CHAPTER VII
Concluding Evaluation:

In the Introductory Chapter the aim and purpose of this dissertation have been clearly stated. This aim is to examine the artistic aspect of Butler's intellectual quest. His works have been examined to find out the nature, range and depth of his intellectual quest and a comprehensive evaluation of this quest will bring out his contribution to and present position in English literature. This reevaluation of Butler's ideas made in the previous chapters will be completed by examining his style and his impact on posterity.

Section I

To consider Butler as an artist an examination of his style of writing is essential. In an entry of his Note Books Butler wrote:

A man may, and ought to take a great deal of pains to write clearly, tersely and euphemistically: he will write many a sentence three or four times over - to do much more than this is worse
than not re-writing at all: he will be at great pains to see that he does not repeat himself, to arrange his matter in the way that shall best enable the reader to master it, to cut out superfluous words and, even more, to eschew irrelevant matter: but in each case he will be thinking not of his own style but of his reader's convenience.

I should like to put it on record that I never took the smallest pains with my style, have never thought about it, do not know nor want to know whether it is a style at all or whether it is not, as I believe and hope, just common, simple, straightforwardness. I cannot conceive how any man can take thought for his style without loss to himself and his readers.


This passage brings out the keynote of Butler's concept of style. In a writing entitled On English Composition and Other Matters (published in 1858 in the first number of The Eagle, a magazine, written and edited by members of St.John's College, Cambridge) Butler as an undergraduate stated his idea of style. In this he advocated terseness, masculinity, vigour, straightforwardness and conciseness. He stressed the importance of obeying intuitive perception, rather than rules. The use of simile,
he held, should be judicious and apt. He also pleaded for impassiveness and impartiality. According to Butler, simplicity of style to be truly effective must be unstudied. Butler wanted a writer to be free from the fetters of preconceived ideas and wanted him to write about things well-understood by himself. Undergraduate Butler categorically wrote:

Never let us haunt after a subject, unless we have something which we feel urged on to say, it is better to say nothing.

_A First Year in Cantlebury Settlement and Other Early Essays, (Shrewsbury Ed., Vol. I, 1924) - Samuel Butler, p. 209_7

Bernard Shaw while reviewing Gilbert Cannan's book on Butler wrote that Butler "had the supreme sort of style that never smells of the lamp, and therefore seems to the kerosene stylist to be no style at all."1 Butler wrote to Sir William Marriott (14th August, 1862) - "I feel strongly and write as I feel."2 In an entry of his _Note Books_ 

2. _Ibid_
Butler wrote:

It is often said that treatment is more important than subject, but no treatment can make a repulsive subject not repulsive. It can make a trivial, or even a stupid subject interesting, but a really bad flaw in a subject cannot be treated out.

The Note Books of Samuel Butler
(H.F.Jones) 1919, p. 108

Another entry records:

A man's style in any art should be like his dress - it should attract as little attention as possible.

Ibid, 107

Clarity, terseness and straightforwardness - these were the qualities which Butler held the watchwords for his manner of writing. Against the background of the theoretical standard of his mode of writing Butler's works can be examined to trace the evolution of his style. In this tracing the style of three major literary writings - Erewhon, The Way of All Flesh and Erewhon Revisited will receive more attention and the other writings will be examined cursorily to weave the thread of chronology.
A First Year in Canterbury Settlement, published in 1863, carefully edited by his father, is partly a book of travel, partly a guide book to those who intended in terms of emigration. Save some occasional bursts of poetic emotion the style of the whole book is of serviceable quality. Mere geographic description assumes a poetic colouring in a passage -

It is a long, open valley, the bottom of which consists of a large swamp, from which rises terrace after terrace up the mountains on either side; the country is as it were, crumped up in an extraordinary manner, so that it is full of small ponds or lagoons - sometimes dry, sometimes merely swampy, now as full of water as they could be.

Chapter VII describes birds and flowers, but the description appears to issue from the pen of either a botanist or a zoologist. This book is about Butler's voyage to New Zealand, his settlement there, and his experience as a sheep-farmer. This trivial subject has been made vivid through his casual, humorous and poetic language.
The next important work - *Erewhon*, published in 1872, is a major literary product of Butler. The prose style of this utopia is of serviceable nature, with occasional poetic and ironic passages.

On his way to Erewhon Higgs describes the landscape in animated prose -

> The beauty of the scene cannot be conveyed in language. The one side of the valley was blue with evening shadow, through which loomed forest and precipice, hillside and mountain top: and the other was still brilliant with the sunset gold.

(*Erewhon*, 1924, p. 17)

Higgs's emotional reaction at the sight of colossal statues on the outskirts of Erewhon finds expression in a passage of superb imaginative fervour.

> Then came a gust of howling wind, accompanied with a moan from one of the statues above me. I clasped my hands in fear. I felt like a rat caught in a trap, as though I would have turned and bitten at whatever thing was nearest one. The wildness of the wind increased, the moans grew shriller, coming from several statues, and swelling into a chorus... However brave a man might be, he could never stand
such a concert, from such lips, and in such a place. I heaped every invective upon them that my tongue could utter as I rushed away from them into the mist, and even after I had lost sight of them, and turning my head round could see nothing but the storm - wraiths driving behind me, I heard their ghostly chanting, and felt as though one of them would rush after me and grip me in his hand and throttle me.

Erewhon (1924 Ed.), pp. 44-45

The inverted attitude of the Erewhonians to crime and disease finds expression in ironical prose:

There are sub-divisions of illnesses into crimes and misdemeanours as with offences amongst ourselves - a man being punished heavily for serious illness, while failure of eyes or hearing in one over sixty-five, who has had good health hitherto, is dealt with by fine only, or imprisonment in default of payment.

Ibid, p. 94

The Musical Banks of Erewhon stand for the churches and Higgs's awe at the sight of the imposing building - structure of a Musical Bank is communicated in a prose passage of moving beauty:
It was an epic in stone and marble, and so powerful was the effect it produced on me, that as I beheld it I was charmed and melted. I felt more conscious of the existence of a remote past. One knows of this always, but the knowledge is never so living as in the actual presence of some witness to the life of bygone ages. I felt how short a space of human life was the period of our own existence. I was more impressed with my own littleness, and much more inclinable to believe that the people whose sense of the fitness of things was equal to the upraising of so serene a handiwork, were hardly likely to be wrong in the conclusions they might come to upon any subject.

=Erewhon (1924), p. 149=

One conspicuous feature of the style of Erewhon is the frugal use of metaphor, the use of which requires a considerable command over the language. The metaphor used in the expression - "A man’s expression is his sacrament." is noteworthy and deserves special mention.

=Erewhon also abounds in passages of light, comic prose, especially in Chapter XVIII; two passages of this nature are cited below:

l. Erewhon (1924 Ed.) - Samuel Butler, p. 157
They hold that the unborn are perpetually plauging and tormenting the married of both sexes, fluttering about them incessantly, and giving them no peace either of mind or body until they have consented to take them under their protection.

[Erewhon (1924 Ed.), p. 183]

It is a distinguishing peculiarity of the Erewhonians that when they profess themselves to be quite certain about any matter, and avow it as a base on which they are to build a system of practice, they seldom quite believe in it. If they smell a rat about the precincts of a cherished institution, they will always stop their noses to it if they can.

[Ibid, p. 184]

When Butler wrote on a scientific topic his prose became sinewy and bare. The following passage may stand for a good instance of this:

The assurance that the future is no arbitrary and changeable thing, but the like futures will invariably follow like presents is the groundwork on which we lay our plans - the faith on which we do every conscious actions of our lives.

[Ibid, p. 261]
The Fair Haven, the next writing, published in 1873, steeped in irony, abounds in passages of ironical prose.

The wide variations and inconsistencies of the different Gospels have been defended ironically —

....that all ideals gain by a certain amount of vagueness, which allows the beholder to fill in the details according to his own spiritual needs, and that no ideal can be truly universal and permanent, unless it have an elasticity which will allow of this process in the minds of those who contemplate it.

(The Fair Haven (1913 Ed.), pp. 24-25)

The same tone of irony persists almost throughout the book and a number of passages excerpted below will substantiate the point of argument.

There are many things which though not objectively true are nevertheless subjectively true to those who can receive them; and subjective truth is universally felt to be even higher than objective, as may be shown by the acknowledged duty of obeying our consciences (which is the right to us) rather than any dictate of man however much more objectively true.

(Tbid, p. 37)
It is only conventional Christianity which will stand a man in good stead to live by; true Christianity will never do so. Man have tried it and found it fail; or, rather, its inevitable failure was so obvious that no age or country has ever been made enough to carry it out in such a manner as would have satisfied its founders.

*The Fair Haven (1913 Ed.),* p. 47

The inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the Bible have been offered an ironic defence -

Life is not one of the exact sciences, living is essentially an art and not a science. Everything addressed to human minds at all must be more or less of a compromise.

*Ibid, p. 52*

.... the fragmentary character, and the partial obscurity - I might have almost written, the incomparable chiaroscuro - of the Evangelistic writings have added to the value of our Lord's character as an ideal, not only in the case of Christians, but as bringing the Christ-ideal within the reach and comprehension of an infinitely greater number of minds than it could ever otherwise have appealed to.

*Ibid, pp. 237 - 238*
All ideals gain by vagueness and lose by definition, in as much as more scope is left for the imagination of the beholder, who can thus fill in missing detail according to his own spiritual needs.

(The Fair Haven (1913 Ed.), p. 242)

Even in an ironical context Butler can speak seriously and this can be substantiated by the following passage:

... it is the beauty of the Christ-ideal which constitutes the working power of Christianity over the hearts and lives of men, leading them to that highest of all worships which consists of imitation. Now the sanction which is given to this ideal by belief in the Divinity of our Lord, raises it at once above all possibility of criticism.

(Tbid, pp. 236-237)

Sometimes Butler's irony turns into direct sarcasm:

It is to the poor, the weak, the ignorant and the infirm that Christianity appeals most strongly and to whose needs it is most especially adapted - but these form by far the greater portion of mankind.

(Tbid, p. 253)
The scientific writings of Butler - Life and Habit (1878), Evolution Old and New (1879), Unconscious Memory (1880), Luck, or Cunning ? (1887) are mostly written in plain prose with occasional sprinkling of lightness.

Two passages from Life and Habit are cited below for examination:

We come, therefore, to the conclusion that our knowledge and reasonings thereupon only become perfect, assured, unhesitating, when they have become automatic, and are thus exercised without further conscious effort of the mind, much in the same way as we cannot walk nor read nor write perfectly till we can do so automatically.

\[ \text{Life and Habit (1916 Ed.), p. 35} \]

Each one of these component members of our personality is continually dying and being born again, supported in this process by the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe; which three things link us on, and fetter us down, to the organic and inorganic world about us.

\[ \text{Ibid, p. 65} \]
Both the passages above are written in matter-of-fact style. But in some passages Butler's style becomes poetical —

"It is therefore the beginning of consciousness, and infancy is as the dozing of one who turns in his bed on waking, and takes another short sleep before he rises."

\textit{Life and Habit, (1916 Ed.), p. 49}

Life, then, is memory. The life of a creature is the memory of a creature. We are all the same stuff to start with, but we remember different things, and if we did not remember different things we should be absolutely like each other. As for the stuff itself, we know nothing save only that it is 'such as dreams are made of'.

\textit{Ibid, p. 244}

The prose style of \textit{Evolution Old and New} also is plain and straightforward and two passages are quoted below to support this statement.

"But it must not be supposed that an animal or plant has ever conceived the idea of some organ widely different from any it was yet possessed of, and has set itself to design it in detail and grow towards it."

\textit{Evolution Old and New, (Shrewsbury Ed. Vol.5,1924) p. 38}
Slowly, step by step, through many blunders and mischances which have worked together for good to those that have preserved in elasticity. They have travelled as man has travelled, with but little perception of a want till there was also some perception of a power, and but little perception of power till there was a dim sense of want; want stimulating power, and power stimulating want; and both so based upon each other that no one can say which is the true foundation, but rather that they must be both baseless and as it were, meteoric in midair.

_Evolution Old and New_, (Shrewsbury Ed. Vol.5, 1924) pp. 38 - 39

Unconscious Memory, the next scientific book also is written in a prose style of serviceable nature. A few excerpts will prove the validity of this statement.

..... the germs had been developed in the course of time from something or things that were not what we called living at all; that they had grown up, in fact, out of the material substances and forces of the world in some manner more or less analogous to that in which man had been developed from themselves.

_Unconscious Memory_ (1922 Ed.), p. 13

By far the greater number of our movements are the results of long and arduous practice.
The harmonious co-operation of separate muscles, the finely adjusted measure of participation which each contributes to the working of the whole, must, as a rule, have been laboriously acquired, in respect of most of the movements that are necessary in order to effect it.

\[\textit{Unconscious Memory} (1922 Ed.), p. 80\]

In \textit{Luck, or Cunning ?}, Butler's last extended book on science, he left behind the field of science and entered the region of metaphysics and the language also became more moving and animated.

If a man can be called literary, he must have acquired the habit of reading accurately, thinking attentively, and expressing himself clearly. He must have endeavoured in all sorts of ways to enlarge the range of his sympathies so as to be able to put himself easily in rapport with those whom he is studying, and those whom he is addressing. If he cannot speak with tongues himself, he is the interpreter of those who can — without whom they might as well be silent.

\[\textit{Luck, or Cunning ?}, (1922 Ed.), pp. 24-25\]

Another passage of good prose is excerpted below:
Variations are an organism's way of getting over an unexpected discrepancy between resources as shown by the fly - leaves of its own cheques and the universe's pass-book; the universe is generally right, or would be upheld as right if the matter were to come before the not too incorruptible courts of nature, and in nine cases out of ten the organism has made the error in its own favour, so that it must now pay or die.

(Luck, or Cunning? (1922 Ed.), p. 113)

The passbook image in the passage is applied felicitously.

Mr. Darwin was the Gladstone of Biology.

(Ibid, p. 91)

Lamarck was the Lazarus of Biology.

(Ibid, p. 235)

-Both the metaphors are aptly used.-

Both chronologically and stylistically God the Known and God the Unknown (1879) belongs to Butler's scientific period and the plain prose of the writing befits a book of science than that of literature.
The incoherency of our ideas concerning God is due to the fact that we have not yet truly found him, but it does not argue that he does not exist and cannot be found anywhere after more diligent search; on the contrary, the persistence of the main idea, in spite of the incoherency of its details, points strongly in the direction of believing that it rests upon a foundation in fact.

This extract may serve fairly as a representative passage to bring out the mediocre quality of Butler's prose. But some passages of poetic glow occasionally occur and one such a passage is given below:

... but we enthrone Him upon the wings of birds, on the petals of flowers, on the faces of our friends, and upon whatever we most delight in of all that lives upon the earth. We then can not only love Him, but we can do that without which love has neither power nor sweetness, but is a phantom only, an impersonal person, a vain stretching forth of arms towards something that can never fill them - we can express our love and have it expressed to us in return.
The Way of All Flesh, the only novel of Butler, written over a long stretch of time (1873 - 1885), published posthumously by R.A. Streatfield in 1903, is Butler's most important literary writing. The style of the novel has already been examined in Chapter III of this dissertation. It has already been stated that the prose of this novel also is of serviceable nature. The novel contains varieties of prose - philosophical, scientific, Biblical, ironic and comic. Some isolated passages of imaginative prose also are to be found out in the novel.

Mrs. Theobald was not prepared for so sudden an assumption of importance. Her nerves, never of the strongest, had been strung to their highest tension by the event of the morning. She wanted to escape observation; she was conscious of looking a little older than she quite liked to look as a bride who had been married that morning; she feared the landlady, the chambermaid, the waiter - everybody and everything; her heart beat so fast that she could hardly speak, much less go through the ordeal of ordering dinner in a strange hotel with a strange landlady. She begged and prayed to be let off. If Theobald would only order dinner this once, she would order it any day and everyday in future.

The Way of All Flesh - (Everyman's Ed, 1968) - pp. 49 - 50
This passage excerpted above is a representative specimen of prose style in which the whole novel is written. Clarity, simplicity and straightforwardness - these three were the watchwords of Butler's writing and these three attributes are adequately present in the passage. The presence of these three qualities are present in all kinds of his prose and this can be substantiated by examining at least one passage from the different varieties of prose.

Nor yet did he know that ideas, no less than the living beings in whose minds they arise, must be begotten by parents not very unlike themselves, the most original still differing but slightly from the parents that have given rise to them. Life is like a fugue, everything must grow out of the subject and there must be nothing new. Nor, again, did he see how hard it is to say where one idea ends and another begins, nor yet how closely this is paralleled in the difficulty of saying where a life begins or ends, or an action or indeed anything, there being a unity in spite of infinite multitude, and an infinite multitude in spite of unity.

(The Way of All Flesh (1968 Ed.), p. 178)

Every change is so great a shock that nothing can survive it. Every change is a shock; every
shock is a protanto death. What we call death is only a shock great enough to destroy our power to recognize a past and a present as resembling one another.

[The Way of All Flesh (1968 Ed.), p. 208]

Yet had he not on the whole tried to find out what the ways of God were, and to follow them in singleness of heart? To a certain extent yes; but he had not been thorough; he had not given up all for God. He knew that very well; he had done little as compared with what he might and ought to have done, but still if he was being punished for this, God was a hard taskmaster, and one, too, who was continually pouncing out upon His unhappy creatures from ambuscades.

[Ibid, p. 293]

If he could only manage to sprinkle a pinch of salt, as it were, on the archbishop's tail, he might convert the whole Church of England to free thought by a coup de main.

[Ibid, p. 248]

About Mrs. Jupp Overton writes comically:

And yet age does not wither this godless old sinner, as people would say it ought to do. Whatever life she has led, it has agreed with her very
sufficiently. At times she gives us to understand that she is still much solicited; at others she takes quite a different tone. She has not allowed even Joe King so much as to put his lips to hers this ten years. She would rather have a mutton chop any day. 'But ah! you should have seen me when I was sweet seventeen. I was the very moral of my poor dear mother, and she was a pretty woman, though I say it that shouldn't. She had such a splendid mouth of teeth. It was a sin to bury her in her teeth.'

(The Way of All Flesh (1968 Ed.), p. 351)

The passages excerpted above (the first one philosophical, the second scientific, the third Biblical, the fourth ironic, and the last comic) show the compactness of Butler's style which aims at directness and precision of expression. The rhetorical language and some occasional imaginative language adopted for the style of writing the book have already been discussed in Chapter III.

Alps and Sanctuaries (1882) and Ex Voto (1888) — both are books of travel and examined in respect of their content they are not of considerable significance. But in respect of style they contain some passages of narrative power and emotional fervour.
The sky was of a deep blue, there was not a single cloud either in sky or on mountain, but the snow was already deep, and had covered everything beneath its smooth and heaving bosom. There was no breath of air, but the cold was intense; presently the sun set upon all except the higher peaks, and the broad shadows stole upwards. Then there was a rich crimson flush upon the mountain tops, and after this a pallor cold and ghastly as death.

Alps and Sanctuaries (Shrewsbury Ed, Vol.7, 1924), p. 8

The use of metaphor in the line - "our holidays are our garden.*1 - is both startling and beautiful.

Ex Voto is written in mediocre prose and the following passage excerpted will substantiate this.

.... the works of the four artists Leonardo, Rafaelle, Michael Angelo and Titian above mentioned show one thing more clearly than another, it is that neither power over line, nor knowledge of form, nor fine sense of colour, nor facility of invention, nor any of the marvellous gifts which three out of the four undoubtedly possessed, will make any man's work live permanently in our affections unless it is rooted in sincerity of

1. Alps and Sanctuaries (Shrewsbury Ed, Vol.7, 1924), p. 50
faith and in love towards God and man.

A Lecture on the Humour of Homer (1892) also is written in plain prose and the passage below will support this.

The leading ideas of the Iliad are love, war, and plunder, though this last is less insisted on than the other two. The keynote is struck with a woman's charm, and a quarrel among men for their possession. Women throughout the Iliad is a being to be loved, teased, laughed at, and if necessary carried off.

The two volumes of Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler (1896) contain correspondences of Dr. Butler with occasional comments of Samuel Butler, the grandson and so this writing is of less importance from the standpoint of tracing the evolution of Butler's prose style.

The prose of The Authoress of the Odyssey (1897) also is plain and bare and a passage excerpted below will bring out the validity of the statement.
Both Iliad and Odyssey begin with an invocation addressed to a woman, who, as the head of literature, must be supposed to have been an authoress, though none of her works have come down to us. In an age, moreover, when men were chiefly occupied either with fighting or hunting, the arts of peace, and among them all kinds of literary accomplishment, would be more naturally left to women.

(The Authoress of the Odyssey (Shrewsbury Ed. Vol.12, 1924), p. 13)

Butler's interest in the knotty authorship problem of the Homeric epics led him to translate the Odyssey and the Iliad. In this translation he claimed to surpass the translation of the same made by Butcher and Lang. For examining the validity of Butler's claim a passage translated by both Butler and Butcher and Lang may be cited side by side.

Butler begins his Book II -

Next morning, as soon as he was up and dressed, Telemachus sent the criers round the town to call the people in assembly

(The Odyssey (1924 Ed.), p. 22)

Butcher and Lang translate the same passage -
Now so soon as early dawn shone forth, the rosy-fingered, the dear son of Odysseus gat him up from his bed, and put on his raiment and cast his sharp sword about his shoulder, and beneath his smooth feet he bound his goodly sandals, and stept forth from his chamber in presence like a god. And straightway he bade the clear-voiced heralds to call the long-haired Achaeans to the assembly.

These two passages clearly indicate that the translation of Butcher and Lang is a better one. What Butler's translation particularly lacks is the rhythm of the language. His translation of the Iliad is better than that of the Odyssey. Two passages from the Odyssey are excerpted below for examination.

As he spoke, he took a double cup of nectar, and placed it in his mother's hand. 'Cheer up, my dear mother', said he, 'and make the best of it. I love you dearly, and should be very sorry to see you get a thrashing; however grieved I might be, I could not help you, for there is no standing against Jove. Once before when I was trying to help you, he caught me by the foot and flung me from the heavenly threshold. All day long from morn till eve, was I falling,
till at sunset I came to ground in the island of Lemnos, and there I lay, with very little life left in me, till the Sintians came and tended me.

The Iliad (1921 Ed.), p. 16

Butler translates the incident of the Greek preparation of war against the Trojans -

When they were got together in one place shield clashed with shield and spear with spear in the rage of battle. The bossed shields beat one upon another, and there was a tramp as of a great multitude - death - cry and shout of triumph of slain and slayers, and the earth ran red with blood. As torrents swollen with rain course madly down their deep channels till the angry floods meet in some gorge, and the shepherd on the hillside hears their roaring from afar - even such was the toil and uproar of the hosts as they joined in battle.

The Iliad (1921 Ed.), p. 63

The above two passages are written in good prose, but the style fails to convey the feeling of sublimity of Homeric epics.

In Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered also Butler's prose is of mediocre nature.
Erewhon Revisited (1901) Butler's last writing, rounds off Butler's literary career. After 1885 (in which Butler completed the writing of The Way of All Flesh) Butler's literary inspiration started drying up both in respect of theme and style. The maturity of the intellect denudes the style to a great extent. But an absence of adequately serious theme makes it impossible to say that the bare and durable mode of Butler's writing in the last phase is due to his maturity of intellect. The prose style of Erewhon Revisited which is the last flickering flame of his creative talent is mostly mediocre. Two passages are excerpted below to substantiate this:

Hanky tried to beat him down, assuring him that no curiosity dealer would give half as much, and my father so far yielded as to take £4,10s in silver, which, as I have already explained, would not be worth more than half a sovereign in gold. At this figure a bargain was struck, and the Professors paid up without offering him a single Musical Bank coin. They wanted to include the boots in the purchase, but here my father stood out.

Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.), p. 50

On his former visit he had seen little of the town, for he was in prison during his whole
stay. He had had a glimpse of it on being brought there by the people of the village where he had spent his first night in Erewhon—a village which he had seen at some little distance on his right hand, but which it would have been out of his way to visit, even if he had wished to do so; and he had seen the Museum of old machines, but on leaving the prison he had been blindfolded.

[Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.), p. 77]

Two other passages are quoted below; they are coloured with poetic imagination of artificial effect.

The spot he chose was a grassy oasis among the trees, carpeted with subalpine flowers, now in their fullest beauty, and close to small stream that here came down from a side valley. The freshness of the morning air, the extreme beauty of the place, the lovely birds that flitted from tree to tree, the exquisite shapes and colours of the flowers, still dew-bespangled.

[Ibid, p. 287]

There is not a breath of air; Nature sleeps so calmly that she dares not even breathe for fear of waking; the very river has hushed his flow. Without the starlit calm
of a summer's night in a great wilderness; within, a hurricane of wild and incoherent thoughts battling with one another in their fury to fall upon him and rend him - and on the other side the great wall of mountain, thousands of children praying at their mother's knee to this poor dazed thing.

(Erewhon Revisited (1923 Ed.), pp. 298 - 299)

The prose style of Butler's Collected Essays, published posthumously in 1904, is equally plain, bare and factual. The Note Books, examined in detail in the last chapter is written mostly in a pithy and sententious style. The above survey shows clearly that Butler's style from Erewhon upto Erewhon Revisited exhibits hardly any improvement. Erewhon, in spite of having some inevitable immaturities, is written in a style which is living. The Way of All Flesh records the summit of his creative talent in respect of both theme and style. But, on the whole, Butler's style has no stamp of individuality. His tenacious clinging to the principles of clarity, terseness and straightforwardness presents his style as a matter-of-fact manner of expression only. This inference is reinforced by a comment of W.B.Yeats on Butler's style. Yeats called Butler Shaw's master and wrote that Butler was -
.... the first Englishman to make the discovery that it is possible to write with great effect without music, without style, either good or bad, to eliminate from the mind all emotional implication and to prefer plain water to every vintage, so much metropolitan lead and solder to any tendril of the vine.

Axel's Castle (1969 Ed.)—
Edmund Wilson, p. 44

Section II

To complete this examination of Butler's intellectual quest an evaluation of his impact on posterity is essential and this evaluation will determine his literary position and contribution. Butler's impact on posterity will be outlined in three aspects - his influence on modern thought (both on biology and philosophy), his attack on professionalism and mechanisation of life (two leading preoccupations of the modern age) and his influence on the ideas of the modern writers.
PART I

Butler's impact on biology and philosophy

Butler's chief contribution in the field of biology lies in the fact that he was opposed to the fortuitous selection theory of Darwin, was in favour of the theory of the inheritance of acquired characters and held memory as the means to perpetuate the process of heredity. Modern biology on the basis of the theories of chromosome has completely outdated Butler's evolutionary theory. The chromosome theory throws an important light upon the machinery both of variation and heredity, but it still is unable to explain the cause initiating the first spark of life and rests on the assumption of innate creativeness in creatures. Moreover, it can explain the cause of variation in terms of the presence or absence of purely quantitative factors. But the variation can be qualitative also and this type of variation cannot be explained in physiological terms. This deficiency inevitably will drive any body to the vitalist doctrine which Butler held.

In the field of philosophy Butler's theory of evolution had a vital role to play. Darwin's theory of fortuitous
selection was essentially mechanistic in character and this mechanistic theory reinforced by the contemporary explorations of physics, astronomy and geology eliminated mind from the universe. To Butler there was no difference between the organic and the inorganic. The elastic and exceedingly vague modern concept of matter is coming closer to Butler's concept of the universe. His biological hypothesis that memory is the agent of heredity has subsequently been proved to be obsolete, but it pioneered in the field of psychology and psycho-analysis, long before William James, Jung and Freud took the field.

Butler's attack on professionalism

A.N. Whitehead in his book Science and the Modern World warned the world about the evils of professionalism. The fixed person for the fixed duties in the future will be a public danger. Whitehead wrote - "The dangers arising from this aspect of professionalism are great, particularly in our democratic countries."¹ In his writings Butler anticipated in a strange way this alarming preoccupation.

¹ Science and the Modern World - A.N. Whitehead, 1927, p. 245
of the present century. As a writer he was amateur writing on diverse subject matters with equal felicity. His tirade against professionalism had its origin in his controversy with Darwin. His evolutionary theory failed to earn the expected row and was greeted with contemptuous silence which he took as an affront and felt that he was treated as an unwanted intruder, deficient in professional skill and acumen, in the field of science. From his hatred of professionalism in science he had a natural transition to hatred of professionalism in everything. To Butler professionalism meant the sacrifice of individuals to universals - the sacrifice of persons to principles. Thus he attacked professionalism in parents (who on account of their age held themselves as the embodiment of all laudable virtues and held the children as imps of wickedness), professionalism in schoolmasters (Dr. Skinner in The Way of All Flesh), professionalism in clergymen (Theobald in The Way of All Flesh), professionalism in writers (who pay more attention to form than to subject-matter), professionalism in academicians (who out of mental lethargy advocate suppression of all originality, as in Erewhon).
Attack on the mechanisation of life

Arnold Toynbee in his A Study of History wrote on Erewhon:

Four hundred years before the narrator’s visit, the Erewhonians had realized that they were being enslaved by their mechanical inventions. The man-machine combination was becoming a sub-human entity like the man-boat of the Eskimos and the man-horse of the nomads. So they scrapped their machines and pegged their society at the level it had reached before the opening of the Industrial Age.

(A Study of History – Arnold Toynbee, 1947, p. 185)

This preoccupation with the growing problem of life in the wake of industrialisation shows Butler anticipating another harassing problem of the century. Very accurately he foresaw the admitted evils of industrialisation and excessive dependance on machines. The present world, particularly the New World, caught in the rigid toils of machinery, has bartered its leisure, tranquillity and independence for creature-comforts. By delegating more and more human functions to machines man is cutting himself off from the sources of instinctive happiness and is gradually
brought to the status of feeder or tender of machines. He has robbed himself of his work of joy and has choked the natural expression of his creative impulse.

The original and visionary character of Butler’s concept of life was revealed for the first time after the First World War. All the traditional norms and values of life were in a process of topsy-turvy and against this background of transposition Butler’s role as an avante-garde thinker is properly appreciated.

Virginia Woolf wrote on *The Way of All Flesh*:

The first signs of it [the change] are recorded in the books of Samuel Butler, in *The Way of All Flesh* in particular; the plays of Bernard Shaw continue to record it ............ All human relations have shifted — those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place these changes about the year 1910.

*Samanth Butler A Mid-Victorian Modern* (Clara G. Stillman, 1972) p. 204, (footnote)
Within the thirty years following the publication of *The Way of All Flesh* an all-pervading change overtook the western society. A tremendous shattering of absolutes, a collapse of authorities in public and private life, loss of the sense of stability and unity in human beings and human affairs seized the new society. The Victorian taboo regarding sex and other morals was violently thrown away. Agnosticism came as a proud boast. Science and psychology opened up hitherto-unknown vistas of human knowledge. The momentous manifestation of this welter of changes was the growth of a new concept of individuality. Clara Stillman's comment on this growth of individuality is pertinent and illuminating -

A new conception of individuality had arisen, combining at once a more passionate egotism and an almost mystical psychic nihilism, a sense of infinite complexities and contradictions in human personalities, buried roots, twining branches, shifting sands, and perpetually receding horizons.

Samuel Butler *A Mid-Victorian Modern* (1972)
- Clara G. Stillman, p. 204 /
In this context, we should recognise the importance of A.J. Hoppe's statement in the Introduction to the Everyman's Edition of *The Way of All Flesh*:

"Butler's works", particularly *The Way of All Flesh*, with its inherent plea for the rights of the younger generation as opposed to those of the old, provided the post-war disillusioned with a justification and defence for open revolt against long-established standards and beliefs. His avowed dislike for the authority that was enshrined in orthodoxy made a ready appeal to the mood of the moment.


Butler's posthumous influence

Butler's posthumous influence was due to those very qualities which hindered his progress when alive - restlessness, resentment and irony. "His impatience with philistinism and stupidity was a sure passport to the next generation."¹ The young readers of the present century

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¹. *Towards the Twentieth Century* (1937 Ed.) - H.V. Routh, p. 357
were in sympathy with Butler's mood and met him half-way. Butler's theory of memory based on holding the mind as a palimpsest on which layers of impressions were superimposed since the dawn of animal creation, chimes with the theory of the stream of consciousness of modern psychology. Religion has been replaced by the concept of Emergent Evolution in the present century and Butler was the first writer to uphold its cause.

On Butler's influence on his successors M.D.Zabel in his essay entitled Samuel Butler : The Victorian Insolvency wrote:


The name of Ivy Compton-Burnett, I think, should be added to this list. While considering the influence of The Way of All Flesh, the word 'influence' is to be accepted in the
wide and liberal sense of intellectual agreement. The writers who were influenced by Butler admit of two divisions - evolutionists (Shaw and Lawrence) and novelists writing on social theme (Wells, Bennett, E.M.Forster and Ivy Compton - Burnett). Butler's failure in form impelled Joyce and Woolf to turn to symbolism in the art of narration. For want of space I propose to discuss Shaw, Lawrence, Forster and Ivy Compton - Burnett as representative writers bearing intellectual affinities with Butler.

PART II

Bernard Shaw hailed Butler as "in his own department, the greatest English Writer of the 19th century." After Butler's death Shaw assumed the office of the interpreter of the long-ignored oracle and he made an open acknowledgement of his indebtedness to Butler for his views of society and progress. The Revolutionist's Handbook (1903), The Doctor's Dilemma (1906), Major Barbara (1907),

the Bishop in Getting Married (1908), Misalliance (1910) and the long preface to Back to Methuselah bear testimony to Butler's impact on Shaw's thinking. Fondness for topsy-turvy situations, the explosive free thought, criticism that strips shams and insincerities naked, the inversion of current dogmas, stinging maxims - all these Shavian characteristics directly derive from Butler.

But Bernard Shaw, though an admirer of Butler, was by no means a blind borrower. His ideas were not on all fours with those of his master. To Butler speculative intellect was a pedantic futility and he advocated for the merging of the practical intellect and unconscious intellect. But to Shaw the unfettered operations of intellect are the goal of evolution. Shaw, unlike Butler, glories in life and holds that human longevity may be extended by living life properly. The Ancients in the last play of Back to Methuselah, having achieved a relative

1. Baker discusses this impact in his The History of the English Novel (Vol.10), 1960, pp.244-245
emancipation from the needs and exigencies of material existence, reach the stage of pure contemplation which Shaw regarded as the object of evolution. Shaw interprets evolution as a process in which man emerges into godhead. The philosophy of evolution which emerges from Shaw's positive mind in the preface to *Back to Methuselah* was beyond the reach of Butler's negative mind. Moreover, Butler considered himself merely an intelligent individual, cognizant of the corruption and stupidity of social institutions - indignant, but indifferent to active reform. Shaw urged his audience to action, but Butler encouraged individual adjustment.

The next important admirer of Butler was D.H. Lawrence. In her personal recollection, Jessie Chambers describes Lawrence's reading of Butler's works in general and admiration for *Erewhon* in particular. Lawrence greatly admired Butler's *Erewhon*. His interest in Butler is discerned fairly early in his life. His first reference

1. D.H.Lawrence A Personal Record - Jessie Chambers, London, 1965, p. 120
to Erewhon was as early as 1908 when he was a young man of twenty three.\footnote{Letter to Branche Jennings, 22nd December, 1908, The Collected Letters of D.H. Lawrence, Vol. I, Harry T. More, 1962, p. 41} John Alcorn placed Butler and Lawrence in the "naturist\footnote{The Nature Novel From Hardy to Lawrence—John Alcorn, London, 1977, Preface, p. x} tradition, suggesting that they shared certain views regarding the "spirit of place."\footnote{Ibid, p. 107}

In Fantasia of the Unconscious and Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious, written between 1919 and 1921, Lawrence in the manner of Butler rejected Darwin's theory of evolution as being mechanical. Butler's vitalist thought paved the way for the same of Lawrence. As early as 1913 D.H. Lawrence in a letter to his friend Ernest Collins made his position as a vitalist amply clear:

My great religion is a belief in the blood, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and bridge .... All I want
is to answer to my blood, direct without fribbling intervention of mind or moral or what not.

(Collected Letters, Vol.I,

In this context, we may quote Dr. Sheila Lahiri Chaudhuri's statement in her unpublished doctoral dissertation:

Lawrence had found in Butler not only the right weapons for his antidocial and anti-rationalistic ideas but also the positive forces to counteract such ideas. Thus Lawrence's worship of physical life, of natural instinct and of man in his primitive state of consciousness can be linked with Butler's concepts. Out of such ideas had emerged Lawrence's theory of the solar-plexus, his primitivism and the creation of the instinctive man.

(D.H. Lawrence and some aspects of Nineteenth Century Thought and Art -
Dr. Sheila Lahiri Choudhuri, Unpublished dissertation, Jadavpur University, 1982, p. 332)

Like Butler's unconscious memory, which is spontaneous and instinctive consciousness, Lawrence developed a theory of blood consciousness, as opposed to mental consciousness. 'To be thyself' as opposed 'to know thyself' is a concept in Lawrence which directly links him to Butler's
attack upon the mechanical aspect of Victorian society.
The movement towards a more instinctive life against
the materialistic and mechanical life in Lawrence can
directly be traced to Butler. Living in an age which
was daily becoming more self-conscious and intellectual,
Lawrence, like Butler, and Blake before, turned towards
'instinct' and 'dark consciousness' to explain man's
behaviour.

After Butler, Lawrence was the foremost novelist
to initiate a discussion of the role of education in
society. At an initial stage, Lawrence, like Butler,
presented education as having a negative and destructive
effect on the lives of people. It is often described as
a part of the industrial situation; it is shown like
wealth to corrupt human will and destroy natural instinct.
Sharp criticism of the educational system, in the vein of
Butler, is presented in The Rainbow through the reaction
of Ursula to whom her studies were 'dreary work' and the
college was a little, slovenly laboratory for the factory.
Lawrence thinks that the present system of education

"is a ramming in of brain facts through the head,
and a consequent distortion, suffocation,
In formulating 'a need based education system' of elementary and secondary schools, suggesting education to be state education, Lawrence is able to provide a well thought-out solution for the muddled form of existing system of education. Lawrence's criticism of the education system, like Butler's criticism of the same, does not end in demolition only.

F.R. Leavis suggests that Lawrence could be compared with Butler in his treatment of clerical life. The Virgin and the Gipsy, the short novel that Leavis had in mind, deals with the life of a vicar, who has been deserted by his wife. With perfect ease Lawrence builds up the two worlds - the shifting sordidness of the clerical life and the brute nakedness of the gipsyman. The gipsy represents the primitive society, uncorrupted by

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1. Fantasia of the Unconscious -
the forces of civilization and he is a wanderer, totally free from any social responsibility, full of life, warmth and joy of existence.

Well's Tono - Bungay and Bennett's Clayhanger, two autobiographical novels, are written in the tradition of The Way of All Flesh. E.M. Forster is most profoundly influenced by Butler. Lee Elvert Holt in an essay entitled E.M. Forster and Samuel Butler calls Forster -

the least obviously yet most profoundly Butlerian of all contemporary English storytellers.


Forster himself wrote that Dante's Divine Comedy, Gibbon's Decline and Fall and Tolstoy's War and Peace were "three monuments." But these books were too monumental to influence Forster. To him Erewhon "was the food for which I was waiting." Forster also wrote - "Erewhon also

1. A Book that Influenced me in Two Cheers for Democracy - E.M. Forster, 1972, p. 212
2. Ibid, p. 214
influenced me in its technique."¹

Lee Holt writes upon Butler's impact on Forster:

Forster, of course, knew and liked Butler's books, and we are told that at one time he planned to make a critical study of them, but he himself could perhaps not say which of his ideas was suggested to him by Butler, and which simply agreed with Butler's because both men thought alike and lived not many years apart.


Forster's love for Italy was imbibed from his reading of Butler's Alps and Sanctuaries which is the chief record of Butler's devotion to Italy. "Forster and Butler are alike in their refusal to indulge a blind devotion to instinct and spontaneity that would make them neoromantics in their points of view."² Like Butler, Forster

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¹ A book that Influenced me in Two Cheers for Democracy - E.M. Forster, 1972, p.215
is profoundly impressed by the effect of music upon human nature.

Forster's novels can be considered in estimating Butler's impact on them and Lee Holt writes in this context:

Where Angels Fear to Tread has fewer tangible ties with Butler than Forster's other novels, but it shows its author thinking Butler's thoughts, and the criticism of English society inherent in it, together with the implied remedies for the weakness of that society, agree exactly with what Butler had to say.


The Longest Journey (1907), has its hero another oscillating, weak-witted young college graduate who, Mr. Trilling 1 tells us, has a touch of Ernest Pontifex about him. It was Butler's chief mission to wage war against intellectual and emotional narrowness of the sort typified in Mrs. Failing and Agness Pembroke. To Butler instinct

1. E. M. Forster - Leonel Trilling, 1934, p. 73
and emotion were more important than reason and logic. Rickie in his mock at the holy places, in his admiration for the 'rowing people' at Cambridge (like Butler's Towneley), in his instinctive reaction to educational institutions and in many other ways was like Butler.

During the very years in which Forster completed *A Room with a View* (1908) he was planning a critical study of Butler which was later interrupted by the war and never finished. The word 'view' in Forster's title signifies a glimpse of truth and the chief theme of the book is to emphasize sincerity and truthfulness. This emphasis is thoroughly Butlerian. Butler was never tired of satirizing conventional hypocrisy in all its forms; from Erewhon on his books are filled with attacks on insincerity, ranging from playful sallies to broad frontal assaults.

The next novel *Howard's End* (1908 - 10) deals with the effect of money and worldly success upon human character. The second half of the Victorian period was thoroughly materialistic in character, but the prudery dominating the age hypocritically eschewed the theme of money to be a topic for public discussion. Butler shattered this prudery
by eulogising money openly in his Note Books. Margaret in *Howard's End* is a thorough Butlerian. Forster writes-

"The imagination ought to play upon money and realize it vividly, for it's the second most important thing in the world."

(*Howard's End* - 1924, p. 123)

In *Howard's End* Forster makes more effective use of music as a way of developing and enlarging on his theme in any other of his novels and in this use of music to convey ideas essential to his story he follows in Butler's footsteps. About Mrs. Wilcox Forster writes:

"One knew that she worshipped the past and that the instinctive wisdom the past can alone bestow had descended upon her - that wisdom to which we give the clumsy name of aristocracy."

(*Howard's End, 1924, p. 19*)

Butler too believed that true wisdom is handed down from generation to generation by unconscious memory.

*A Passage to India* offers most final and satisfying solution for man's predicament to be found in Forster. Like Samuel Butler, Fielding "had dulled his craving for verbal
truth and cared chiefly for truth of mood."\(^1\) Also, like Butler, he felt that when he died he would "far rather leave a thought behind him than a child."\(^2\) Forster, like Butler, refused to have faith in the supernatural, but his remark on being asked if he believed in heaven was highly characteristic and Butlerian: "I do not yet I believe that honesty gets us there."\(^3\) "Forster's motto, like Butler's, is: 'Lord, I disbelieve. Help thou my unbelief'."\(^4\)

Ivy Compton-Burnett's theme in her novels is strongly reminiscent of Butler's. She has dated the action of her books sometime between 1888 and 1902 (the year of Butler's death). In her novels it is shown that even now when the bonds of family life have relaxed - Theobalds and Christianas horribly flourish. Parental tyranny in an unabated form still haunts many houses that

\[1. \quad \text{A Passage to India - Forster, New York, p. 72}\]
\[2. \quad \text{Ibid, p. 119}\]
\[3. \quad \text{Ibid, p. 191}\]
have a show of comfort and happiness.

In each of her novels there is a tyrant; family tyranny is always an important, usually the most important theme. In *Dolores* (1911) the selfish claims of Cleveland Hutton are always liable to break up the academic career which his daughter has made for herself.

In *Pastors and Masters* (1925) Henry Bentley, makes his children the victims of his nervous depression (as Theobald does on account of the split between his public and private life). In *Brothers and Sisters* (1929) Sophia Stace, and *Men and Wives* (1931) Harriet Haslam are tyrannical and devouring mothers (like Theobald), though they differ from each other in their aims and methods, and their mental makeup. Joseph Napier in *More Women than Men* (1933) is a more subtle type of tyrant, who is able to lead as well as drive her family and colleagues into obedience; she is the most attractive and the most dangerous of the tyrants, and the only one who combines that role with murder. Duncan Edgeworth in *A House and its Head* (1935) has the superior honesty and directness of the male oppressor, but his oppression is the more open and ruthless.
In *Daughters and Sons* (1937) the matriarch, Sabine Personby, and her unbalanced daughter, Helta, both tyrannize over their house-hold. In *A Family and a Fortune* (1939) Matilda Seaton tries to tyrannise over her richer relations, and succeeds in making the life of her paid companion impossible. The tyranny of the grandfather, Sir Jesse Sullivan, in *Parents and Children* (1941), and of the invalid aunt, Sukey Donne, in *Elders and Betters* (1944) constitute the theme of the two books. The combination of tyranny with a tendency towards violence offers Compton-Burnett's family picture a sinister look. Compton-Burnett's social criticism, like Butler's, is negative in character.

The impact of Butler on Joyce and Virginia Woolf is to be traced in respect of theme and form. Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as young man*, like *The Way of All Flesh*, is in form an autobiography which ultimately turns into social criticism. Butler's novel shows the emergence of an individual, following his clash with different social forces, into isolation. Joyce expressed the uniqueness of his hero through a complex ironic relation of young Stephen Dedalus to a variety of religious, social
and personal ceremonies. Joyce, like Butler, did not believe in imparting any final shape of triumph to his hero, so he presented his hero's reactions to the operations of different social forces in a series of momentary resolutions.

Evert Spinchom concludes an essay entitled *A Portrait of the Artist as Achilles* with 'Postscript on Influences' in which the author gives a list of books exercising influences on Joyce. According to Spinchom, psychological studies of Freud, Jung, anthropological studies of Paul Foucart, Goblet d'Alviella, Farnell, Jane Harrison influenced Joyce to a great extent. Upon the structure of *The Portrait of the Artist as a young man* Spinchom discerns an impress of Strindberg's *To Damascus* and *The Son of a Servant* and Wagner's *Persifal.*

Evert Spinchorn concludes:

As a matter of fact, each and every one of the cardinal ideas in Joyce's novel could have had its immediate source in a work published or made easily accessible between 1895 and 1914, or, to put a fine point on it, between 1906 and 1916, the very years Joyce is known to have been re-shaping the unwieldy and naturalistic Stephen Hero.
into the polished perfection of the symbolic portrait.

"Approaches to the Twentieth Century Novel, (Ed. John Unterecker), 1977, p. 50/

Butler is not specifically named, but during years between 1906 and 1914, as recorded by Virginia Woolf, The Way of All Flesh was extremely popular with the public. Martin Adams in his book After Joyce writes about The Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman - "... it is a Bildungsroman, like Wilhelm Meister, Richard Feveral, A Sentimental Education, The Way of All Flesh." But Joyce surpassed Butler and others by ignoring the pull of the central literary phenomenon of the late 19th century (preoccupation with "love, class, and morality") and by

1. "... in 1910, the flames caught; twice in that year it /The Way of All Flesh/ was reprinted, and the impression before us is the eleventh of the second edition."


3. Ibid, p. 7
inventing a new technique of novel writing (without introductions, descriptions, and formal analysis).

Butler's impact on Joyce is particularly discernible in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce's book narrates "the story of how a gifted imaginative and intellectual misfit frees himself from the shackling influence of family, church and society and sets out as an exile to fulfill his vocation."\(^1\) Stephen and Ernest are strikingly similar in their congenital awareness of isolation, in their physical fragility during school days, in getting flogged at school etc. Stephen's sex-experience with the harlot\(^2\) is better conducted than that of Ernest's experience with Miss. Maitland. The second half of Joyce's novel deals with Stephen's problem in respect of faith, his tormenting conflict between traditional concept of morality and instinctive hunger of the flesh. This conflict ultimately gave birth to the artist, "independent

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2. *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* - James Joyce, 1939, p. 115
of all religions."¹ This is sure to remind anybody of Ernest's experience which must appear shallow and external beside Stephen's. Butler's hero escapes from society, but Stephen, in spite of his awareness of a profound isolation,² ends with a "welcome"³ to life.

Virginia Woolf in a review of Harris's book on Butler enumerates the positive and negative aspects of Butler as a writer. According to Mrs. Woolf "irresponsibility"⁴ of humouring his ideas in season and out of season is his most glaring defect. Butler's "freedom of soul"⁵, his conscious treatment of life as an art are the positive aspects of his character. But Butler has taught us to be "less ambitious, less apt to be solemn and sentimental and display without shame a keener appetite for happiness"⁶. Apart from a force of character, humanity

1. The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man - James Joyce, 1939, p. 255
2. Ibid, p. 8; pp. 111 - 112
3. Ibid, p. 288
5. Ibid, p. 30
6. Ibid, p. 31
and great love of beauty, Butler's highest gift was "to have by nature a point of view, to stick to it, to follow it where it leads ...."¹

In another article on The Way of All Flesh Virginia Woolf writes:

There is a sense, after all, in which it is a limitation to be an amateur; and Butler, it seems to us, failed to be a great novelist because his novel writing was his hobby.

¹ Contemporary Writers - Virginia Woolf, London, 1965, p. 34

The Way of All Flesh, Virginia Woolf thinks, "differs from most professional novels by being more interesting and more alive",² as Butler was endowed with two formidable qualities - an elderly and disillusioned mind (to be careless of public popularity), and a weight of experience to make up for lack of enthusiasm. To Virginia Woolf The Way of All Flesh is more than a story

¹ Contemporary Writers - Virginia Woolf, London, 1965, p. 31
² Ibid, p. 34
and she writes about the purpose of the novel in the following way:

It is an attempt to impart all that Butler thought not only about the Pontifexes, but about religion, the family system, heredity, philanthropy, education, duty, happiness, sex.

Contemporary Writers -

In both these writings (a Review of Harris's book on Butler and a Review of The Way of All Flesh) nowhere Virginia Woolf acknowledges any indebtedness to Butler. Her diary, edited by her husband, also never mentions Butler. The stream of conscious technique of her novels reflects recent interest in psychology and the 'free association' used by psychiatry and this psychological preoccupation is anticipated by Butler through his theory of memory.
PART III

The seminal nature of Butler's ideas

This outline of Butler's impact on some selected writers of present century purports to bring out the seminal nature of Butler's ideas. Intellectually Butler was far in advance of his age and his visionary concepts captured the attention of so many leading novelists of the present century. An evaluation of Butler's impact on the modern writers needs a separate treatment. Butler's hero Ernest ends in a social isolation and he is an apotheosis of individualism. The western society has witnessed the break-up of the family which Butler strongly desired. But the problem of individual isolation has been intensified. The spectre of individual isolation as an inevitable upshot of technological domination in the present century is a complex and sophisticated form of Butler's view regarding human slavery to machines.

In the Introductory Chapter the aim and purpose of this dissertation have been clearly stated. It is to evaluate the late Victorian writer Samuel Butler's intellectual
quest, to assess his literary position and his literary contribution. It has been stated unambiguously that the purpose of this dissertation is to bring out the artistic aspect of Butler's intellectual quest.

An examination of Butler's writings in respect of both theme and style clearly shows that Butler claims remembrance of posterity as an acute thinker. His style is mediocre, his literary output also is not vast. His lack of passion, imagination, enthusiasm and intuitive vision act as cramping limitation on his creative talent.

Morton Zabel sums up Butler's position in the following manner:

Butler does not stand in the highest rank of English or Victorian genius. He belongs to a radically limited order of English talent - it appears in such contemporaries as Beddoes, Lewis Caroll, Walter Pater, and Housman - that shows an ingrowth of imagination and spirit and that produces an art curtailed by doubt, self-indulgence, or eccentricity.

Zabel makes a list of Butler's demerits as a writer - "sterility of emotion and moral insight"\(^1\) and preoccupation with "the canker at the heart of human nature or society"\(^2\) (which ultimately turns into a merit).

Zabel sums up -

He \(\text{Butler}\) uses those least popular of keys, common sense, imagination, and justice, to unlock certain important secrets of moral energy and to make them available to the thought and art of a new century.


Anyone has the liberty to differ with Zabel on holding Butler in the line of Beddoes, Lewis Carroll, Walter Pater etc. The depth of Butler's intellect and his endeavour to comprehend truth through an intellectual study of the problems of his age deserve appreciation and


2. \(\text{Ibid}\)
re-assessment. Living in an age of dull conformity and conventionality, he could soar beyond his own age and his intellectual pilgrimage, still not outdated, needs re-evaluation as a potent force to leaven the world of ideas in the present century.

1. "Although a rebel, he \text{Butler} was not a reformer." - Two Cheers for Democracy- E.M. Forster, 1972, p. 214