting duties and striking a balance between her own wants and needs and her various duties. By owning her writing as a

Providential vocation, rather than merely self-cultivation, Gaskell boldly asserts the priority of her writing as a primary duty alongside her duties as wife and mother. But, when other hard decisions, conflicted with self-interest, must be made—most notably decisions as to the spending of time and the spending of money—Gaskell retreats to the safe harbour of the unquestionable priority of her duties as a wife and a mother, and her husband’s unquestionable authority. But this retreat is not easy, nor does it resolve the tension. It is William Gaskell’s work that keeps the Gaskells in Manchester. Gaskell dies, at fifty-five, exhausted by a whirl of activity, with *Wives and Daughters* (with all of its secrets and lies) very nearly completed and her longed-for escape from Manchester (purchased secretly without her husband’s knowledge) very nearly ready for her first round of house guests. It is her heart that gives out. It seems to me that the secrecy of her acquisition and her untimely death, can be read as the irresolution of her struggle to strike a balance between her conflicting duties and her own needs. This cluster of synchronic tensions around the need for married women to prioritise duties, while their home duties are given unquestionable priority over all others, marks a locus for diachronic change in Providence centred moralities.

We have also identified a cluster of tensions in Spurgeon’s conception of Providence around God being perfectly just and God electing certain individuals for salvation while inexorably condemning other individuals to eternal punishment—regardless of anyone’s character or actions. We have noted that Spurgeon is aware that others balk at this tension and, albeit unconvincingly, makes an effort to argue his way around it. On a practical level, however, these tensions in what is essentially Spurgeon’s theology seem to have little real impact on his workaday morality—unlike a similar tension in the theology of Bulstrode in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*. It seems to me that these tensions in Spurgeon’s conception of Providence may well identify a locus for diachronic change in Calvinist conceptions of Providence more generally. But they more worryingly bespeak an impetus toward a more Bulstrode-like morality by which the individual sees themselves (as one of God’s elect) at the centre of Providence, and makes their own assumptions about who else may, or may not, be one of the elect—often on the basis of their own self-interest. In this way, an individual who believes themselves to be one of the elect may anticipate God’s punishment of an adversary by withholding any sympathy or support which may foster their adversary’s redemption—because they see their adversary not as their fellow in want of redemption but merely as a force to be reckoned with. Certainly,

this appears to be the danger George Eliot has in mind when she draws Bulstrode—self-righteous, self-interested and yet sincere—going to bed and sleeping in gratitude to Providence because his nemesis, the blackmailing drunkard Raffles, is dying.

Finally, we have found that all of our protagonists with a Providence centred conception of moral causation acknowledge an inherent tension in the concept of an unerring Providence realised by the willed efforts of often erring individuals. Further, it is apparent to all that, despite Providence, bad things can and do happen. We have noted their various efforts to accommodate this tension. Whewell has an unflinching belief in unerring Providence and trusts to better understanding in the future to resolve this tension, knowing that all human understanding develops iteratively, over time. Gaskell, too, trusts to the future, but at times she very nearly despairs of unerring Providence—hoping for better understanding in the life beyond. Dickens accepts that Providence is frustrated by erring individuals in this world, but he nevertheless looks to its complete fulfilment in the world beyond. Both Newman and Spurgeon have a heightened sense of both the specificity of unerring Providence and the sinfulness of the individual. So, for them, the tension between unerring Providence and the erring individual is constant and often at fever pitch—life being a perpetually raging battle between good and evil, in both the world and the individual soul. Both Newman and Spurgeon are dogmatic—Newman anxiously and Spurgeon stubbornly. Each trusts to the sovereignty of God’s Providence, and hold on tight.

For Mill, the tension between an unerring Providence and the bad things that happen is insurmountable. It is because there is so much evil in the world that Mill denies the existence of a benevolent providence altogether. And, it seems to me, this tension around unerring Providence, often erring individuals and bad things happening is the driver for some of the key differences between the more traditional conceptions of Providence held by Whewell, Dickens, Newman, Gaskell, and Spurgeon and the conceptions of providence held by Green, Arnold and George Eliot. Further, by modifying their conception of providence, each of Green, Arnold and George Eliot reach an accommodation between unerring providence, often erring individuals and bad things happening.

For Green, the bad things that happen are failures; mistakes; self-defeating shortcuts to pleasure which erring individuals misidentify as their own good. And, for Green, the identity of consciousness between the perfected God and the yet to be perfected individual must eventually give rise to the individual’s consciousness of

these failures, and to remorse and despair, which, in time, brings the erring individual to righteousness. In this way, the erring individual's failures, and the bad things that consequently happen, are part of the process of the self-realisation of the individual; part of the process of unerring providence.

For Arnold, providence is a forward movement effected by the continuous cycle of the two forces that would, in counterpoise, perfect us—Hellenism (the creative freedom of spontaneity, effected by culture) and Hebraism (the fettering control of the consciousness of sin, effected by religion). For Arnold, the erring individual is out of balance—suffering a surfeit of one impulse and the want of the other. And, for Arnold, it is in the nature of things that, in time, the ascendancy of Hebraism will give way to Hellenism, and the subsequent ascendancy of Hellenism will, in turn, give way to Hebraism, and this oscillating interplay will, over time—over a very long time—approach more and more nearly that counterpoise between Hebraism and Hellenism by which humanity will realise its perfection. In this way, for Arnold, the erring individual, rather than frustrating providence, is the inevitable product of its process.

George Eliot is more prosaic. For her, the erring individual warrants our sympathetic understanding and acceptance. The bad things that happen are to be regretted but, nevertheless, they are the means by which we experience the suffering that is essential for sympathy; essential for our moral growth. In this way, for George Eliot, the erring individual is the occasion for effecting, rather than frustrating, providence.

So, this cluster of synchronic tensions in the more traditional conceptions of Providence held by some of our protagonists acts as a locus for diachronic change—with each of Green, Arnold and George Eliot addressing the tension around unerring providence, erring individuals and the bad things that happen, by developing modified conceptions of providence that accommodate these tensions by incorporating them, in one way or another, into the process of providence.

Further, Arnold, Green and George Eliot, by reinterpreting providence in terms of the realisation of human perfection, eternal consciousness or sympathetic community, each retain (or for George Eliot, re-establish after a brief hiatus) spiritual meaning, moral purpose and moral duties grounded in a providence. It seems to me that this willingness, if not determination, to retain a conception of providence, albeit in a radically modified form, bespeaks in these three protagonists, who look beyond

Providence, an enduring need for spiritual meaning; an enduring affinity with Houghton's will to believe.

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