

BUTLER AS A THEOLOGIAN.

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It appears to me that Butler's work as a moralist must be ranked extremely high. The writer with whom one naturally compares him in this respect is Kant, and I do not think that he suffers by comparison with the great German thinker. As a pure metaphysician Kant is, of course, unrivalled; but it seems to me that in ethics Butler has stated all that is valuable in Kant's teaching with much greater clearness and far less paradox and pedantry. Now the resemblance between these two great men goes further than this. Kant was interested in establishing a kind of moral theology, and Butler in the *Analogy* is busied with the same task. Here, I think, Butler has been definitely more successful than Kant, and I propose in this paper to give a sketch and some criticisms of his moral theology.

We must first clearly understand how the problem presented itself to Butler, and what is his general line of argument. Every argument presupposes a certain amount of common ground between the two parties; they must agree in admitting certain premises, or there is no possibility of one ever convincing the other of anything. When A argues with B, he takes as a premise something which B already grants, and he tries to prove to B by principles of reasoning which B accepts that certain consequences which B had not before admitted follow from this premise. So the first question to ask is: "With whom is Butler arguing in the *Analogy*, and how much does he assume as common ground between them and him?"

The answer is that he is not arguing with atheists, but with Deists. He assumes that his opponents accept the view that the world is due to an intelligent author. They might have reached the conclusion that the present order of nature had a First Cause by considering that an infinite series of causes, stretching back endlessly into the past, is impossible, *i.e.* by

a form of the Cosmological Argument. And they might have reached the view that this Cause is an intelligent, active being from the traces of order and apparent design which we find in the present condition of nature; *i.e.* by the Argument from Design. Now this was a perfectly fair and reasonable assumption for Butler to make. In his time there were hardly any atheists of the least importance, and very few people holding views which we should call agnostic. Christians, and practically all non-Christians, were agreed that nature has a First Cause, and that this First Cause is intelligent. We may therefore take it that the arguments in the *Analogy* are directed against the Deists, and that the Deists would have granted the premise which Butler assumes, *viz.* that nature is due to an intelligent author. A modern writer would need to start with a much less sweeping premise. The Cosmological Argument has been completely exploded since Butler's time by Kant; and the Argument from Design, though not absolutely exploded, has been greatly damaged by the criticisms of Kant and Hume. Many people would add that it has been still further weakened by the theory of evolution by natural selection, which claims to account for the appearance of design in nature by the operation of purely random and unintelligent factors. But this is a much more debatable question, for the theory of evolution by natural selection has been so much blown upon in late years that it has ceased to be a very formidable weapon. Anyhow, we must remember that, even if Butler's arguments ought to have persuaded the Deists, it does not follow that they ought to persuade us; because the Deists were prepared to grant him more than we could be expected to do after the criticisms of Kant and Hume. So, to be fair to Butler, we must put ourselves back into the position of an eighteenth-century Deist.

The next point to consider is the differences between Butler and the Deists. The Deists admitted an intelligent author of nature, but they refused to go farther. Butler enumerates what he considers to be the essential doctrines of natural religion, and he then adds the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, which he admits could only be known, if at all, by special revelation. Natural religion holds that there is a future life in which we shall be rewarded or punished for our actions in this life, and that the present is a state of probation for the future. This much some of the Deists might have admitted, but many of them would not. The further doctrines, characteristic of Christianity, which can

only be known by revelation, are that the world was in a state of apostacy and moral ruin, and that this gave rise to a special interposition of Providence. This interposition was a scheme carried on through the mediation of a divine person for the recovery of the world, and it was attested by miracles. Lastly, Butler says, it must be admitted that this scheme contains much that is strange and unexpected; it has not been revealed to every one, nor with the strongest possible evidence to anyone. At most we can say that it has been revealed to such persons and with such a degree of evidence as God thought fit. Now these characteristically Christian doctrines the Deists rejected, and one of their strongest reasons for doing so was these very peculiarities which Butler so honestly admits. The Deists said that there is much in Christianity which is unreasonable and unintelligible, and they added that God would surely have made this important revelation common to everyone and perfectly clear to all mankind. So they concluded that the characteristic doctrines of Christianity are probably not true, and that it is almost certain that the Christian scheme is not a revelation from God but an invention of men.

We are now clear about the points of agreement and the points of difference between Butler and the Deists. We must now see what it was that Butler wanted to prove, and how he proposed to prove it. He wanted to prove to the Deists that, if they granted that the order of nature is due to an intelligent being, they could not consistently stop at that conclusion. A careful study of the nature and situation of men must throw some light on the nature of God and his ways of working, since the Deists admitted that man and his environment were created by God. Butler thinks that this more careful study will make it highly probable that there is a future life, that we shall be rewarded and punished in it for what we have done here, and that the present life is a state of trial and of education for the future. Hence, he says, a consistent Deist ought to attach a very considerable weight to the doctrines of natural religion. This position is worked out in the first part of the *Analogy*, and it is with this that I shall mainly deal. In the second part, Butler goes on to consider specifically Christian doctrines and the objections which Deists made to them and to the kind of evidence which was offered for them. His argument here is that from what we know of God's workings in the part of his creation which is open to our inspection, it is quite likely that there would be a special revelation, and almost certain

that, *if* there were one, it would contain much that would seem surprising and unreasonable to us. He then goes further into detail, and tries to show that the points to which the Deists specially objected in Christianity itself and in the evidence for it, as showing that it could not be due to God, have close analogues in the ordinary course of nature which is admitted to be due to God.

The reasoning is thus an argument by analogy; and, as such, it does not profess to establish more than a probability. But, in the first place, all the arguments which we use in the natural sciences also depend on analogies and give rise only to probabilities. Our only ground for thinking that the next piece of bread which we eat will nourish and not poison us is that it is like other things which we have eaten in the past which nourished and did not poison us. Secondly, as Butler says, "probability is the guide of life." When we must act in one way or another, and nothing better than probability can be got, it is reasonable to act on the strongest available probability as if it were certainly true, no matter how small it may be in itself or how little it may exceed the probabilities of the other alternatives which are open to us. Suppose that a man were in a burning house and that he had the alternatives of escaping by the door or by the window. It might be that the likelihood of escaping by either means was extremely small. And it might be that there was only a very slightly better chance of escaping by the window than by the door. Nevertheless we should deem him mad if he did not use every effort to escape by the window under such circumstances. Similarly, it must be true either that vice will be punished in the next life or that it will not. We must act on one alternative or the other. And, if it be in the least more likely that it will be punished than that it will not, we ought to act as if it certainly will be.

The gist of Butler's arguments about revealed religion is this. If nature and revelation be the work of one author, we should expect to find resemblances between them. The Deist admits that nature is due to an intelligent author, and yet he must grant that there is much in it which seems to us strange and unintelligible. It is therefore inconsistent in him to hold that the strange and unintelligible features in Christianity show that it cannot be due to God. On the contrary, if we find close analogies between the difficulties in the Christian scheme and the difficulties in the ordinary course of nature, this will be a ground for thinking that the Christian religion and the course of nature proceed from the

same source. Butler is one of the very few philosophers and theologians who have consented to put their conclusions in terms of probability. It seems to me to be a great merit in him and greatly to strengthen his case. It is pretty certain that nothing more than probability can be reached on such subjects, and it is both wiser and more honest to admit this at the very beginning than to pretend to give knock-down proofs which are sure to be fallacious. On the other hand, it does make his arguments more difficult to test. We can see that Butler's reasoning does give *some* probability to his conclusions, but it is always extremely hard to say *how much*. In particular, it is often hard to tell whether the argument makes the conclusions more probable than not.

Before going into detail I will make some general remarks on the type of argument by which Butler tries to show that it is probable that nature and the Christian scheme are the works of a common author.

1. The same author sometimes writes two books in very different styles. There is very little likeness between *The Old Wives' Tale* and *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, though both are by Arnold Bennett. Hence, even if the Christian scheme had not been in the least analogous to the course of nature, they might have had a common source. Suppose, now, that there had been no difficulties in the Christian scheme. I can quite well imagine a theologian pointing out, as I have just done, that this is compatible with a common author of nature and of Christianity. And I can quite well imagine him going on to argue that the clearness of the Christian scheme, as compared with the perplexities of the order of nature, shows that here the Divine Architect is working in a medium best suited to his hand. Thus, whether Christianity had contained difficulties and perplexities or had been pellucidly intelligible, the argument from analogy would have been equally ready to deal with the situation. "*Si dixeris 'æstuo,' sudat.*" I cannot help feeling that an argument which is so very accommodating must be regarded with a certain amount of suspicion.

2. Books may be very much alike and yet written by different authors. Hence a likeness between Christianity and the course of nature is consistent with their having different sources. And if a large part of the analogy consists in there being obscurities and difficulties in the books it becomes a very weak argument for identity of authorship. Hegel's *Logic*, Browning's *Sordello*, and Henry James's *Golden Bowl* all resemble each other in being extremely obscure in parts,

but they all have different authors. If somebody said to me, "This book is obscure, therefore it cannot be by Henry James"; it would be a sufficient answer to say, "You admit that Henry James wrote the *Golden Bowl*, and there are certainly very obscure passages in that." But, if I were to go on to say, "The very fact that this book is obscure makes it likely that Henry James wrote it," I should be using an extremely weak argument. I think, therefore, that we may fairly say that only positive analogies which go into considerable detail can be used to render common authorship probable. Analogies on negative points, such as difficulty and obscurity, will suffice to refute a man who says that common authorship is impossible, but they will not appreciably add to the probability of common authorship. Now, Butler does try to carry the positive analogies between religion and the order of nature into considerable detail, and this is the strength of his book. And he does in the main use the analogies in negative points only to refute objections to common authorship, and not to make it positively probable. But I think that he does sometimes fall into the mistake which I have been pointing out.

3. Suppose we did find very close analogies between two books, at least three explanations would be open to us. One would be that they were written by the same man. Another would be that there were two authors, and that one of them had formed his style by reading the works of the other. A third would be that there were two authors who had been brought up in the same circle and had been greatly influenced by it and perhaps by each other. Now Butler considers only the first alternative. But the Deists might certainly have taken the second. They might have said, "We admit that God made man in his own image. Therefore men's minds will work on somewhat the same lines as God's. And, again, the only materials which men have to work with are created by God. It is therefore not unlikely that any man-made fiction will bear some likeness to the order of nature which was made directly by God." So the analogy between the order of nature and the scheme of Christianity would be compatible with the view that God made nature and man, and that man invented Christianity. Man would then be like an inferior writer who had lived all his life in the house of a great author or had been that author's amanuensis and had read nothing but his works. The third alternative is one which the Deists would not have admitted, but which is theoretically possible. There might be a society of gods

who lived together and influenced each other. One of these might have created men and the rest of nature. Others of them might have revealed various schemes of religion to men. Under these circumstances we should expect to find certain analogies between all these schemes and the course of nature. And this is what we do find. As the analogy could thus be explained in several alternative ways beside the one which Butler mentions, the probability of the particular explanation to which Butler confines himself is not rendered so great by the analogy as he supposed.

So much by way of general criticism. We will now consider the special analogies by which Butler thought that a Deist ought to be persuaded to ascribe a high probability to the doctrines of natural religion as distinct from the specific doctrines of Christianity. He starts by considering the arguments for a future life, which he rightly holds to be an absolutely essential doctrine of religion. His argument may be put as follows. If something exists now we do not need any special reason to hold that it will go on existing. The line which we always take is that anything which exists now will go on existing unless there be some positive cause to stop it. Now it is commonly thought that the dissolution of the body is a positive cause which is likely to put an end to the mind. Therefore, if we could show that there is no reason to believe that the dissolution of the body will put an end to the mind, we may assume that the mind will survive the death of the body. He then tries to show that there *is* no reason to expect that the break up of the body will stop the mind. The argument therefore raises two questions: (1) Is it true that the mere fact that a thing *has* existed is a sufficient reason for expecting that it *will* exist unless there be something positive to stop it? And (2) is it true that there is no reason to think that the death of the body is likely to put an end to the mind?

1. Butler's first premise is no doubt plausible. If we leave a chair in our rooms we do expect to find it there when we come back. We do not want any explanation of its still being there; we should only want an explanation if we found that it had vanished. It is, then, true of material objects that we expect them to go on existing unless there be some positive cause to destroy them. The question is: Is this a general rule which can be applied straightaway to minds, or is it peculiar to material objects? The answer seems to me to be that it is not a general rule. If there were a noise going on or a light burning when we went away we

should not be the least surprised to find that it had stopped when we came back. We expect chairs and tables to go on existing if no special cause arises to destroy them, because we have so constantly found this to be true by experience. We do not expect this of lights and noises, because we have so often seen lights go out from mere lack of oil or found that noises cease from the mere stoppage of some movement. In fact there is no general rule on the subject; some things go on unless there be some positive cause to stop them, others stop unless there be some positive cause to keep them going; and we simply have to learn from experience which rule holds for each particular class of objects.

2. Butler's argument to prove that there is no reason to think that the destruction of the body would put an end to the mind is based partly on facts about human beings and partly on analogies with animal life.

(a) He points out that the matter of our bodies is constantly changing without detriment to our minds. He shows that limbs, eyes, etc., may be lost without interfering with our powers of thinking and reasoning, and that people who are dying of long and deep-seated diseases may be perfectly conscious and mentally active up to the end. All this is quite true; but it only shows that *many* parts of our bodies can be dispensed with *separately* without detriment to our minds. It is not safe to conclude from such facts either (α) that there is *no* part of our bodies which is indispensable to the existence of our minds, or (β) that all parts of our bodies could be destroyed *together* without detriment to our minds. Each of our meals can be dispensed with separately, but it would be rash to conclude that all of them could be dispensed with together. And, again, it does seem that, whilst our eyes, ears, noses, etc., are merely instruments which the mind uses, there is one part of our body which is not a mere instrument of the mind, but is an essential condition of its existence. This is, of course, the brain. Butler is quite right in saying that a man can have visual experiences in dreams after he has lost his eyes, and therefore that the eye is a mere instrument. But we have no reason to think that he could have visual experiences if a certain part of his brain were destroyed. The plain fact is that, so far as we know, our characters and our mental powers vary in life with the state of our brains, and that after our brains are destroyed all signs of mental action cease. This certainly suggests very strongly, though it does not conclusively prove, that our minds depend for their existence and functioning on the substantial integrity

of our brains. The only possible ground for holding any other view would be phenomena which point to the post-humous action of minds. I think that there are abnormal phenomena, dealt with by the Society for Psychical Research, which in some measure suggest this view. But, apart from such phenomena, I cannot see the slightest ground for thinking that the mind survives the destruction of the brain; and of course such phenomena are extremely ambiguous, and may be susceptible of many other explanations.

(b) The analogies from animals by which Butler tries to support his argument are drawn from the transformation of insect life, such as the change of caterpillars into butterflies. Of course the old illustration which St Paul uses of the seed dying and rising again with a new body as wheat is of the same nature. Now I am not inclined to despise such analogies. If we had positive reason to think that the mind does survive the death of the visible body, I think that such analogies would really be helpful as suggesting the way in which this may happen. But it does not seem to me that, in themselves, they add any probability to the view that the mind survives bodily death. There are just two remarks which I must make about these analogies.

(a) They suggest that, if we survive, we do not do so as disembodied spirits, but with some kind of body. This body might of course not be perceptible to men's senses under normal conditions; and it might well be that even our present body is more than meets the eye. There are certain abnormal phenomena, for which tolerably decent evidence is slowly accumulating, which seem to suggest such a view. I allude of course to alleged cases of materialisation and telekinesis. I understand that the orthodox Christian doctrine is that we have bodies of some kind after death; and it seems to me that, if we survive at all, it is probable that the orthodox doctrine is here right.

(β) If we consider the analogy with caterpillars and seeds more carefully, I think it suggests something which Butler would not have welcomed. Most seeds do not grow into plants and most caterpillars never become butterflies. If we are going to use this analogy at all, we must use it consistently. And it seems to suggest that, if *any* men survive and put on a glorified body, probably only a small minority do so. There may well be accidents in the spiritual world as well as in the world of visible nature. And I think it may fairly be argued that, to all appearance, there are many men who are far less worth preserving than some cats and dogs and horses.

I have spent some time over Butler's arguments for survival, because all the rest of the book presupposes this doctrine. I have tried to show that analogies from the ordinary course of nature do not render survival probable, though they do suggest the *modus operandi* of survival, if it should be a fact. But I do think that, when certain abnormal phenomena are taken into account, survival with a different kind of body acquires a small but appreciable probability. The rarity of the phenomena, the difficulty of avoiding fraud, and the possibility of alternative explanations, prevent me from putting this probability at all high. But I do think that it is high enough to deserve serious consideration in practice. And this, after all, is all that Butler asks us to accept.

Assuming that there is a future life, Butler proceeds to argue by analogy that it is probable that our position in it will depend largely on our actions here and now. It is admitted by the Deists that the present world is made by God. Now in the present life happiness and misery are, to a large extent, in our own hands. We cannot be made happy without our own co-operation, and we always have it in our power to make ourselves wretched in this life by vice or folly. In particular, mistakes in early life often bring on us the greatest misery in the form of poverty and disease in our later years. And we often find that these consequences follow after a long interval of wealth and health. Moreover they may attack a man who has forgotten or sincerely repented his past mistakes and faults. It is evident, then, that in this life our happiness and misery lie largely in our own hands; that the punishment of early vice and folly may be long delayed, and therefore that apparent immunity is no guarantee against final wretchedness; and that sincere repentance may be quite unavailing. If God made the present order of nature, these are the principles on which he governs it. It is reasonable to suppose that he governs the future life on the same general principles. If so, we may anticipate that folly and wickedness in this life will be followed by misery in the next, just as folly and wickedness in youth tend to be followed by poverty and disease in old age. And since health and prosperity over a long period are no guarantee against ruin at the end of life, so the sinner who lives and dies in prosperity has no ground for thinking that God has forgotten him and will not punish him at last. We need not suppose, Butler says, that God interferes in any irregular or miraculous way to punish faults in this world

by misery in the next. Just as poverty and disease in old age follow by general laws from early folly and wickedness, so misery in the next life may follow by natural laws from folly and wickedness in this one.

In the main Butler's argument seems to me to be perfectly sound, but there are certain points which need special notice. If we consider the miseries which men suffer in this life we shall notice that, besides those which may fairly be regarded as punishments of their own vices, there are also the following kinds: (1) There is some misery which has no discoverable connection with vice or folly at all. It is just pure unavoidable misfortune. (2) Misery which is connected with human vice and folly seems often to fall more heavily on quite innocent persons (such as a man's wife and children) than on the actual agent. (3) In this world it would seem that ignorance is punished more heavily than anything else. A careful and scientific debauchee may go on sinning to a green old age with very little damage to his health or pocket. An ignorant youth may do himself great and lasting harm by a few acts of folly which may not indicate any great moral depravity. Of course we must admit that the careful sinner at least exhibits the virtues of prudence and intelligence, and that these are valuable qualities. Again, ignorance is a great evil, even when it is not a moral fault. We can well imagine that God would wish to give men the strongest possible motives for not remaining ignorant; and in view of the intellectual laziness of mankind this can only be done by punishing ignorance with frightful severity. In the next life the careful sinner may still be punished, and the innocent youth may have learnt by bitter experience the propriety of looking before he leaps. Still, when all these qualifications are made, I think it must be admitted that, although in this life there is a rough coincidence between vice and misery, yet misery is not distributed with any near approach to what we should consider justice. And, if analogy with this life be our only means of judging God's probable principles of action in the next, we have no right to expect a nearer approximation to justice in the future than we find in the present.

Butler considers such questions in rather greater detail when he asks how far we can regard God as a *moral* governor, *i.e.* as one who favours virtue and disapproves of vice. He points out that we are moral beings, and that the societies which men have formed and the laws which these societies have made are natural products. It is therefore not true to

say that nature is indifferent to right and wrong, unless you put man in an unreal opposition to the rest of nature. It is true that nature, apart from man, seems morally indifferent ; but, as Butler would put it, God created men as well as the rest of nature, and his character must be learned by studying the whole of his creation and not simply the non-human part of it. We could put the same point to-day by saying that, whatever else man may be, he is certainly a product of natural processes ; and that in judging nature we must remember that it has produced people who approve of virtue, disapprove of vice, and are capable in some degree of guiding their actions by their judgments of approval and disapproval.

Now, Butler says, it is not true even in this world that vice as such has any tendency to make for happiness or prosperity. And it is true that virtue (which of course includes prudence) has this tendency. Suppose an equal number of virtuous and of vicious persons, and suppose that the virtuous people have time to recognise each other and to join together ; it is practically certain that in the long run they would completely control the rest. Justice, truthfulness, prudence, kindness, and temperance do tend to bind their possessors together and to make them into a strong society. And the opposite characteristics have no such tendency. This seems to me to be perfectly true. Butler draws a very illuminating comparison between virtue and reason in this respect. No one can doubt that rational beings are, as such, stronger than irrational ones. Of course, if the rational beings were very few, if they could not recognise each other, and if they were surrounded by a vast majority of irrational beings of much greater bodily strength, they might be killed off. But, given anything like equality of numbers and anything like a chance to co-operate, it is certain that they would in the end control all the irrational beings ; as man has gradually controlled all other animals, though so much weaker in body than many of them.

The same is true of virtue and vice. In particular cases the vicious may so outnumber the virtuous, and the latter may be so isolated and thus unable to recognise each other or to co-operate, that they will be wiped out. Again, at any given time a few vicious men may make themselves more prosperous than any virtuous man, by trading on the follies of those whose virtues keep an organised society in being. But I think that we can safely say that whenever vice flourishes it does so by being parasitic on virtue. The success of a swindling company-promoter presupposes a

society in which honesty is so common that a large number of people will be ready to believe his prospectuses. And the analogy can be carried farther. Perfectly healthy plants are rarely attacked by parasites, and a perfectly virtuous society would lack that taint of cupidity and muddle-headedness which gives the swindler his chance.

Butler fully admits how greatly the intrinsic tendency of virtue has been hampered in the course of history, through the imperfect virtue of all actual men and the difficulty which virtuous people have in recognising and co-operating with each other. But exactly the same may be said of reason. There must have been long ages throughout which it was touch and go whether men would survive at all, and when the suggestion that they would some day control all the other inhabitants of the earth would have seemed ridiculous. If, then, God made the world and its inhabitants, we may conclude with reasonable probability that he governs the future life on the same principles. And since we see virtue here as a principle prevailing slowly and with difficulty against obstacles, we may reasonably suppose that in the indefinite duration of the future life it will gradually come to exercise its full natural strength. The virtuous man may therefore feel pretty confident that he is co-operating with God and that he is on the winning side, though that side may not win without a hard struggle carried far beyond the narrow bounds of earthly life.

There is one point in this argument of Butler's which needs further elucidation. I have no doubt that he is right in saying that virtue and reason have, on the whole, been favoured in the past; and that it is plausible to suppose that, in spite of many set-backs, they will prevail still more in the future. But the question arises: What future? Might not this argument simply suggest that future generations on earth would be likely in the long run to be increasingly virtuous and rational? Butler unhesitatingly applies this argument to the future of the individual in the next world. What would he say to a person who accepted the argument, but applied it to the future of the race in this world? As Butler does not deal with this question, I can only try to answer it for him. Whether he would accept my answer I do not know. In the first place, I should say that there was no inconsistency in applying the argument both to the future life of the individual, assuming that he has one, and to the future life of the race on earth. If God favours virtue at all he may let its natural tendency work out in both

directions. But, secondly, I should say that the whole notion of indefinite future progress on earth by the race is absurd. It is as certain as anything well can be that, after a time, conditions on earth will become less and less favourable to humanity, and that finally the race will die out in the cold of a more than arctic winter, unless some cosmic disaster should destroy it suddenly before that time. No doubt, at every stage of this decline, temperance, prudence, justice, truthfulness, and kindness will be more favourable to racial survival than their opposites. But in the end they will not secure survival for the race, and with its death they will die out on earth. If therefore the past history of humanity really does give us reason to think that God favours virtue and means to secure its fuller and fuller triumph, it is quite useless to expect this to be realised in the future life of mankind on earth. It will either be secured in another and wholly different order of being or it will not be secured at all; and the sooner we recognise this fact and cease to delude ourselves with talk of "a good time coming" the better it will be for everybody.

Butler next tries to see how far the situation in which we are placed in this world can be reconciled with the view that the Creator is a benevolent being who governs the world with justice. I have already pointed out certain respects in which the appearances are against this view. Butler readily admits that it might seem that mankind is placed in a needlessly dangerous situation, and that many people go hopelessly astray through their own unavoidable ignorance or the wickedness of others. He begins by pointing out that it is not of the least use to suggest that God could easily have managed things better; we do not know what his full intentions are, and we have no idea what the full consequences of a different course of action by God would have been. If he had acted otherwise we might have been out of the frying-pan into the fire. Here Butler is obviously right. Assuming that there is a God, it is as absurd for us to criticise his actions as it is for an ordinary newspaper reader to criticise the actions of a commander-in-chief in a great campaign. We have neither the relevant information nor the necessary faculties for passing any sensible judgment on such matters. But what we can do, according to Butler, is this. We can look carefully at the actual situation in which God has placed man, and see whether we cannot detect the reasons which may have guided God. A man who cannot profitably criticise a general, or suggest an alternative plan of campaign

to him, may be able afterwards with a map to guess why he made some of the moves which he did make.

Now, if we look at the actual situation of man, it seems likely that it is meant as a training-ground for his future life. And, if we look at the matter in this light, we shall find that a good deal of the paradox and apparent injustice of man's situation vanishes. We find that people are not born into the world with complete knowledge or fully developed faculties. They have to go through a long course of training and experience before they are ready to live in the world on their own resources. Suppose, then, that we compare infancy and maturity with this world and the next. It may be that, just as we need a long training to be ready to live fully in this world, so we need a long training to make us ready for the next. And it may be that in the whole of this life we are simply exercising the faculties which we shall need in the future life. Now, we do find that all our active powers are developed and strengthened by practice, and this is as true of our moral activities as of our bodily and intellectual ones. If a man is to act rightly he must first be properly trained, and then he must be exposed to difficulties and temptations. In proportion as he struggles with these and overcomes them, his conscience is strengthened and he forms habits of right action. It is quite impossible for us to see how the same result could be brought about in any other way.

Now, Butler says, it will always be necessary for us to be able to resist temptation, because we shall always be liable to it from our very nature. Man consists of a set of particular propensities under the control of the more general principles of self-love and benevolence, which are in turn subject to the supreme principle of conscience. Presumably he will be built on the same general plan in the next world. Now, such a being is always liable to go wrong, even if he starts with all these principles and propensities in exactly the right relative strengths. For circumstances are practically sure to arise sooner or later in which there are special opportunities for gratifying some of these impulses and special difficulties in gratifying others. Thus there will be a tendency for the former to grow at the expense of the latter. Hence a being like man cannot keep right, even if he start right, unless the principle of conscience be strengthened and formed into a habit. And the only way in which this seems to be possible is by its constant exercise in the face of difficulties and temptations. It may be that anyone who really used

his opportunities in this world would so have strengthened his conscience and so have impressed virtuous habits on himself that in the next life it would be practically impossible for him to go wrong. And it is reasonable to suppose that this world is an indispensable training-ground in which we form our characters for the next life.

Butler freely admits that most people do not use the dangers and temptations of this world for any such purpose, and he does not pretend that his theory will account for all the apparently needless evil in the world. He says that the waste of moral agents through their own actions is more distressing but not more startling than the waste of seeds and of young animals. Yet the latter is a fact of nature, and must therefore, on the Deistic hypothesis, be somehow consistent with the wisdom and benevolence of God.

I think that there is no doubt that, if a future life be admitted, the view that this world is a training-ground for souls becomes distinctly plausible. And I think that there is no doubt that such a view will justify a good deal, though by no means all, of the apparent injustice in this world. It is easy to condemn the creation if it be regarded simply as an institution for providing men with "a good time"; from that point of view it is quite obviously a complete failure. Man is clearly not adapted for enjoying, nor nature for providing, any very intense or lasting happiness. But it may well be that God does not think that happiness, as such, is particularly valuable or important; and that he thinks the existence of beings who are intelligent, self-controlled, kindly, and just is much better worth aiming at. And it may well be that even he cannot produce such people except by exposing every one to dangers and temptations which will certainly be fatal to many. There is no reason to suppose that God can make omelettes without breaking eggs, any more than we can. The worst that we can say is that it looks to us, who are largely ignorant of the conditions, as if an immense number of eggs were broken in proportion to the output of omelettes.

Butler next raises the question whether any of the arguments which have been used or the conclusions which have been reached would be invalidated if it could be shown that everything that exists and every event that happens does so "by necessity." This is an extremely brilliant chapter which remorselessly exposes many common fallacies. Butler puts his argument in the following way:—Suppose it to be true that everything that exists and happens does

so of necessity, this must be compatible with all the facts that we can actually observe around us. Now, it is perfectly certain that the world contains many things, such as books, bridges, watches, etc., which would not have existed unless human beings had made plans and had put them into action. If the doctrine of necessity be inconsistent with such facts, it must be false. But if it be consistent with them, it can have nothing to say against the Argument from Design. If necessity be compatible with the fact that a watch or a house needs an intelligent designer, it cannot possibly affect the argument that the order and teleology in nature require an intelligent author to explain them. All that the doctrine of necessity could tell us would be that God acted from necessity and not from free-will in designing and creating the world. Thus the fundamental assumption which Butler and the Deists share in common is logically unaffected by the doctrine of necessity.

The question might still be raised whether the doctrine of necessity is consistent with the view that we shall be rewarded or punished in the next world for our actions in this. To this Butler answers that, whether our actions be free or completely determined, we are as a matter of fact praised, blamed, punished, and rewarded for them in this world by our fellow-men. If we are necessitated to commit murder it is equally true that our fellow-men are necessitated to disapprove of murder and to show their disapproval practically by hanging us. Necessity, if true at all, is therefore compatible with the existence of beings who approve and disapprove of our actions and reward or punish us for them. The doctrine of necessity is therefore perfectly consistent with the expectation that God will reward and punish us in the next world. If a determinist thought that he could commit murder with impunity in this life, because all actions are rigidly determined, he would very soon find that he was mistaken. And he is just as likely to be mistaken if he thinks that, because all his actions are rigidly determined, they will not be punished in the next life. If he finds himself in Hell it will be a poor consolation to know that God could not help sending him there.

Lastly, we might raise the question: Granted that determinism is compatible with the view that the world was created by an intelligent being and that it is governed by this being through rewards and punishments, is it consistent with the *character* which religion ascribes to this being? Would it be compatible with the justice or the

benevolence of God to punish us for acts which are completely determined? To this Butler answers by taking a concrete example from human life. We are inclined to say that if a murderer's action be completely determined, no blame attaches to him and therefore it is unjust to punish him. Now, although it seems plausible to talk in this way, it is certainly inconsistent. If determinism be true, the judge is as completely determined in condemning the prisoner as the prisoner was in committing the murder. Either the fact that actions are completely determined exonerates both parties or it is irrelevant to the question of right and wrong. If it exonerates the prisoner for his murder it equally exonerates the judge for his sentence. If it does not exonerate the prisoner for his murder we cannot say that it makes the judge unjust in punishing the murderer. This argument is I think, perfectly conclusive. It shows that the question of determinism or free-will is wholly irrelevant to the question of the justice of punishment. It also shows how extremely difficult it is to be a consistent determinist. In the example the determinist was tacitly assuming that the judge's actions were free whilst the prisoner's were completely determined. Thus I think that Butler has fully proved his point that his arguments and conclusions are wholly unaffected by any form of determinism which is not flagrantly inconsistent with observable facts.

Butler ends the first part of his *Analogy* by arguing that it is likely that what we see of God's moral government is only a very small fragment of a much bigger and closely interwoven scheme, which we cannot grasp as a whole. It is obviously true that external nature forms a scheme of this kind. We fully admit that we only understand a very small part of nature and that we have unravelled only a few of its laws. But we do not doubt for a moment that nature as a whole forms one vast system in which everything is connected, directly or indirectly, with everything else. If we find some natural phenomenon, which we do not understand and which we cannot connect with anything else in nature by known laws, we never suppose for a moment that it really is isolated or that it really is irregular. We always assume that, if we knew more, we should be able to place it in the whole system of nature and see its connections with the rest. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that God's actions in the moral world are not isolated, but form parts of a wider scheme which, as a whole, is beyond our ken. Now, just as the assumption about nature leads us to see that events

may well be regular and law-abiding although they look irregular, so the parallel assumption about the moral world leads us to see that what looks like injustice on God's part may not really be so. If we could see the whole bearing of his apparently arbitrary actions we might recognise that they are perfectly justifiable. In the natural world we often find that trivial and undesirable events bring about important and valuable consequences, and that these consequences could not have been got in any other way. This may be true in the moral world too. It may be simply impossible for virtue to be developed without temptation and suffering; and to say that God might have produced the one without the other may be like saying that he could have made a closed rectilinear figure with only two sides.

Again, it looks as if God governed the moral world by general laws, as he certainly governs the natural world. Now, general laws necessarily involve hardships in particular cases. But we can see many advantages which come of general laws, and we cannot be sure that these do not more than balance the disadvantages. If we say that God might have dealt with the hard cases by special miracles, we must remember that one obvious disadvantage would have arisen, viz. general uncertainty leading to idleness and carelessness. And it is certain that the effects of such miraculous interventions could not be confined to the particular evils which they were meant to cope with. The farther and remoter consequences of such interventions might be so bad as to make them highly undesirable.

In conclusion I must say that it does seem to me that Butler really has established a case for the characteristic doctrines of natural religion, on the assumptions with which he starts. The two chief points of criticism are (1) that he accepts without question the traditional arguments for the view that the world has been created by an intelligent being, and (2) that his arguments for survival of bodily death are weak. We might end by raising the question: How far do these two factors affect his conclusions? As regards the first, I think that his arguments and conclusions could fairly easily be restated in a non-theistic form. Suppose we simply say that the world as known to us has developed in complexity according to natural laws from earlier and simpler states, and that it has never had a beginning in time. All that Butler has pointed out about the existing order of nature remains true. Instead of saying that this throws light on the character of the author of nature, we have now

to say that it throws light on the character of the universe as a developing process in time. And, instead of arguing from the probable character of the author of nature to our probable fate in the next life, we could argue straightaway from the tendencies of the world-process, as revealed in the part open to our inspection, to the probable character of those parts which have not yet been revealed.

The other weakness is a more serious one. If it be not reasonably probable that some at least of us will survive the death of our bodies, most of the rest of Butler's conclusions must go by the board. But this is just the point where it seems to me that a little further evidence has accumulated since Butler's time. At present it is very conflicting and very difficult to interpret; but it does at least faintly suggest the possibility of survival, whilst Butler's arguments taken by themselves do not give any appreciable probability to that doctrine.

A very great merit of Butler's arguments is that they are hardly, if at all, affected by the progress of natural science since his time. The facts about the world on which he bases his arguments remain facts, and no scientific discoveries are in the least likely to explode them or to explain them away.

Into Butler's arguments from analogy in favour of the special doctrines of Christianity, and in favour of the view that a revelation might reasonably have been anticipated and that it might be expected to contain difficulties and paradoxes, I do not propose to enter. Butler's arguments in the second part of the *Analogy* are often ingenious and always candid. But it is obvious that the more specialised the conclusions which he is trying to establish, the weaker the argument from analogy must become. As I have said, I think that the argument from analogy does lend some support to the doctrines of natural religion; but under the weight of specifically Christian doctrines it seems to me to show obvious signs of buckling.

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