Samuel Clarke, who defended Newton’s view of the world against Leibnitz’s strictures, is perhaps chiefly interesting to us as one of the authorities of Bishop Joseph Butler. It is Clarke’s defence of free will, Clarke’s idealist theory of eternal "fitness ” as the basis of ethical distinctions, perhaps Clarke’s teaching on immortality, that Butler regards as “ the common known arguments ” and authoritative enuncia­tions of truth in the regions of philosophy or Natural Theology.@@1 Butler himself occupies a peculiar position in more respects than one. He has profoundly influenced British thinking, but is little known abroad. He is difficult to classify. We may be helped in assigning him his proper place if we observe that, almost invariably, he accepts certain beliefs which he forbears to press. Thus in his most important contribution to ethics, the *Three Sermons on Human Nature—*i., ii., iii. of the *Sermons*—he grants the validity of an appeal to “ nature ” upon the lines of a sort of Stoical idealism, but for his own part he prefers the humbler appeal to *human* nature. He makes the issue, as far as possible, a question of fact. We, from the altered modern point of view, may doubt whether Butler’s curious account of the mechanism of moral psychology *is* a simple report of facts. There are (*a*) given instinctive “ propensions ”; (*b*) a part of higher principles, “ benevolence ” and “ rational self-love,” equally valid with each other, though at times they may seem to conflict; (c) there is the master principle of con­science, which judges between motives, but does not itself constitute a motive to action. Butler is opposing the *psycho­logical hedonism@@2* of Hobbes. He does not find it true to experience that man necessarily acts at the dictation of selfish motives. But Butler—for reasons satisfactory to himself, and eminently characteristic of the man; he hoped to conciliate his agel—dwells so much upon the rewards of goodness, as bribes (we must almost say) to rational self-love, that some have called Butler himself an *ethical hedonist·,* though his sermon on the “ Love of God ” ought surely to free him from that charge. In all this, Butler was convinced that he was giving a simple statement of facts. Any one introspectively apprehending the facts must grant, he thought, that bene­volence was an integral part of human nature and that con­science was rightfully supreme. This reveals the empiricist temper, and points to an attempted empiricist solution of great problems. Butler holds that more ambitious philosophies are valid, but he shrinks from their use. The same thing is seen again in the *Analogy.* Butler divests himself in this book of the principles of “ liberty ” and “ moral fitness ” in which personally he believes.@@3

Part i. of this book shows the “ Analogy" of “ Natural Religion ’’ to the "Constitution and Course of Nature.” Probably “ Nature ” is here employed in a more familiar or humbler sense than in the passing reference in the *Sermons.* The *Analogy* means by “ nature,” indisputable human experience. Deists believed in a God of un­mixed benevolence; Butler's contention is that justice, punish­ment, hell-fire itself are credible in their similarity to the known experiences of man’s life upon earth. What the *Three Sermons* sought to find written small within—a law of inflexible justice or righteousness—part i. of the *Analogy* seeks to discover written in larger characters without us. Butler is charged by Sir Leslie Stephen with arguing illegitimately—professing to make no appeal to “ moral fitness,” and yet contending that the facts of human life show (the beginnings of) *moral* retribution for good and evil. Assuredly Butler did not mean to give him his right of speaking about moral evil and good when he waived the “ high priori ” method of vindicating their real existence. Yet it is a very grave question whether the idea of God’s moral government admits of being argued as pure matter of fact. Butler tries to do this. You call it unjust, he says in effect, that you should be punished. You argue, for example, that you have no free will. Well, what of

that? Docs it not look very much as though you were being punished? Does not nature seem to treat you *as if* you had free will ?@@4 One thing more should be noted about Butler. He nowhere formally argues for the truth of theism. He will not waste time upon triflers who deny what he thinks, in the light of the (empiricist!) Design argument, an absolutely clear truth.@@5 On the whole then Butler in personal conviction is an intuitionalist, waver­ing towards the idealism of his age; but in argument he is an empiricist, trying to reason every question as one of given facts. None the less, in the issue, it is the very element which goes beyond an appeal to facts—it is the depth and purity of Butler’s moral nature- -which fascinates the reader, and wins praise from Matthew Arnold or Goldwin Smith or even Leslie Stephen. Precisely because he goes beyond phenomenal sequences, it is impossible to fling him aside unheard. On the other hand, no Christian, and perhaps no theist, is interested in maintaining that Butler grasps the whole truth. At the most we might say this: If theism is a growing doctrine, Butler in England like Kant in Germany stands for a fresh ethical emphasis.

Stephen accuses Butler of reasoning in a circle. The things which make for our ultimate welfare are the things we call morally good. No wonder if they prove to involve happiness; that is their definition! But is. it? Does not Stephen himself rather say that morally good things are conditions of *social,* not personal welfare? Butler’s argument is that the individual suffers (and feels that he suffers deservedly) from neglecting these. If George Eliot is guilty of a platitude when she says that “ consequences are unpitying,” then Butler's argument is empty: but not other­wise.

Butler on the soul may be studied in chap. i. of the *Analogy*-where we observe the old assumption of an immaterial and sc immortal principle—and in his appendix on *Personal Identity.* Wherever moral postulates make their presence felt, Butler’s doctrine of man, as of God, leaps into new vigour.

It is a moot point whether S. Clarke’s *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* is really *a priori..* Clarke appeals to the immensity of time and space as involving infinity in God. A modification of his views is the starting-point of W H Gillespie’s able *Argument a priori for the Being and Attributes of the Godhead,* published part by part 1833-1872. We find something curiously similar in James Martineau’s *Study of Religion* ("Implicit Attri­butes of God as Cause,” *sub fin.).* One might also compare J. R. Seeley's *Natural Religion—*though he is no decided champion of a personal God—and F. Max Müller’s *Gifford Lectures.* Dismiss­ing his earlier intuitionalism, in order, like Butler, to conciliate an empiricist age, Μ. Müller tried to show that even sense experi­ence throws us on the Infinite—which for him was the kernel of the idea of God. He therefore appealed to the Indian goddess Aditi or Immensity, a deity connected with a set of personal gods called Adityas. Looking into the immensity of space, man also looks into the depths of godhead. Whatever one may think of the cogency of such arguments, it seems safe to conclude that thinkers, who dislike constructive idealism, but accept time and space as boundless given quanta, reach in that way the thought of infinity, and if they are theists, necessarily connect their theism with reflexions on the nature of Time and Space.

We have already spoken of Kant’s peculiar philosophical positions. One result of these is a very damaging attack upon traditional theism. Kant puts together, as belonging to “ Rational Theology,” three arguments—he is fond of triads, though they have not the significance for him which they came to have for Hegel. Then he attacks the arguments, one after another. Is there anything fresh in the attack? Or is it simply a reiteration of his sceptical contrast between phenomena and noumena, and of bis confine­ment of (valid) knowledge to the former? Perhaps the attack on *cause* as used in the cosmological argument is independent of Kant’s philosophical peculiarities. The argument affirms a first cause, or uncaused cause. Does it not then deny rather than assert universal causation? But that special criticism is a question of detail. A more entirely novel and more general principle of Kant’s attack upon theism is the challenge of our right to build up the idea of God bit by bit out of different arguments. The arguments had been regarded as alternative or else as cumulative proofs, all pointing to one conclusion— God exists. Kant insists that they are incompatible with each

*@@@1 Analogy,* part i. chap. i. (“the natural and moral proofs of a future life commonly insisted upon”); last sentence of part i., *Conclusion* (“ the proper proofs of [natural] religion from our moral nature,” &c.); part ii. chap. viii. *sub fin.,* “ the proof ” of religion, “ arising out of the two . . . principles of liberty and moral fitness.”

@@@2 These useful distinctions are stated and well explained in W. R. Sorley’s *Ethics of Naturalism.*

*@@@3 Analogy,* iii. chap. viii.; following S. Clarke?

@@@4 Part ii. of the *Analogy* tries similarly to establish Christianity as credible matter of fact, sufficiently analogous to known facts of experience (Apologetics) apart from any moral “ value judg­ments ” (as Ritschlians might say).

@@@5 See (e.g.) ii. chap. ix. The *Three Sermons* also point to a *moral* argument for theism, but forbear to. press it (Sermon ii.; when the *third* sense of the word “ Nature ” is being explained).