INTRODUCTION
SECTION I

Samuel Butler, best known as the author of *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, was a writer of the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of extreme intellectual fermentation. The factors leading to this fermentation will be sketched in brief outline with a view to showing Butler's relation to his age. This dissertation aims at critically sketching out the intellectual quest of Samuel Butler with particular reference to his three major literary works - *Erewhon*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *Erewhon Revisited*.

To understand and examine Butler's ideas, it is necessary to base his ideas on the main facts of his biography and a brief discussion of his works in a chronological order.

Born in the Rectory at Langer in 1835, Samuel Butler, the son of Canon Butler, did his school-course at Shrewsbury School, under the headmastership of Dr. Kennedy, a classical scholar, and matriculated in 1854 from St. John's College, Cambridge wherefrom in 1858 he took a first class (bracketed twelfth) in classics. Problems started in his choosing a profession. Deciding to be ordained he worked for sometime in a slum, encountered the problem of baptism of children and gave up his plan to be ordained. To acquire fortune he emigrated to New Zealand and as a sheep-farmer, remained there for four years and a half, sold his farm at considerable profit.
and came back to England in 1865. Toying for sometime with
the idea of taking to painting he spent a number of years
after it, finally gave it up after finding out that he posse­sed no talent for it and following this he took to writing.
But the problem of money harassed him on account of the liqui­
dation of a trading company in Canada where he had invested
his whole capital. This monetary problem persistently
haunted him till his father's death in 1886 and this death
offered him financial independence. From 1886 till his death
in 1902, his life sailed smoothly, but these years were fruit­
less in respect of creativity. This bare outline of Butler's
uneventful life is presented to form a fitting background of
his works.

Samuel Butler started his literary career as an under­
graduate student of Cambridge. His first publication in
The Cambridge Magazine was an essay entitled On English
Composition and Other Matters (1858) in which he elaborated
his idea about the style of writing and the temptations
against which a young writer should be on guard. The best
of these writings is a parody of a tract distributed by the
Simeonites, a group of Evangelicals, centred at Cambridge.

In New Zealand Butler read Darwin's The Origin of Species
and became an ardent champion of Darwinism. His zeal for
Darwinism took the form of a number of essays on Darwinism
and these were contributed to different journals of New Zealand.
In *A Dialogue* (20th September, 1862) he shows his warm support for Darwinism, expresses his deep concern for the growing crisis in faith. In his own way he makes an attempt to reconcile religion and science in the speech of a speaker called 'F'. In *Darwin Among the Machines* (13th June, 1863) in a half-humorous and light manner Butler applies the theory of natural selection to a farcical end by attributing the faculty of reproduction to the machines. Even in this earlier writing his growing concern for the mechanisation of life is evident. In *Lucubratio Ebra* (July 29, 1865) he comes back to Darwinism and argues against his statement forwarded in *Darwin Among the Machines*. His dialectical process of thinking in viewing a problem is fore-shadowed even in these earlier writings.

In *A First Year in Cantlebury Settlement*, a collected edition of his letters written home, published in a scrupulously edited form in 1863 by his father, he deals with the problems encountered by a colonialist and the prospects of sheep-farming. But it does not contain any serious reflection on life.

In 1865 Butler published an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Evidence for Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as given by the Four Evangelists* (extended later in the form of *The Fair Haven*) in which he made a critical examination of the different versions of the Gospels. This led him to entertain a sceptical attitude towards resurrection, the pivot of Christian myth.
Butler collected his New Zealand papers and gave shape to his earlier thoughts in Erewhon ("a reversed anagram of Nowhere"), a satiric and philosophical fantasy, in 1872. It presents many of his leading ideas of life - his idea of morality, the calamity of being born, the false currency of religious and ethical ideas, the plague of machinery gradually dominating human life. The concept of the Erewhonian system of education, laying stress on vagueness and evasion, is a satire on contemporary British system of education. As a major literary work of Butler it will receive exhaustive treatment in Chapter I for bringing out his intellectual quest.

In The Fair Haven, an extended form of his earlier pamphlet on resurrection, published in 1873, Butler attacked the two basic tenets of Christianity - the account of resurrection and the divinity of Christ. The conflicting versions of the different Gospels invalidated the belief in resurrection as well as his divinity. The whole writing, steeped in a spirit of irony, may mislead an unwary believer who is likely to accept the book as a serious tract expounding faith.

During the period from 1878 to 1887, a period of dissen­sion, Butler was engrossed in the problem of Darwinism and a

personal argument with Darwin. In 1878 he published Life and Habit, the most important of his scientific books, and in it Butler sought to show a design in the process of evolution. In it he put forward the idea that we are one person with our ancestors through inherited memory. Butler's second scientific book - Evolution Old and New, published in 1874, was written to demonstrate the conviction that scant justice had been done to the work of Buffon, Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck by Charles Darwin and his followers. In the same year was published God the known and God the unknown in which Butler searches for God in Pantheism, in Orthodox Theism. Both Pantheism and Orthodox Theism turn out to be as atheistic to Butler, as Pantheism brings the concept of an impersonal God (which conveys no more meaning to Butler than an impersonal person) and the God of Orthodox Theism is not a God, for Butler held that we cannot conceive of an intelligence without a body. The third possibility of conceiving God without a body is considered and rejected. In Life and Habit he had put forward the idea of one single individuality perpetuated through memory and the Vast Being is the real Tree of Life. Butler held the unknown God as the expression of our ultimate ignorance. This unknown God is vaster and more remote - who called the known God into existence.

The theory of memory which Butler set up to explain the problem of heredity found fuller treatment in his third scientific book - Unconscious Memory, published in 1880.
Alps and Sanctuaries, published in 1882, Butler's next writing, was a book of travel in Italy, his second home.

In 1887 was published Luck, or Cunning? - his last scientific book in which Butler stressed two points - (1) the substantial identity of heredity and memory, (2) the reintroduction of design into organic development.

In his four scientific books Butler is concerned with the exploration of the mystery of heredity and this pursuit is a clear evidence of his deep and serious involvement in life. Bernard Shaw called the scientific theories of Butler "extra-ordinarily fresh, free and future-piercing." In his scientific books Butler achieved more than he himself realized. In these books he was on the verge of the whole subject of social psychology - a subject whose importance has been recognised in our time. In framing his theory of memory Butler did more than attacking Darwin, he did a pioneering work in exploring human mind and heredity. These scientific books are important also for sounding a warning regarding the alarming growth of authoritarianism in the men of science.

Darwin's death in 1882, the hostile reaction of the reviewers and the scientific world for his attack on Darwinism led Butler to renounce the scientific controversy and to get

himself engrossed in writings of varied literary interest. Ex Voto, published in 1888, was Butler's second book on Italy. In 1892 he delivered A Lecture On the Humour of Homer which indicated his growing interest in the Homeric problems. Out of this interest was born On the Trapanese Origin of the Odyssey, published in 1873, and in it Butler made a wild conjecture of establishing Sicily as the site of the Odyssean story. The respite he found from his involvement in the Knotty authorship problem of Homer was devoted to trace the personality of his illustrious grandfather - Dr. Samuel Butler, the famous headmaster of Shrewsbury. This labour of love with a view to compensating for the misrepresentation of the venerable old man in the character of John Pontifex in The Way of All Flesh found literary expression in Life and Letters of Dr. Samuel Butler, published in 1889. The involvement in the Homeric problem recurs in The Authoress of Odyssey, published in 1897, and in it Butler advanced the fanciful theory that Odyssey had been written by a woman. His interest in the authorship problem led him to translate the Iliad and the Odyssey in up-to-date English in 1898. He published Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered in 1899 and in it he dismissed both the theories that W.H. was either William Herbert or Lord Southampton and identified him as a person named William Hughes. On the basis of internal evidence he attempted
to establish that the sonnets were "the first poems that Shakespeare wrote."¹ To Butler the sonnets "are the unguarded expression of the inmost feelings of one whose privacy should have been especially and particularly sacred."² Butler accepted the scandalous interpretation of the sonnets, but still did not fail to appreciate the literary excellence of the sonnets.

These writings from 1888 to 1889, devoted to the authorship problem, only exhibit dissipation of Butler's intellectual energy, but they indicate his basic investigating habit.

Frustrated by the cold reception he had received from his books, Butler returned to his idea of Erewhon and revisited his land of dreams in Erewhon Revisited, published in 1901. In this book he attempted to make good his own caricatures of British national hypocrisy and disingenuousness presented in Erewhon. In spite of his assertion that the purpose of the book was "the story of a father trying to win the love of a hitherto unknown son,"³ the consistent satire on the miraculous

1. Shakespeare's Sonnets Reconsidered - Samuel Butler (Ed. 1925).
2. Ibid, p. 141
element of Christianity in the form of the gradual growth and flourish of sunchildism is evident. The entire academic, ecclesiastical and scientific world has been held up to ridicule through the two professors - Prof. Hanky and Prof. Panky. The contemporary system of education has been subjected to severe criticism in the person of Prof. Logomachy whose text book *The Art of Obscuring Issues* had passed through ten or twelve editions.

*The Way of All Flesh*, published posthumously in 1903 by R.A.Streatfield, written intermittently over a long period (Butler began the novel in 1873, and worked at it off and on until 1885), is Butler's only novel through which he wished to be remembered. Gilbert Cannan in his book *Samuel Butler, a Critical Study* describes the theme of the book as "the relation of parents and children under the shadow of the Church of England .... "¹ This subject has been heightened by the fact that it is largely autobiographical. Chronologically it belongs to the same period as *Life and Habit* and may be regarded as a practical commentary on and illustration of the theory of heredity there propounded. The whole Victorian society with its sham and hypocrisy has been mirrored here. Butler examined critically many problems of his age - the family as an institution, the problem of heredity and the

Gilbert Cannan,

p. 108
upbringing of children, the ritualistic forms of religion, systems of education, the tyranny of parents over the children etc. In *The Way of All Flesh* Butler wished to "expose a hollow seriousness."\(^1\) The devastating satire of the novel has made a modern critic call it "one of the time - bombs of literature."\(^2\)

Butler's *Note Books*, published posthumously by H.F.Jones in 1902 and by A.T.Bartholomew in 1934, provides information regarding his likes and dislikes, his method of writing and many other things. They contain valuable records regarding his ideas of life, truth, morality, his age and idea of death.

His *Essays on Life, Art and Science*, first edited and published by R.A.Streatfield in 1904, also contain some articles which provide a clear view of his life.

Butler's letters written to his friend Miss. Savage and to the members of his family also contain important documentary evidence for framing his intellectual quest.

The present dissertation aims at bringing out Butler's intellectual quest mainly in his three major (creative) literary works - *Erewhon*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *Erewhon Revisited*.

This selection has been made as these three writings are purely creative works of aesthetic appeal. His literary essays, Note Books and his letters will provide the groundwork for constructing the principles inherent in Butler's intellectual quest. The other works will be discussed in their broad lineaments. But adequate attention will be paid to those works which are not strictly literary (The Fair Haven, God the Known and God the Unknown and the scientific books), but form the foundation of Butler's artistic vision.

Samuel Butler, best known as the author of Erewhon, was a writer who became most creative during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The second half of the nineteenth century was a strange amalgam of reality and unreality - progress and prosperity in all spheres - trade, commerce, industry, science, technology; but poverty and squalor also stalked wide over the country. Butler's Erewhon brings back the concept of Utopia the tradition of which dates back to The Republic of Plato. Butler chose this Utopian framework as his attitude toward life was basically critical and satire and irony, of which he was a past master, were to function dangerously in this Utopian work. As an emerging writer he was calling into question some basic norms of life of an age which, lost in a state of respectability and complacency, claimed egregiously a social progress without any parallel.
Butler gave a new lease of life to the Utopian theme and this pioneered a spurt of attempts in the same field by Lord Lytton, William Morris, H.G. Wells, Bernard Shaw and many others. The sixth decade of the 19th century witnessed unparalleled prosperity and the revolutionary explorations of science which coupled with philosophical theorisation held the promise of a new era of uninterrupted progress and stability. But the actual trend of events failed to fulfil the popular expectation and Erewhon, a Utopia, mirrors this frustration due to non-fulfilment of a desired expectation.

The concept of Utopia acquires a new dimension in the nineteenth century. In Early Victorian England the social situation evoked as much dissatisfaction as enthusiasm. It was "the Railway Age,"¹ in which "certain sections of the British people groaned under the crushing load of inequitous laws and customs."² But the "railway development coincided with an unprecedented fillip to metallurgy and mining"³ and "it facilitated the supply of goods to an unlimited demand of unprotected market in the tropics and sub-tropics."⁴ The wonderful changes in the form of Catholic emancipation, abolition of slavery, changes in poor law, the establishment of beer-houses, extension of the British empire, astounding strides in art, science

2. Ibid, p. 140
3. Ibid,
4. Ibid, p. 141
and mechanisation within a short span of time — all refer to a rapid and comprehensive change in the social fabric. The French Revolution effected a radical change in the social system of England in all phases. This social ferment of the age led to the writing of *Political Justice* of William Godwin, "Cobden's fight for parliamentary reforms and for justice to the poor, Owen's lead in the co-operative movement, Francis Place's services to trade unionism, Ashley's tenacious steering of a series of factory legislations, and Chadwick's *Public Health Act,*"¹ the Chartist Movement, the *laissez faire* doctrine of Bentham and Mill. All these worked together toward evolving an emerging and enlightened form of democracy in England. This emerging democracy with the rising middle-class in power gave a concrete shape to the revolutionary ideology of the French Revolution. Liberalism and individualism were fostered by these socio-political and economic changes.

In this age of far-reaching changes, as the Early Victorian period was, a multiplicity of opinions regarding ends and means prevails. Amidst the conflict of opinions — Tory, Radical, moderate, ecclesiastical, secular, Christian, materialist— we note an agreement on the sharp and antagonistic class differences in society. The Chartists aimed at removing class differences by liquidating the privileged aristocracy, the

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¹ Op. cit., p. 141
Young Englanders urged an alliance between the Aristocracy and Labour, the Christian Socialist applied his interpretation of the gospel to social problems; while the humanist sought to disentangle the enduring principles of life from the fluid passion of the moment. All agreed that the miseries of poverty which had overwhelmed the labouring classes during the last half-century or more required steady eradication. Apart from the recurrent theme concerning the rich-and-poor, other topical questions which engaged attention were - the Corn Laws and Free Trade; the anti-social character of the church; factory conditions, condition in mines, child labour, female labour, agriculture labour; slavery, colonial life, emigration, convicts, temperance and the fallen woman. All these bring out the many-sided socio-economic problems of the times.

Through these fast and sweeping political, economic, philosophical changes the rapid rise of the middle class to dominate power and culture on a glorious sea of confidence is evident. It heralded an era of unparalleled peace, prosperity and complacency. The existence of poverty was cognisable, but it was expected to be mended by science and sound religion. The whole period was involved in manifold conflict of ideas which were bound into a whole by the moral sense, the social conscience animating the middle class.
A "kind of busy serenity", evident in the International Exhibition of 1851, prevails over England after 1850. The fifties and sixties might be called the Era of Technical Learning both in commerce and industry. When Darwin and Huxley brought revolution in the field of philosophy, more far-reaching revolutions were afoot in the field of technological break-through in the standardization and perfection of machine tools. The labour-saving and cost-cutting factories flourished on the death-bed of cottage industries. Population mounted up and prosperity kept pace with it. The labour problem became almost tranquil. The unions, not yet legitimised, were reforming. Agriculture also took a new lease of life. The increasing demand for food-stuff and the easy transport system through the railway added fillip to the flourish of agriculture. The age was rolling in prosperity with solitary warning voices from men like Carlyle, Arnold and Ruskin about the menace of philistinism overtaking the age. But after 1873 the Great Depression persistently plagued England till the end of the century. The Depression, further accentuated by a commercial rivalry with America and Australia, took the outlet in the form of extending colonisation. The technological advance during the period was too fast to be grasped.

1. The Victorians And After (Ed. Batho, Dobrée and Chapman, 1938), p. 137
The mid-Victorian British society was dominated by the Utilitarian doctrines of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Bentham offered his gospel of Utilitarianism at a time out-of-joint when some clerical views regarded poverty as 'ordained', and persuaded the poor to submission in the name of religion. Benthamism dismissed "moral sense, love, right, in fact all the terms which formed the moral vocabulary"¹ and sought to establish "a moral arithmatic, a 'felicific calculus' by means of which the greatest happiness of the greatest number might be calculated, thus making traditional ethics superfluous."² The Benthamite "doctrine of Utility is a quantitatively conceived hedonism..."³

John Stuart Mill was unquestionably an acute thinker, and highly influential in his age because of the clarity and persuasiveness of his points of view. But his philosophy, materialistic in character, was after the style of Bentham, not Kant, Herbert Spencer but not Soren Kierkegaard, materialistic but not fundamental and idealistic. Stuart Mill, more than any other, stimulated the Victorian general reader to an interest in philosophical discussion. Though in the main faithful to the tenets of the Utilitarian school, positivist in his views of science, associationist in psychology, agnostic in religion,

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2. Ibid, p. 35
Mill had a mind of singular candour and breadth of sympathy. These characteristics show the development of social philosophy to something very like liberal socialism. His contribution to Benthamism was to impart feeling and passion. His concept of altruism—the cult of the Religion of Humanity—brings out the essence of religion—the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object.

The cult of Utilitarianism, based on reason and empiricism, gave birth to the doctrine of Laissez faire which formed a natural law of booming the profit on scientific grounds and recommended abstention from all attempts to improve the lot of the workers. Carlyle and Dickens in the first half of the reign of Victoria were concerned with describing and analysing the conditions of England, examining prevailing economic doctrines relating to poverty, population, the scope of public responsibility and suggesting a handsome and humanitarian alternatives to the current doctrine.

Utilitarian dominance of philosophy gave way to the Philosophy of Evolution under the leadership of Herbert Spencer who viewed philosophy as science and advocated individualism with restricted state-interference. Spencerian philosophy, described as neo-Kantian or neo-Hegelian, having its germ in Kantian speculative philosophy, was in constant conflict with current empirical philosophy. Ferrier, Stirling, Green, Caird
and Bradley were the most prominent spokesmen of this school of philosophy.

The second half of the Victorian Period witnessed also the gradual growing out of power of the middle classes and the slow emergence of socialism (in the sense of collectivism). Socialism had been present all through the period - in the form of Owenism, Chartism, Trade Union Movement; but this earlier socialism, imbued with Benthamite individualism, was strangely at variance with the doctrines of Marx, which only at the end of the period began to affect socialistic thought. In the face of individualistic spirit of the period, this age covers an almost bewildering development of state. The middle class in the saddle through the enactment of different Acts - the Reform Act of 1832, Chartism, Trade Union Act of 1871, the Employees and Workingmen Act of 1875 etc - decreed the rise of the workers and finally led to the formation of the Labour Party.

Victorian Liberalism in politics coincided with liberalism in religion. Evangelicalism dominated the first half of the age which entered into a theological debate in the Tractarian Movement which was a purely Tory reaction against the growing power of the middle class and was an assertion of authority, lying outside the scope of Parliament. Symptomatically it brings out the Victorian uneasiness, born out of a spirit of
enquiry stimulated by rationalism and empiricism, in the field of faith and this uneasiness finds climactic expression in the sixties of the century following the publication of The Origin of Species. Basil Willey in his book - Darwin and Butler - Two Versions of Evolution remarks -

"Three great explosions took place in rapid succession which rocked the fabric of Christendom and sent believers scuttling for shelter. The first was the Origin of Species (1859), the second, Essays and Reviews (1860), and the third, Bishop Colenso's The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined (1862)."

Rationalism waged war on religion and this war took literary form in the major writings of the period - in Tennyson's poetry, in the pessimistic writings of Arnold, Clough and Hardy. Francis Newman, J.A. Froude, Frederick Temple, Rowland Williams, Baden Powell, Henry Wilson, C.M. Goodwin, Mark Pattison, Benjamin Jowett, Mark Rutherford, John Morley - these honest doubters record this struggle and work for a synthesis of faith with rationalism. Positivism, Spencerian Evolutionism, Agnosticism and Pragmatism are attempts to avoid the struggle and evolve a working faith.

This brief and outline survey of the Victorian Period with a view to tracing the yeast of social ferment leaves out of

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account many other aspects. But a short reference to the impact of science is felt as a necessity. Geology, biology and anthropology were not directly influential in producing a revolution in thought. Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-1833), *The Vestiges of the Natural History* (1844) by Robert Chambers, *The Origin of Species* (1859), the books of Herbert Spencer (*Principles of Biology*, *Principles of Psychology*, *Principles of Sociology*), *Man's Place in Nature* (1863) by Thomas Huxley pioneered in evolving a scientific attitude to life. Works in technical fields, such as electro-magnetism, a field graced by Faraday, probably had little influence, except reinforcing the Utilitarian movement and encouraging the idea of progress.

The purpose of this brief survey, which in no way can claim comprehensiveness, is to bring out the chief social preoccupations of the age which amalgamates contradictory aspects - progression and retrogression, prosperity and poverty, elation and despair. The spirit of such a period of varied aims and objectives urges the contemporary intellectuals to view the age from widely differing angles. All the writers of this period endeavour to adjust the problems of their age to their own standpoints and these individual attempts to understand the social problems constitute their intellectual quest.
As we have stated earlier, this dissertation aims at evaluating the intellectual quest in the major literary works of Samuel Butler, a late Victorian writer. But an attempt to examine Butler's intellectual quest will be preceded by an examination of the intellectual quest of some other writers and thinkers of the age, major and minor, such as, Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Dickens, George Eliot, John Bury, Arthur Clough, Disraeli, Dicey, Capel Loft, Charles Mackey, Gerald Massey. This selection, made on the basis of exclusive pre-occupation with the socio-economic problems of the age and their-representative character, includes writers from different fields of literature. With that principle in view some writers, chronologically belonging to the early Victorian Period and some decidedly minor writers, have been enlisted. This brief survey purports to sketch the intellectual response of some leading intellectuals to the social ferment of the mid and late Victorian Period and against this sketch Samuel Butler's intellectual quest will be easier to comprehend and evaluate.

Tennyson, intensely aware of his responsibility as a poet, was ambitious of interpreting his age and was adequately well-equipped to discover the relevant aspects of contemporary life.
which were of sufficient significance for this interpretative purpose. He had an earnest desire to do something to help those who lived in misery. He would invite a change since change was in accordance with the law of Nature. Tennyson brooded over the requirements of the age and found out that the age could best be served by those who would project their vision beyond their age. In assuming such a far-stretching, visionary view of things, Tennyson advisedly refused to overrate the contemporary social unrest. His aim was to penetrate through the dust and cobwebs of passing events to vigorous and stable principles. Tennyson's was a judicial and unimpassioned reaction to the social situation which preferred principles to events. But his poetry reflects the cult of doubt, though intellectual doubts no longer assailed him as belief absolute had been the solvent of the 'ghastliest doubt': In Memoriam embodies his intellectual quest and the "intellectual content of In Memoriam mainly relates to (i) the question of the immortality of the soul, (ii) the consideration of evil in human nature, (iii) the consideration of evil in external nature, of the apparent strife between God and Nature, (iv) a compromise between Knowledge and Wisdom, and (v) the idea of Progress."¹ The first four are philosophical preoccupations and the last is the

¹ Chroniclers of Life - Amalendu Bose, p. 234
preoccupation with the concept of Progress. The awareness of evolution is present in Tennyson long before Darwin's great work was published. Unable to brush aside the evidence of science, he passionately loathes the animal part of man and urges man to outgrow it.

Carlyle viewed the Victorian sense of progress as going straight away to darkness and the dogs. As the strongest moral force in the nineteenth century, he was a veritable leader to those who walked in uncertainty and darkness due to pervasive encroach of materialism and dismal science. He laughed to scorn the pretensions of scientific materialism to undermine man's faith in the unseen, was critical of the contemporary science of economy, championed the spiritual against the material, demanded respect for justice and for the moral laws. Basil Willey writes on this aspect of Carlyle -

"He correctly diagnosed the weaknesses and exposed the cant of Victorian 'democracy' : its reliance upon laissez faire economics, its superficial concept of freedom, its belief in the virtues of political enfranchisement, its deficiency in purpose, idea or soul."¹

According to Carlyle, the need of the time was a true Aristocracy,

an Aristocracy of the Wise, and a true priesthood with ordered
hierarchy. In Chartism the stir-up of his sympathies for the
oppressed classes is evident. But his solution of the problem
favours reverting to the condition of the Middle Ages. In
Carlyle's writings the chief concern was the description and
analysis of the condition of England, another concern was the
examination of the prevailing economic doctrines related to
poverty, population, and the scope of public responsibility,
and the third was the attempt to suggest more handsome and
humanitarian alternatives to these doctrines.

Ruskin, the professed disciple of Carlyle, more methodical
than the master, subjected himself to rigorous and systematic
training, to analyse the contemporary social situation. It was
Carlyle who first convinced him of the horror of industrial
economics. He was realistic enough to understand that a change
of heart among the employers, and nicely behaved employees
could not solve the industrial problem of the age. He saw that
the whole basis of economic system would have to be changed.
Ruskin's crusade against the age was directed to make man free
from the slavery to tools, to root out unhealthy egoism pervad­
ing the principle of law and demand. As a cure of the social
problems he suggested the development of the organic principles
of order and solidarity accepting the family and religion as
practical ideals, humanization of industry by the establishment
of small workshop and renunciation of all over-elaborate forms of mechanism. In Unto This Last (1862) his aim was to bring into prominence human factors which became obscured by generation of abstract discussion. In Fors Clavigera he elaborated his suggested form of government replacing further development of democracy. He was in favour of some kind of authoritarian leadership in the role of overseers and pastors rather than ruthless tyrants. Ruskin's long discussion on the possibility of bringing about social reforms by educating the masses and inducing a desire for the moral life is tediously naive. Some of the measures suggested by Ruskin like the practice of austerity by the poor to show the well-to-do the pleasure of simplicity, the advice of practising self-reliance and self-help to the workers etc are neither sound nor practicable.

The contribution of John Stuart Mill to the field of philosophy has already been outlined in the Section I of this discussion. Mill believed in the possibility of indefinite progress and perfectibility, a common belief of the age, but assumed that the masses would never be able to do better than the best leaders. For Mill the point of departure and the final end were always the individual. Two economic facts lie at the basis of Mill's political ideology - a belief in the Malthusian theory of population which he held to lead to impoverishment and consequent misery and the belief in the operation of a law of
diminishing returns in the field of profit. Mill viewed that the true purpose of mechanical inventions was "not to increase wealth, but to abridge labour, and create leisure for cultivating the graces of life." He indulged in the luxury of a Utopian dream of a stationary state in which the increase of population would be arrested and the existing habits of mankind could be improved by education and an enhanced standard of living. This could be improved by state intervention which was advocated by Mill in the better distribution of wealth, in providing a national education, in framing laws restraining imprudent marriages, in alleviating displaced workers. Mill's advocacy for state interference is a paradox in the thinking process of the apostle of individualism.

Arnold, like Carlyle and Ruskin, was a tireless and powerful social critic. He sympathised with the Chartists, though he


"Hitherto it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make fortunes. They have increased the comforts of the middle classes. But they have not yet begun to effect those great changes in human destiny, which it is in their nature and in their futurity to accomplish." - Political Economy (1865), Vol. II, bk IV, p. 332
would be sorry to live under their government. In Arnold we encounter a new phenomenon - the literary intelligence playing freely upon the great concerns of human life. His main effort was that of a sage, a teacher, a moralist, and a physician of the human spirit. With the motto of 'Estoile ergo vos perfect' - 'the full perfection of humanity' which was his life-long quest, with serene detachment and inward poise, Arnold produced Culture and Anarchy, a masterpiece of ridicule as well as a searching analysis of contemporary society. The particular 'anarchy' confronting Arnold during writing Culture and Anarchy was the anarchy associated with second Reform Bill, with trade-union disturbances, Fenian outrages, the Murphy riots at Birmingham and Manchester, and the like. Basil Willey writes on this -

"The old world was dead, killed by the French and Industrial Revolutions, and in the vast, sprawling democracy which had succeeded he could see no centre of control, no sense of direction, little in fact but the worship of Mammon and machinery, supported by a faith in the virtue of 'doing-as-one-likes', and a complacent belief in material progress."¹

Faith in machinery, Arnold viewed, was the besetting danger of the age - faith in coal, railways, wealth, and increasing population and faith, too, in freedom to say and to do just one

¹. Nineteenth Century Studies - Basil Willey, p. 265
liked. The Philistines with the Puritan or Dissenting connection, according to Arnold, were to be relied on for upholding the cause of culture. He laid stress on more and more central planning, more enlightenment at the heart of the body politic, and above all state education for the middle classes and the masses. He set up a new humanism to replace the religious debacle of the time. He battled continuously against provincialism, smugness and narrowness of mind. Amalendu Bose writes:

"The contemporary social situation did not provide Arnold with a theme. In rejecting this muddled situation in favour of deeper moral issues, Arnold brought himself in line with Tennyson and Browning. And perhaps this dichotomy within himself between his democratic sympathy for the suffering multitude and his realization of the unsuitability of this sympathy and this suffering for aesthetic purposes was an aggravating factor to his melancholy."^1

F.R. Leavis calls Dickens an entertainer without any profounder responsibility as a creative artist. But a study of Dickens's novels exhibits his serious preoccupation with his contemporary social evils. According to Allen Dickens was the expression of the conscience of his age. — Allen writes:

1. **Chroniclers of Life** — Amalendu Bose,

p. 211
"He showed his readers what they themselves thought and felt of the great social problems which confronted them; or rather, reading him, they discovered what they thought and felt."¹

Dickens attacked different aspects of social evils - the British penal code (in Pickwick Papers), the workhouse (in Oliver Twist), the atrocious state of things in the private schools of Yorkshire (in Nicholas Nickleby), persecution of children by their selfish elders (in The Old Curiosity Shop), avarice (in Martin Chuzzlewit), child-labour and public school (in David Copperfield), well-to-do, mercantile and professional classes (in Dombey and Son), the delays and inequities of the laws (in Bleak House), the evils of industrialism (in Hard Times), the delays and inefficiencies of government offices (in Little Dorrit).

In his later novels the criticism of his age became increasingly more radical. The overriding single subject of these later novels was money which was used as a symbol for power, position and so on. Dombey and Son, Bleak House, Great Expectations deal with the theme of money which causes different social and personal evils. F. R. Leavis praises Hard Times as a "comprehensive"² criticism of his age dominated by the gross and materialistic philosophy of Utilitarianism.

"Gradgrind is a Utilitarian"¹ and he stands as a class name for the hard Victorian employer. To Dickens public commission, Blue Books, Parliamentary legislation are Gradgrindery. In Josiah Bounderby Dickens attacked rough justice, the embodiment of the aggressive money-making and power-seeking individual which was a driving force of the Industrial Revolution. Dickens did not like the mean side of the Manchester philosophy—the preaching of an impossible thrift and intolerable temperance. He hit hard at the economists, though the hit was without any background of a theory.

Chesterton thinks that Dickens's onslaught on the solid scientific school was most effective, as it was not backed by any theoretic framework. But Cross calls Dickens "a sort of professor of humanitarianism."² Raymond Williams, a recent critic, also shares the view of Cross—

"His (Dickens's) positives do not lie in social improvement, but rather in what he sees as the elements of human nature—personal kindness, sympathy, and forbearance."³

Dickens sought to arouse the conscience of the British public, and he left the issue with themselves. He recognised the

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3. *Culture and Society (1780-1950)* - Raymond Williams, p. 106
suffering people as objects of pity and advocated the hopelessness and passive suffering against the attempts of the working people to better their conditions.

Fiction in the hands of George Eliot is no longer a mere entertainment. It strikes a new note of seriousness and even of sternness. With passionate determination to speak the truth which was a doctrine and a conviction to her, she turned to writing novels. She renounced Evangelicalism in which she was brought up, abandoned positivism, found pantheism unsatisfying. But many passages of her novels imply that she could never eradicate a profound sense, not merely of divine immanence, but of divine transcendence. Her philosophy was simply a moral philosophy and she dealt with the problem of knowledge in terms of ethical truth. In political belief she was a radical tory. "Her toryism is evident in her traditionalism, her delight in an ordered, hierarchical way of life in which everyone has his prescribed place and duties." Her moral beliefs were in consonance with the findings of contemporary science, particularly heredity took the shape of scientific determinism in her views. She knew all the social currents and stresses operating between the various hierarchies.

1. The English Novel - Walter Allen., p. 221
Her three earlier novels - *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Silas Mariner* (1861), were set against the background of rural life. In these novels of reminiscences she rendered the piquancy and charm of personal experience and drew the England of her young days. F. R. Leavis calls these "her classics."¹ In these novels she established her as a novelist of warm sympathy for the humble and disgraced. The Reform Movement of 1832 furnished the background of her one venture into the political novel, *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866). To George Eliot true reform lay in the resolve of the mass of the people to learn to think and act for themselves. Felix "is shown as a working man radical, determined to stick to his own class, and to apply solely to the energies of 'moral force'."² George Eliot's view of the common people is very like that of Carlyle in *Shooting Niagara*. Raymond Williams comments on George Eliot's political ideas -

(She)"is that of a Carlyle without the energy, of an Arnold without the quick practical sense, of an anxiously balancing Mill without the intellectual persistence."³

She recognised the social evil of industrialism, but this recognition was balanced by fear of becoming involved. "Sympathy was transformed, not into action, but into withdrawl."⁴ Her skill

². *Culture and Society* - Raymond Williams, p. 115
³. Ibid, p. 118
⁴. Ibid, p. 119
in portraying a whole community in *Middlemarch* (1872), her best novel, invites comparison with Balzac, and her picture of village life has been compared to that in Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*. We find in *Middlemarch*, "not character modified by circumstance only, but character first impelled and then modified by the beliefs, the ambitions, the spiritual objects which it assimilates."\(^1\)

George Eliot's contribution to the development of the novel came from her conscious attempt at realism, especially in probing character and social situations of provincial life. She had the ability to analyze the interdependence of people in a restricted community, to assess their motivations, and to treat the intricate effects of the social climate on personality. It is true that her tendency to write as though she were giving a lesson in ethics or psychology slowed up the story. Nevertheless, she must be placed among the first significant writers of the psychological - sociological novel. \(^2\)

Our brief discussion so far brings out that almost all the major writers of the period were in reaction against their age and they were more concerned with analysing the distressing

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social situation rather than making a direct theme of it. This age under consideration is unparalleled in evoking serious and engaging social attention from the writers, major and minor. This social preoccupation in some minor writers is going to be traced now. John Bury in his *The Idea of Progress* describes the ruling Victorian faith in progress which was generally accepted as a common basis of literary thought. A. H. Clough, the apostle of anti-*laissez-faire*, opposed to the prevailing Benthamite creed, in his poetry and prose-writings analyses the contemporary social situation and these analyses, always liberal and unorthodox, show the potentiality of his turning into a socialist, if he lived longer. In his poems Clough reaches no conclusions about the social muddle. It is because his attitude well represents the attitude of a sensitive section of the bourgeoisie of the times and because he is one of the few abler writers to introduce the contemporary social situation in sustained works that Clough is of considerable interest to the students of the social ferment of the Early Victorian period. Benjamin Disraeli was inspiring the Young England group with a reformulated Aristocratic principle of social relations. Class-distinction, not class-antagonism, is the cardinal principle of Disraeli's scheme. *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845), and *Tancard* (1847) - these three novels of Disraeli may be regarded as manifestoes of and
to the Young England party. They are still indispensable documents to chronicle the history of the time. Disraeli's preoccupation with the problem of the working class was regarded as a heresy in his age and as politically motivated. But the later course of events testified to his sagacity and foresight. Dicey, the constitutionalist, in his book *Law and Opinion in England* offered a systematic picture of the times, dwelling on the causes leading to the failure of Chartism, the advent of Disraeli's Young England Group, and the occasional exhibition of sentimental friendliness of the Tories toward the workmen. Capel Loft in his remarkable verse-novel *Ernest*, never losing his firm grip on the contemporary socio-economic situation and the gathering storm for creating an atmosphere of actuality around his descriptions, has enriched his novel with the romantic story of a political revolution that aligns itself vaguely also to the medieval legend of King Arthur. No one has iterated in verse the idea of progress oftener than Charles Mackey whose social philosophy was a curious combination of the technique of Carlyle and Macaulay. With no patience with Benthamism, he preaches the gospel of work. He did not notice any class-antagonism and he prescribed education as the panacea to combat the primitive selfishness, urging man to fight and to suffer. Another minor Victorian verse-writer, Gerald Massey was a plain humanitarian
talking vaguely and piously about hope and faith, kindness and love, of meekness and duty, of the mystical assurance that however gloomy the situation then was, everything would be right in the end. The poetry of Gerald Massey is another instance of the revolutionary ardour frittering itself away in tame generalities.

We now pass on to a writer of this age which, as evident in the brief survey offered above, is characterised by profound changes in the socio-economic pattern and like Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, Mill, Arnold and other major writers of the age, Butler attempted to analyse the social problems of his time. With a strong ideological bias he passed on from the particular to the general - from an ideological interpretation of the social changes to an ideological view of human life in general. This ideological approach to the contemporary social ferment constitutes the Kernel of his intellectual quest.

From the time of the French Revolution onwards the English literature is permeated with a profound philosophical quest which was a product of the idealism of Kant and Hegel, a new knowledge and expansion of the universe. This philosophic quest for exploring the meaning of life, a common mid-Victorian pre-occupation, finding expression in Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, Arnold, is present in Butler's writings also. The problem of evolution, its impact to transform the pattern
of life and a changed view of human existence—were the ruling passion of Butler's intellectual life. This starting point of preoccupation with evolutionary principle is the germ of his thinking about evolving a new concept of Christianity which could support the ethical burden of a sceptical society and added to the moral responsibility of man and his relation to the universe.

Throughout his life in all of his works his spirit of quest is obvious. His search for the location of a Utopia (in Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited), for finding out the true tenets of Christianity by weeding out the interpolations of the miracles indicate his spirit of quest. In his scientific books he is after tracing a design or purpose in the evolutionary principle and setting up his theory of vitality (which was to be elaborated by Shaw and Bergson) controlling the process of evolution and enunciating the theory of memory guiding heredity. The Way of All Flesh, apart from tracing the disastrous effect of narrow evangelical training on the upbringing of the younger generation, is a practical application of Butler's theory of heredity to concrete practical problems of life. His involvement in the Knotty authorship problem of Homer, in offering an emotional and personal interpretation of the Shakespearean sonnets and in revealing the unexplored genius of his illustrious grandfather—all these indicate unmistakably the same investigating nature of his genius.
This investigating spirit brings out Butler's ideological approach to life. In the accepted conventional sense he was not a believer. He was primarily concerned with the problem relating to the origin of life, and its flourish through the process of evolution. The problem of faith under the onslaught of science was a major preoccupation to the Victorian intellectuals and this problem occupied a significant role in Butler's writings. His four books on evolution (*Life and Habit* (1878), *Evolution Old and New* (1879), *Unconscious Memory* (1880) and *Luck, or Cunning?* (1887)) and *God the Known and God the Unknown* (1879) deal with the same theme. It is his search for the concept of a spirit in whom the visible universe exists and outside which nothing can have its existence. *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), his only novel, also deals with the growing doubt of an educated young man with religious upbringing, his ultimate break with Christianity and evolving a natural religion which liberates the spirit from the bondage of artificial imposition. *Erewhon* (1872) and *Erewhon Revisited* (1901) — his two Utopias, meant primarily as satires on society, also hold up the problem of the infiltration of mythical and miraculous elements of Christianity. In *Luck, or Cunning?*, Butler's concluding book on evolution he reached the conclusion — "No one can draw a sharp line between ego and non-ego, nor indeed any sharp line between any classes of phenomena."  

1. *Luck, or Cunning?* — Samuel Butler (1922 Ed.), p. 98
further wrote - "there is an unseen world with which we in some mysterious way come into contact, though the writs of our thoughts do not run within it."¹ He attributed the origin of life to the 'Life Force'. This attribution shows him speaking of religion in the language of science. He accepted the possibility concerning the existence of an Unknown God, but was satisfied in accepting the Known God - the 'Life Force' - who is not perfect and complete, but is always changing and gradually ascending.

This ideological preoccupation forms the core of Butler's intellectual quest. His concept of morality, founded not on religious doctrine, was based on the concept of immediate pleasure and well-being.² He applied his amoral idealism to interpret the problems of his time and to criticise the various beliefs and institutions of the late Victorian period - like education, menacing mechanisation of life, the growing danger of professionalism, ritualistic religion, sham, hypocrisy and

1. Luck, or Cunning? - Samuel Butler (1922 ed.), p. 266
2. (a) "Morality turns on whether the pleasure precedes the pain or follows it." - The Note Books of Samuel Butler, (Ed. H.F. Jones, 1919), p. 29
   (b) "The true laws of God are the laws of our well-being."
   - Ibid, p. 26
prudery predominating Victorian social life. Of the sciences, the branch in which he found absorbing interest was the biological sciences. In this field his contribution lies in framing the principle of 'Life Force' and in laying the foundation of psychological exploration of the mind which Butler held as a palimpsest receiving the impression of different births in the form of memory. His second contribution was in sounding a warning about the growth of scientific orthodoxy which he noticed with dismay to supplant religious orthodoxy.

Butler viewed the problems of his period from a theoretical standpoint. He kept himself aloof from any discussion of the social problems from either economic standpoint or from the basis of any political theory. His main concern was framing a theory of human existence in the light of Darwinian evolutionism. Completely indifferent to either the Victorian prepossessing belief in the idea of Progress or in the problem of poverty as a social malady of the age, he shared only one common characteristic of the late Victorian thinkers - the problem of reconciling science with faith. Butler shared the scepticism of Francis Newman about the miraculous incidents of Christianity and took the same stand with John Morley who advocated religion of Christ and severely attacked the Established church. The problem of Theobald in The Way of All Flesh was to practise compulsive professional hypocrisy and
this problem finds echo in Morley's treatment of the problem of a clergyman who had lost his faith, but had to accept it as a living at the cost of his conscience.

Butler's attitude to the problems of his age was marked with a note of ambivalence. His common habit of viewing a problem from an ordinary angle and then an inverted angle is noticeable even in the field of religion. His attack on religion was directed against the aspects of dogmatic orthodoxy and institutionalised tyranny. Butler described God in *Luck, or Cunning?* as "the ineffable contradiction in terms whose presence none can either enter, or never escape." All through his life he was haunted by this contradiction - an attempt to escape from God and also to enter into His presence. His youthful debunking attitude to Christianity is evident in his earlier aphoristic entries of his *Note Books* - "Resist God and he will fly from you." or "To love God is to have good health, good looks, good sense, experience, a kindly nature and a fair balance of cash in hand." or "Christianity is a woman's religion, invented by women and womanish men for themselves."  

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But his extolment of "The Christ - ideal"¹, though set in an ironical context, is a serious statement. Another statement of Butler's faith of what he took to be the 'Kernel' of Christianity brings out his real attitude to Christianity -

"The essence of Christianity lies neither in dogma, but in faith in an unseen world, in doing one's duty, in speaking the truth, in finding the true life in others rather than in oneself, in the certain hope that he who loses his life on these behalfs finds more than he has lost."²

This inconsistency of his attitude to religion, a part of his attitude to life, stands clarified when it is seen against his statement -

"no man's opinions can be worth holding unless he knows how to deny them easily and gracefully, upon occasions in the cause of charity."³

This interplay of consistency and inconsistency, like chiaroscuro, brings out Butler's comprehensive vision of life.

In the field of social criticism Butler's attention has been directed against cant, hypocrisy and prudery prevailing over the Victorian society. Butler was opposed to priggishness in all forms. He never liked his own earlier writing -

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The Cantlebury Settlement, as he found the word 'prig' written large on it through his father's careful editing of the book. The priggishness of English academies has been severely exposed through the Erewhonian universities where 'hypothetic' was the principal study. Ernest, the hero of The Way of All Flesh, is brought up as a prig and on account of this priggish inexperience he has to go to jail for obtaining acquaintance of the hard reality of life. The family system, according to Butler, cages together some infighting members who hate each other, but make a show of love and unity. Tyranny of the parents over their children, as a social problem, engaged Butler's serious attention. Though he pointed out the problem, did not prescribe a solution. The way in which Ernest tries to save his children from parental tyranny cannot be applicable to all. The problem of being a victim of heredity has been touched upon, but here also without any suggestive solution. In the field of social criticism Butler's role is mainly that of a debunker.

Butler's philosophy consisted in completing and readjusting Darwinism. Modern biology has dispensed with divine supervision in human life and this dispensation has saddled man with graver responsibilities. If man has evolved from Embryonic cell, he still stands before the potentiality of further development. With the help of science and technology
man has brought about a thorough change in his environment and this can be further improved in the field of morality, intellect and spirituality. This improvement taking the shape of a scientific and unprejudiced conception of human nature can be directed to culture and civilization for realising the immense possibility concerning the bright future of mankind.

The first impression may show Butler as an iconoclast in the field of social criticism. But he valued human beings according to their ability to adjust to their environments. This ability of adjustment, Butler held, lay in man's vital urge transmitted through our tissues. People of the upper section of the society leading an artificial life blunt their vital urge which is best preserved in the lives of people living more natural and elemental lives. Butler held it dangerous to seek for spiritual certainty and guidance among man-made theories. To him common sense and good feeling were to be the safest guides. He was in favour of grafting new ideas to old forms and insisted on the preservation of tradition and continuity which were to save us from friction in our daily life of readaptation. The progress was held by Butler to be experimental and individualistic. The problem of an individual, Butler viewed, was his own and it was to be solved by himself. His dislike and distrust of authoritarianism from first hand impression may show him as an iconoclast. But with a
thoroughly individualistic concept of life he was essentially a conformist counselling adaptability as the surest means for social survival.

Butler in his personal life for a long time had to feel the icy fang of poverty, but poverty as a social problem failed to provide him with a theme. He was silent about the Victorian complacency regarding the idea of Progress. As an idealist, like Carlyle and Arnold, he was in reaction against the tendencies of his age. But the dichotomy of his idealism was that he was never tired of praising the possession of and the urge to possess money. He was a revolutionary in his persistent attack on Darwinism, but in social scale he was essentially a man belonging to leisured upper class who relying on their invested capital could lead a life of amateur penmanship. His intellectual quest lay in having an ideological view of life, in prescribing a spiritualised concept of Darwinism for a bright future of mankind and in evolving a rational religion on the basis of the new explorations of science. His social criticism, without any economic and political basis, was of a generalised and miscellaneous character.

Butler was primarily a critic of life. The above discussion amply brings out his serious preoccupation with the metaphysical problem of life which he attempted to solve biologically and his social preoccupation in which he endeavoured
to expose some of the maladies afflicting the second half of his century. He sought to comprehend truth through his intellectual grappling with the specific problems of the age. But an intuitive vision which follows the initial intellectual quest and makes a writer transcend his time is conspicuously absent in his writings. Depth, richness and wide range characterising great writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare are beyond Butler's range. But his attempt at comprehending his age is marked with piercing incisiveness and penetrative acumen. In an age of intellectual efflorescence Butler's intellectual quest deserves to be termed original, eccentric and stimulating. He transcends the current philosophical and psychological assumptions of his own age and he is alive to day because many of his ideas have become the current assumptions of the present century. His vitalistic theory, his tirade against the existing system of family, his theory of memory heralding the process of modern psychoanalysis, his finding of an antagonism between the old and new generations, his attempt at reconciling science and religion, his anti-mechanistic and his anti-professional outlook - are some essential beliefs characterising the current century.

This discussion of Butler's intellectual quest shows clearly that Butler can claim originality or the title of a genius neither in respect of his philosophy nor in his social
awareness. His prose style which will be considered later also is mediocre. But to the students of literature the interest in Butler lies in the artistic shape given to his ideological view of life. This presentation of a doctrine in the form of creative literature is aesthetically appealing. In this dissertation I shall endeavour to trace Butler's intellectual quest mainly in his three major literary works - Erewhon, The Way of All Flesh and Erewhon Revisited with a cursory glance at the other writings. What led me to select these three purely creative writings has already been stated in Section I of this discussion. The aim and purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate the late Victorian writer - Samuel Butler's intellectual quest, to assess his literary position and his literary contribution. But it should be clearly stated that in this dissertation my chief attention will be directed to bring out the artistic aspect of Butler's intellectual quest.