

Evolutionary Ethics and Idealism

The idealists Henry Jones and Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison in dialog with Darwinism concerning evolution and ethics.

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Abstract

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The intention with this thesis is to reconstruct the dialog between British idealism and Darwinism during the late 19th century concerning the ethical implications of the evolutionary theory. In studying the lectures delivered by the absolute idealist Henry Jones, *Is the order of Nature opposed to the Moral Life* and personal idealist Andrew Seth Pringle- Pattison, *Man's Place in the cosmos* which were intended as criticism of the famous Darwinist Thomas Huxley's lecture *Evolution and Ethics*, the aim isn't to describe the idealist answer to the topic of the debate. Rather the aim is to reveal how Jones and Seth, in their evaluation of Huxley's severing between ethical man and non-ethical nature, contributed to the formation of a philosophical debate on evolution. By use of R.G. Collingwood's theory of presuppositions and Quentin Skinner's contextualism, this study shows how Jones' and Seth's contributed to the formation of the debate by seeing it as centred on issues that was of interest to their forms of idealism. By using various forms of idealist logic, such as the Hegelian dialectic, their way of arguing for their positions entailed illustrating how a true understanding evolution can only be formed in light of the principles of their forms of idealism. Although the historian David Boucher has studied idealism and evolution extensively, he hasn't alluded to the effects the divergence between personal and absolute idealism had on the debate. Furthermore, he hasn't shown how the different forms of idealist logic used in their argumentations, was also a part of the arguments. Lastly, the wider intention with the study was to show the various intellectual roles the idea of evolution played in late 19th century thought, beyond the Darwinist and naturalist ones.

Keywords: idealism, evolution, ethics, Darwinism, British philosophy, scientism, naturalism.

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1. Introduction.

Darwin's evolutionary theory was to become one of Britain's most debated contributions to scientific thought in the 19th century. But the attractiveness of the theory and the pervasiveness of its principles was never restricted to scientific thought. Instead it played a significant role in extra-scientific questions such as political, social, ethical and metaphysical ones. Yet this enthusiasm to appeal to evolution in philosophy seem to never have been combined with a unanimous understanding of what it actually implied for philosophy. Mid and late 19th century English philosophy was instead divided concerning the interpretation of evolution's philosophical implications. Although the idea of evolution has been often associated only with the Darwinists of England, it was of great interest to other intellectual fractions contemporaneous with them, such as the idealists of mid and late 19th century England.¹

English philosophy before the mid-19th century was dominated primarily by the empiricist epistemological tradition that rose in the late 18th century. The school of intuition, based on Thomas Reid's criticism of Hume's scepticism, was the dominant form of philosophy in Scotland. England was dominated by the Bacon's, Hobbes' and Locke's empiricism, just as John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism was starting to grow in popularity.²

The later half of the century was characterized by new impulses. A new movement which emphasized the idea of progress in nature in contrast to the static understanding of nature in earlier empiricism, rose around the time of the publishing of Darwin's *The Origins of Species* in 1859. Amongst its most famous proponents were the biologist and famous promoter of Darwin's theory Thomas Huxley, and the philosophers and social Darwinists Leslie Stephens and Herbert Spencer.³ A simultaneous influential movement that drew heavily from the legacy of German idealism, was the school of British idealism established primarily by the philosophers Edward and James Caird at Glasgow and T.H. Green at Oxford during late 1860's.⁴ The nature of these two movements have been characterised in different ways.

Darwinism has been described by the historian of science Richard G. Olsen as the British variant of the "scientism" that surged through Europe during the 19th century. Other variants of scientism was German metaphysical materialism and French positivism. According to Olsen,

¹ David Boucher, "British Idealism and Evolution", in W.J Mander, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 309-311 (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2014).

² W.J. Mander, *British Idealism; A History*, p. 14 (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2011).

³ Richard G. Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, p. 5. (Urbana and Chicago; University of Illinois Press, 2008).

⁴ Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 5-7.

“scientism” entails primarily the expansion of the scientific theories and ideas into a worldview.⁵ Likewise, Victor Turner, have described Darwinism as a part of that “cult of science” that swept across Europe during the 19th century.⁶ In speaking of Darwinism as Victorian naturalism, he saw that the main idea of the Darwinists’ was the self-regulating and self-sufficient “new Nature” “begotten upon science and fact”. This New Nature was intended to replace the pre-scientific tendencies in thought that were still determinative in the worldview of English culture.⁷

The idealists were largely opposed to the naturalist and scientist worldview promoted by the Darwinists.⁸ Both the historians W.J. Mander and David Boucher have characterized this school as the sophisticated attempt to meet the “crisis of Victorian faith”, which was partly caused by that very scientism that was raging in Europe. Even if both historians point to the theological basis of the school,⁹ they seem to be in disagreement concerning the role of evolution in their thought. Boucher, in contrast to Mander, believes that the idealists were very loyal to the idea of evolution, even if they had a theological background.¹⁰ According to Boucher the extent to which they have been influenced by this idea has been grossly underestimated. He even insists that the hypothesis of evolution and the debates concerning it are so fundamental to British idealism, that it as a school of thought can’t be properly understood if it is divorced from the context of the evolutionary debates.¹¹ He thus points to historians’ negligence of their role in these debates. A negligence based on the assumption that they were hostile to evolution since it was a form of naturalism.¹²

Given this, one can perhaps say that this proposed negligence hasn’t only caused an incomplete understanding of idealism, but that it has also caused an incomplete understanding of the different roles evolution played in late 19th century English thought. Perhaps the study of the idealist reception of the evolutionary theory can reveal something broader about the intellectual elasticity of the idea by showing the way in which the idea of evolution was integrated into a philosophy largely opposed to naturalism.

⁵ Olson, *Science and Scientism*, p. 5.

⁶ Frank Miller Turner, *Between Science and Religion; The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.13 (New Haven and London; Yale University Press, 1974).

⁷ Turner, *Between Science and Religion*, p.8.

⁸ Boucher, “British Idealism and Evolution”, p. 308.

⁹ Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 137, and, David Boucher, ed., *The British Idealists*, x (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Mander, *British Idealism* p. 261-2. cf. Boucher, “British Idealism and Evolution”, p. 319.

¹¹ Boucher, “British Idealism and Evolution”, p. 320.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 308.

The aim of this BA-thesis.

The aim of this BA-thesis is to study how the British idealists understood the philosophical, specifically ethical, implications of the idea of evolution. The specific objects of study are the lectures that were delivered by the absolute idealist Henry Jones and the personal idealist Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison. Their lectures were intended as responses, evaluations and criticisms of Thomas Huxley's lecture *Ethics and Evolution*. Huxley's lecture was delivered in 1893 at Oxford, whereas Jones' lecture, *Is the Order of Nature Opposed to the Moral Life?* was delivered in 1894 at Glasgow, and Seth's ¹³ lecture, *Man's Place in the Cosmos* was delivered in 1897 at Oxford.

There are three main reasons why these lectures were chosen. Firstly, despite there being copious amount of works on the evolutionary theory and on the very idea of progress by the idealists,¹⁴ there are very few of them that are set in the context of directly addressing the opinions of the perceived opponent. Jones' and Seth's lectures were produced specifically as responses to Huxley's lectures, and not as contributions to a larger discussion. These lectures can prove to be concrete examples of the nature of the philosophical debates on evolution. Secondly, Jones and Seth belong to different schools of idealism, absolute and personal idealism. This detail can potentially nuance the way in which the idealists contributed to the debate. Thirdly, Huxley's lecture was intended as a criticism of the social Darwinism of Spencer and Leslie. They held that human society functions by the evolutionary law of struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Therefore, Jones' and Seth's criticisms of Huxley are in fact contributions to an already existing dialog concerning evolution and human society. These lectures are clearly set in the context of a complex debate, therefore the study of them can bring out more explicitly the idealist contribution to the evolutionary debates.

Examining Darwin's evolutionary theory itself and what it "actually" entails is of no interest to this study. The intention is to examining how Jones and Seth as idealists understood the ethical implications of evolution, in relation to Huxley's and the social Darwinists' understanding of it. The aim of this study isn't to exegetically interpret the conceptual contents in the lectures. The intention with this study is to reconstruct the dialog between these groups, or more specifically, to reconstruct the idealist perspective in this debate. Even if the topic of the debate is ethics and evolution, the intention with reconstructing the debate isn't to describe the idealist

¹³ Seth took the last name Pringle-Pattison in 1898. Since the lecture was produced before that, he was known at that time according to his original last name. He will be referred to as Seth instead of Pringle-Pattison.

¹⁴ Some of the most famous being for instance, D.G Ritchie's *Darwin and Hegel*, W.R Sorley's *Ethics of Naturalism*, Edward Caird's *The Evolution of Religion*, etc.

answer to the questions of the topic. The true aim in reconstructing the debate is to uncover how the idealists *as* idealists contributed to the formation of a philosophical debate on evolution, by examining the way in which they received the positions of Huxley, and why they received him in that way. Thus, it becomes more important to analyse *how* Jones and Seth used various ideas to problematize Huxley's positions, as opposed attempting to interpret correctly *what* Jones and Seth meant with those ideas,

I believe that the "how" can be found in three points. Firstly, it can be found in the way Jones and Seth received Huxley's ideas. How did they understand him, and what did they identify to be the most problematic in his ideas? The way they choose to understand him, can reveal something about what Jones and Seth believed to be the real problems that conditioned the formation of this debate. Secondly, it can be found in the reasons for why they received his ideas in a certain way. This can tell something about why they saw the debate as being conditioned by certain problems, as it can also uncover what their fundamental approaches in the debate was. Thirdly, the "how" can also be revealed in the alternative solutions to the problems of the topic they presented. Their solutions to the problems can be seen at one level as only having conceptual content, if viewed as such, it is not of great interest to this study. But if their alternative solutions can be seen as conscious methods for orienting the debate to an intended end, the examination of them is important to this study. These three points can be summarized into two questions. What these two questions seeks to reveal can be summarized in the third question;

1. What are the fundamental *problematizations* that Jones and Seth make of Huxley's way of understanding the ethical implications of the evolutionary theory? What are the underlying *presuppositions* that inform the ways in which Jones and Seth problematize Huxley's positions?
2. What are the alternative ways Jones and Seth understand the ethical implications of the evolutionary theory? What do their alternatives presuppose?
3. What is the debate truly centred on according to Jones and Seth, and what strategies did they use to direct the debate towards these issues?

The first part of the analysis will consist of brief summations of the lectures. The second part will consist of the organization of the content of the lectures into themes. The themes won't represent how the contents follow chronologically, but how they are prioritized conceptually. In these themes the *problematizations*, the main *presuppositions* and the alternatives represented in the lectures will be examined. The organization of the themes is a matter of

interpretation and in this case the interpretation is guided by what seems most relevant to my questions. The last sections of the themes will attempt to compare their problematizations and presuppositions and go deeper into the third question concerning their understanding of the debate, and the strategies they used therein to establish their views. The work done by Boucher on idealism and evolution will be continuously referred to in the last sections, in the attempt to perhaps confirm or criticize the existing research.

Theory and method.

The terms “problematizations” and “presuppositions”, have important technical meaning for this thesis. The choosing of them is based on two different contributions to the question concerning the nature of intellectual history. The first term is derived from the Quentin Skinner’s contextualism, one of the foremost representative of the Cambridge school of intellectual history. Skinner believed that intellectual historians should not study texts and their contents as contributions to trans-historical questions. Instead texts and their meanings should be read according to the specific intention behind them.¹⁵ Skinner contextualism utilized John Austin’s idea of “speech acts”. “Speech acts” refer to the performative aspect of linguistic utterances and locutions. To state something is to *do* something. Austin claimed that the meanings of spoken words are bound up in the performative act of stating them.¹⁶ Skinner used this theory in the context of textual studies and meant that historical authors strived to do something specific with writing their texts. The meaning is bound up in the specific intention behind it. What becomes relevant to this study is Skinner’s emphasis on the idea that the meaning of concepts lie in the usage of them. Since lectures are delivered orally, the performative aspect of the material is even more pronounced. Although they are now documented textually, nevertheless, that performative dimension can still be detecting the different rhetorical devices that were to argue for different ideas.

The term presuppositions is derived from the one of the philosopher and archaeologist R. G. Collingwood’s idea that every textual production is an answer to an unstated question. This question itself is based certain unstated ideas, or certain *presuppositions*. Even this presupposition could be construed as an answer to a question. For him, the study of the presuppositions behind texts was the subject-matter of metaphysics and intellectual history.¹⁷

¹⁵ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume 1: Regarding Method*, p.79, 1st edition (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Robert Lamb, “Quentin Skinner’s revised historical contextualism: a critique”, p. 57, *History of Human Sciences* 22:3 (2009).

¹⁷ An interesting parallel between Skinner’s contextualism and Collingwood’s “presuppositions”, is their attempt to establish the temporality of philosophy and science by pointing to the fact that they are conditioned by unique

Collingwood believed that it is not the aim of metaphysics or history isn't to answer whether or not certain presuppositions are justified. Rather its aim is to simply reveal them, which is also the task of history.¹⁸ This study will attempt to uncover some of the presuppositions the authors rely on in their lectures.

2. Background.

Philosophical idealism, absolute idealism and personal idealism.

There were two major forms of idealist philosophy in Victorian England; absolute and personal idealism. The former which was the earlier and the more prominent form, was the Kantian-Hegelian philosophy that was systemized by Green at Oxford and the Caird brothers at the University of Glasgow during the late 1860s.¹⁹ Jones, being the student of Edward Caird, was trained in the tradition of absolute idealism. It emphasized the theoretical aspects of philosophy over the practical. Which meant that it prioritized metaphysics over ethics, thought over feeling and system over experience. From Hegel, they received some of the most distinctive and reoccurring features of their system; the monistic reconciliation of the world into a rational unity, and the reassertion of the power of rationality. Hegel thought, in contrast to Kant that that which is rational, is that which is truly real. Not in the sense that the real is that which correspond to what is conceived to be rationally necessary, but in the sense that those things that are real are in essence an expression of *Geist*, spirit or mind. External reality and individual consciousness are simply finite and temporal determinations of that mind, or the Absolute.²⁰

The fellow Scottish philosopher Seth who was also trained in Hegelian philosophy, was the first to go against the doctrine of the unity of thought and being in his later work *Hegelianism and Personality* published in 1893. As a personal idealist, Seth believed that there is that the individual self isn't a mere modification of a great Absolute. Rather each person is his own centre of being. He rejected monism and insisted upon "pluralism" by pointing to the irreducibility of the unique *personhood* of each individual soul. His argument was that reality is an individual *experience*, and not something that could be resolved into a universal system. The ethical powers of the individual was seen by him as the only access to reality, and the

questions. An important difference between them however is that Skinner attempts to recover the historicity of ideas by focusing on the intentionality of author's usage of them. Whereas Collingswood sees the historicity of ideas in their embeddedness within the periodical phenomena of a collective and unconscious acceptance of certain ideas as "givens".

¹⁸ R.G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, pp. 63-65, 1st edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939)

¹⁹ Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 10.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 44-45.

fulfilment of it as the true end of the world.²¹ Jones readily criticized the heterodoxy of Seth in his paper *Idealism and Epistemology*, in which he pointed out that there can't be a fundamentally personal or subjective perspective on to the world, since the individual is a part of the world.²² Because they belonged to different idealist traditions, Jones and Seth dealt with the ethical aspects of man differently. Just as their different understanding of the "unity" of the world effected their views on nature. Therefore it wouldn't be surprising if traces of this distinction can be found in their lectures.

Huxley's lecture "Ethics and Evolution".

Huxley's lecture, which was delivered at Oxford in 1893, was the second in the series of the prestigious Romanes Lectures. His main intention was to illustrate two foundational aspects of the "cosmic process" which was alluded to in ancient thought, but demonstrated to fully in modern thought. The first is the cyclic, almost Sisyphean, nature of the cosmic process. He illustrates this aspects by the analogy of the literary figure "Jack and the beans-stalk". The hero, observing the bean-stalk, realizes that as it grows it undergoes series of strange and exciting metamorphosis, just to wither into mere potentiality again after it has reached its greatest height. The cyclicity of the beanstalk, for Huxley, represents the only obvious character of the cosmos; its impermanence, its states as simply "transitory adjustments of contending force".²³

The second aspect of nature, and the most critical to ethics, is the suffering or pain "so perfect as a mechanism" that works in nature and increases in intensity until it reaches its highest level in civilised man. Man, after reaching the top of the natural kingdom by those brutal qualities of animals, rejects them for their opposites. Huxley says that whatever differences there might be amongst ethicist concerning the grounds for a reasoned life, the all agree that the "ape and tiger methods of the struggle for existence" are not compatible with sound morality.²⁴ By examples from ancient Buddhist and Stoic thought, Huxley argues that the ancient sages who looked upon the world, found it difficult to bring the course of the cosmic process into harmony with human ideals of goodness. It has no relations to moral ends and it is divorced from human values. Instead it functions by evil, and this evil hits everyone and everything, since evil a necessary part of the "endless chains of natural causation".²⁵

²¹ Eugene Thomas Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion 1900–2000*, Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, 1, p. 35 (New York, 2000).

²² Mander, *British Idealism*. p. 360.

²³ T. H. Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics", in ed. Julian Huxley *Evolution and Ethics, 1893-1943*, pp. 60-2 (London; The Pilot Press, 1947).

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 63-64.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 65-69.

For Huxley, this felt antagonism is realized fully with the scientific and modern understanding of evolution. Yet some, the evolutionary ethicists or the social Darwinists, have mistakenly believed that since the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest has worked admirably in nature, it must work equally well in human society. Although he claims that neither pure optimistic belief in the harmony between man and nature, and the pessimistic variant of it are complete, he argues with conviction that ethics doesn't function by imitating the cosmic process. Rather it functions by combating it. Nature is the archenemy of ethics. The more advanced society is, the less influence the principles of the cosmic process have on it. He states that although it might be audacious to pit man against nature, modern intellectual achievements have allowed us to see how the history of civilisation is simply the construction of an artificial world within nature, and how science has the potential to manipulate that cosmic process for the welfare of humans. The sciences of psychology, ethics and political science must acquire this manipulative power that astronomy and physics have acquired.²⁶

3. Jones and Seth: The problem of evolution and ethics.

Jones' lecture 'Is the Order of Nature opposed to the Moral Life?'

Jones' lecture was delivered as an inaugural address at the University of Glasgow in 1893. As it commenced with lofty descriptions of his teacher Caird and two other lesser known professors and teachers of his, he criticises how the legacy of metaphysical explorations into "the solutions of the universe" has been rejected by modern philosophers. This is according to Jones, due to a certain helplessness imposed upon them by the intellectual force of contemporary science. Cosmology is the now the science that seeks these solutions of the universe, and is therefore the new metaphysics. As such, proponents of scientific ideas have stepped into the realm of metaphysics, by attempting to answer its questions. The most recent of these intrusions was Huxley's attempt to demonstrate how the cosmic evolutionary process is necessarily opposed to the moral life of man, because it function by inducing pain and promoting self-assertion.²⁷

He characterizes Huxley as a "pessimist" who is attacking the way of the "optimists", which he interestingly identifies as the Hegelians and the social Darwinist, have portrayed an uninterrupted harmony between nature and man, or the real and the ideal. Although Jones applauds Huxley's pointing out how crucial suffering is in nature, he attempted to show, sometimes in a sarcastic and even in a satirical rhetoric,²⁸ how Huxley's antagonism between

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 79-84.

²⁷ Henry Jones, *Is the Order of Nature opposed to the Moral Life? An Inaugural Address delivered in the University of Glasgow on October 23rd, 1894*, pp. 1-7 (London; Forgotten Books, 2015).

²⁸ Ibid, pp.7-14.

man and nature isn't truly evolutionary, since evolution implies continuity between all things produced by nature.²⁹ Thus if man is from nature, his humanity, that is his rationality, must be contained within nature from before his appearance. Therefore the former can't be pitted against the latter, and whatever man does nature has a role in it. According to Jones, this is so, since in giving man intelligence, nature remain to him as an object of contemplation due to the inherent 'intelligibility' in it.³⁰

Seth's lecture 'Man's Place in the Cosmos'.

Seth's lecture was delivered at Oxford in 1897. In contrast to Jones, Seth engaged the social Darwinists' criticism of Huxley much more explicitly by direct references, as he also had a more analytical and impersonal voice. He begins with identifying the different voices in the debate concerning evolution and ethics. The first is Huxley's denial of the belief that nature's laws are extended into human society. The second is his critics Spencer and Stephens that claim to have bridged that gap by contending that human society functions by the laws of evolution. For Seth, the value of the debate lies in the fact that it "illuminate most instructively some deep-seated ambiguities of philosophical terminology". Just as it brings into "sharp relief the fundamental difference of standpoint which divides philosophical thinker."³¹ Whilst Seth commended Huxley for his opinions, since it amounted to, for him, a criticism of the naturalisations of man, he attacked him for doing this by a fallacious means. This fallacious method was the declaration of an unguifable bridge between the natural world and the moral world. Whilst the evolutionists rightly believed in a continuity between the former and the latter, that continuity was purely materialistic and therefore not really inclusive of that in man which isn't simply animalistic.³² Although Huxley alluded to the extraordinary place of man in cosmos, he couldn't realize the true implications of this because of his loyalty to naturalism. Whereas Spencer and Stephens believed in a unity in the world, they couldn't see how this unity is spiritual and not simply material.

3.1. The themes of the lectures.

As it was clarified that this study attempts to reconstruct the debate which these lectures were a part of, the main method won't consist of an exegetical interpretation of the lecture's contents. Although it is still important to describe what was said in the lecture, the descriptions doesn't aim at clarifying the textual content in isolation. Rather it aims at revealing how the idealists

²⁹ Ibid, p. 22.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 26-30.

³¹ Andrew Seth, "Man's Place in the Cosmos", pp. 30-1, in Boucher, ed., *The British Idealists*.

³² Ibid, pp. 37-40.

contributed to the constructing of the debate, by examining the way in which they received and answered the positions of Huxley, and why they received him in that way. The intention with these questions isn't simply to examine the idealist contributions to the topic of evolution and ethics. Rather the intention is to uncover what their positions tell us concerning what they believed to be the deeper underlying issues in this, and how they went about directing the dialog to their understanding of those underlying issues.

The two first themes will examine what their criticism and problematizations of Huxley were, what these criticisms presupposed, and their alternatives solutions to the issues. A way to distinguish between what they say in the lectures and my interpretation of what they say is by my usage of the technical terms problematizations and presuppositions, both in their noun and verb forms. The last two themes will examine what their problematizations, presuppositions and alternative solutions tell us concerning what they thought to be the underlying problems of this debate, and how they sought to orient the dialog to the illumination of those issues.

The problem of dualism and monism.

It is clear that both Jones and Seth are highly concerned about the opposition Huxley placed between man and nature; the ideals of the former is so radically different from the mechanisms of the latter that there must be an opposition between them. Although they agree that this is an issue that must be addressed, the ideas they employed in their argumentation against Huxley, the social Darwinists and the general contemporary scientism were different.

Jones' approach in criticising Huxley's antagonism is conditioned by his criticism of modern philosophers' tendency to avoid metaphysics, Instead of seeking "the solutions of the universe", they, with a "touch of nervous excitement", devote themselves to a specific sciences, such as the science of knowledge, psychology and ethics. But for Jones all men of intellectuality, scientists and philosophers, "must think their thought into some kind of whole".³³ The individual parts of the sciences they deal with must be synthesized into a whole. This is for him the traditional role of the philosopher. He is the one who should produce the worldview under which every science is to be subsumed. But since the modern philosopher

[...] does not speak of the nature of things, nor of the ultimate essence and entities, but of the cosmos and its processes; that which was once called ontology or metaphysics now appears under the new name of cosmological theories.³⁴

³³ Jones, *The Moral Life*, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.

According to Jones, the questions that were traditionally dealt with in metaphysics, have been transported into the realm of science. In doing metaphysics, scientists have gone beyond the limits of the “part” they study, and they have moved onto the whole. Jones’ lamentation of how science’s intrusion into metaphysical questions have given rise to problematic theories concerning the world, is based on the presupposition that metaphysics is a discipline more fundamental to understanding of the world than science. This presupposition also conditions his criticism of Huxley’s thesis since his dualism is, according to Jones, is an incident of science’s intrusion into metaphysics. Therefore it could be argued that Jones’s problematization of Huxley’s dualism is really an attack on how he as a biologist is dealing with questions beyond his scope. This can be explicitly read in his statement that the year of 1893 “witnessed the new incursion of a great scientific man in the philosophic region.” According to Jones, this incursion entailed the rejection of the unity of the world.

It is said of an ancient sage that he went out and looked upon the universe and pronounced that “All is one”. Professor Huxley went down to Oxford the other day and pronounced that All is two, and that there exist between them a strife which is inextinguishable.³⁵

The rhetoric Jones uses is very interesting. Firstly, he is playing on Huxley’s idea that the ancient sages, Indian or Greek, looked upon the world and realized how it is divorced from human ideals of spiritual and moral goodness, and that their realization took full form in modern biology’s concept of evolution. Jones, in referring to ancient sages, is suggesting that in contrast to Huxley’s belief those ancient thinkers saw a fundamental harmony between all the aspects of the world. Secondly, he belittles Huxley’s opinions by pointing to a certain futility in him going “down to Oxford”, in comparison with the practise of ancient sages, who looked upon the universe. Whereas Huxley wants to see ancient thought as leading to his antagonism between man and nature, Jones wants to his monistic view of the world as the true legacy of ancient thought. This goes back to the Jones’ fundamental presupposition that the true science that contemplates the universe in its whole, isn’t what Huxley is involved with. Rather it’s the legacy of metaphysics he comes from. It’s therefore correct to argue that the demonstration of the inherent limitation in the science Huxley deals with is at the centre of the Jones’ interest in problematizing his dualism.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 7.

The interest of the declaration does not lie in its novelty, for dualism, of one kind or another, are as old as reflective thought... It is rather the splendid openness of mind which enabled one of the greatest exponents of natural evolution to indicate limits to that way of thought.³⁶

Seth, on the other hand, is interested in the consequences Huxley's position have on the question of man's place in the universe. Interestingly Seth doesn't disagree with Huxley on there being an actual "breach" between man and nature. In fact he states that

[...] the breach between man and the pre-human nature constitutes without exception the most important fact which the universe has to show; and for a true understanding the world it is far more vital to grasp the significance of this breach than to be misled by a cheap desire for unity and system into minimising, or even, denying the fact.³⁷

Seth even praises and commends Huxley's

[...] insistence on the gulf between man and non-human nature; how sound is the stand he takes upon the ethical nature of man as that which is alone of significance and worth in the "transitory adjustments of contending forces which otherwise constitute the cosmos."³⁸

In a time where man's spirituality is constantly compromised and even denied, he sees Huxley's antagonism as actually pointing to the undeniable uniqueness of man in nature. He sees Huxley as unconsciously supporting the idea that human society and ethics is not created upon anything except "the perfection of human nature".³⁹ The idea that man's distinction from nature is a type of perfection, wasn't the stated position in Huxley's lecture. It can be said that Seth is in fact adjusting Huxley according to his own intellectual presuppositions, by construing him as unconsciously polemicizing against "the naturalisation of ethics".⁴⁰

But where Seth finds Huxley's antagonism to be problematic is the way in which he stated it. This problematic way, according to Seth, is summarized in his usage of the term the "cosmic process". Seth, explains that

³⁶ Ibid, p. 6.

³⁷ Seth, pp. 36-7.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 33-4.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 36.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

The term “nature” and still more and expression like the “cosmic process” may be taken in an all-inclusive sense as equivalent to the universe as a whole or the nature of things; and if so it is obvious that human nature with its ethical characteristics is embraced within the larger whole.

The ambiguity in Huxley’s terms lies in his attempt to use it in a universal sense, when it in fact has only a partial meaning. This is the fundamental weakness of his argument according to Seth, since the unity of the cosmos “isn’t so much a conclusion to be proved but an inevitable assumption”.⁴¹ By consciously admitting that he treats the idea of a unity in the world as an unflinching presupposition, he praises the social Darwinists’ who, in contrast to Huxley, stay loyal to that idea.

Now the strength of the evolutionary theory of ethics lies in its frank recognition of the unity in the cosmos; and in this it is, so far, at one with the philosophical doctrine of Idealism...the doctrine which finds the ultimate reality of the universe in mind or spirit, and its End in perfecting spiritual life.⁴²

Their understandings of it are however radically different, since

The way taken by the ethical evolutionists is to naturalise morality, to assimilate the ethical experience to nature, in the lower or narrower sense which is used to denote all things that happen in the world *except* the responsible activities of human being. And it is against this removing of landmarks that Professor Huxley, rightly, as it seems to me, protest.⁴³

Huxley succeeded in showing the superiority of humanity over non-human nature, which is a fundamental presupposition for Seth, whilst the social Darwinists failed to realize it. Just as Huxley failed to realize the fundamentality in presupposing a cosmic unity, whereas the social Darwinists realized its importance, although on a wrong basis. Thus it is correct to say that for Seth the relevance of the entire debate lies in the demonstration of how man is in fact unique in nature, how the “landmarks” of his extraordinary character shouldn’t be overshadowed. In combination with the confirmation of the presence of unity in the world.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 37.

⁴² Ibid, p. 38.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 38

The problem of the idea of evolution.

As Jones sees the debate as an example of the intellectual power struggle between science and metaphysics, he is interested in showing how this struggle conditions the various conceptualizations of evolution. Jones problematizes Huxley's position by relativizing his idea of evolution, by showing how the great evolutionist's way of understanding evolution is only one way to understanding it. There is according to Jones a fuller way of understanding evolution, which doesn't resort to characterizing nature as purely evil and as divorced from the human ethical life.

Jones sees a type of "easy optimism" which denies the significance of pain in nature as Huxley's object of criticism and the enticement for his pessimistic characterisation of nature as thoroughly evil.⁴⁴ Since the problem for Jones isn't the fact that Huxley criticised optimism, it is possible to say that the true problem is that philosophical tendency in Huxley which leads to his entire dismissal of optimism. That philosophical tendency, "ordinary thought", is one-sided and "rarely able to hold before itself the opposing facts of a concrete truth". It forgets that the evolutionary process has a twofold nature that pain and pleasure work together for the assurance of a higher state of being.⁴⁵ Most importantly, this tendency overshadows the actual significance in optimism.

It is hardly necessary for me to say that I concur with the condemnation of that optimism, which denies the reality, or minimizes the significance of pain and suffering in the world. But I must say, on the other hand, that if optimism is to be refuted, justice must be done to the truth it contains, and its significance must be exhausted.⁴⁶

The significance and main feature of optimism isn't the denial of pain, which Huxley wrongly believes according to Jones. Rather its significance is its emphasis on "the identity beneath the difference, and upon the triumphant realization, through struggle and strife of a final purpose".⁴⁷ True optimism is a monism. Most importantly Jones states that

If optimists have held that "the Real is the Rational, or that "Whatever is, is right, they have done so only because, by that very principle of evolution which has

⁴⁴ Jones, *The Moral Life*, p.7.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 16.

been employed to establish pessimism, they have sought to explain the present evil as a condition of the attainment of a higher good.⁴⁸

This monism utilizes the same principle of evolution, which Huxley appeals to in his dualism. The deeper issue is that these ideas of evolution which are formed “from points of view and by reference to criteria, which are entirely different”, are not individual judgments of nature. In fact, before they issue their judgment on nature, the “pass under review the whole realm of reality”.⁴⁹ Thus it is possible to argue that Jones’ problematization of Huxley’s dualism lies in the criticism of how pessimism, before evaluating the facts of nature, does metaphysics, and that it does it badly. Jones criticizes how pessimism seeks to approach the whole by bifurcating between man and nature. But according to him it is not difficult to show that the “conception of the whole” is “beyond the compass of dualistic views that starts by cleaving asunder the natural and the moral worlds”. This leads to Huxley’s antagonism between man and nature, which is, according to Jones, conditioned on his fundamental fallacy of treating “natural” nature as if it were that whole.

In other words, I find Mr. Huxley dealing with a fragment as if it were a whole, and passing judgment upon a mental abstraction, as if it were the real object.⁵⁰

As such, when Huxley failed to find the principles of rationality and morality in that nature, he pitted man against it. But for Jones the idea of evolution must demonstrate the continuity between all things produced by nature. The true evolutionary position is the one that can show how humanity is contained in nature from the beginning. Jones believes that in order to have a consistent view of evolution’s ethical implications

[...] we must either deny that the cosmic process is purely natural, and find it even from the first some innate reference to the ideal purpose of man; or else, we must abandon the conception of evolution.⁵¹

Jones sees Huxley stuck in a paradox; he attempts to remain loyal to evolution, i.e. continuity, as well to his idea of the rift between nature and human nature. Most importantly he sees Huxley as stuck in a non-evolutionary conception of the world. Therefore, he presents to him two possible alternatives.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 16-7.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 24.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 25

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 22.

The alternatives then are these; (1st) the cosmic process is purely natural, and has no reference whatsoever to ethical ends; (2nd) the cosmic process is at root not natural at all, but intellectual and moral.⁵²

But for Jones neither of these alternatives are correct, since the solution of the problem isn't to reduce the distinction between nature and man. The solution isn't the either-or choice between making nature human or human entirely natural. Nor is the solution to ascribe the emergence of morality solely to one of them, since "facts don't warrants either of these conclusion".⁵³ Instead he sees morality as being the result of the combination between the intelligence of man and the intelligibility of nature. In giving man intelligence nature always remains to him an object of reflection. Thus nature

[...] is not herself either moral or immoral; but inasmuch as knowledge presupposes a world of facts as well as an interpreting intelligence, the moral achievements of man are also nature's.

He thus concludes that

In fact, subject and object, the self and the not-self, the world and man, are partners in the great enterprise of knowledge and goodness; and whatever is done by either of the partners is done by the whole firm.⁵⁴

His guiding presupposition that metaphysics is the highest mode of understanding, can be found reflected in his belief that the unity between the intelligibility of nature and the intelligence of man can't be concluded from scientific endeavour. He states that science is for its own purpose justified in treating an atom as purely physical and as "unrelated to mind". But science can never deny that the atom possess intelligibility, just as it can't prove that it does. Here again one can see how Jones problematizes Huxley by pointing to the dualistic tendency of the "hasty and incomplete abstractions of ordinary thought". As Huxley's idea of the "cosmic process" is robbed from intelligibility, "the light of our seeing", intelligent man is seen as struggling against an unintelligible nature. But this nature is according to Jones simply a "phantom created by abstract thought"⁵⁵. Instead it is the inherent openness of nature towards man's intellect which gives rise to ethics.

⁵² Ibid, p. 26.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 28.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 29.

Likewise Seth is concerned about the various ideas of the evolutionary process that underlie the positions of the Huxley and the social Darwinists, although his interest in them is motivated differently. In contrast to Jones, he isn't preoccupied with defending metaphysics against science. Rather it can be said that his problematization of their idea of evolution is caused by his interest to support his guiding presupposition that the spirituality of man is the end of the world. He argues for this point by showing how the internal contradiction of their idea of evolution finds its solution in his idealism. It is as if the debate is progressing from the simple naturalist monism of the social Darwinists, to Huxley's dualism and finally to his ethical monistic idealism.

According to Seth, Huxley is in the right for striking at that "fallacy of the fittest" of social Darwinism, but he is in the wrong for his "unguarded statements",⁵⁶ concerning the absence of unity in the world. The fallacious belief of the social Darwinists was the idea that since the principle of the survival of the fittest has worked successfully in nature, it can also produce social and ethical progress in human society. If the social Darwinist says "Whatever is, is right"⁵⁷ then Seth argues with Huxley that "since the result of further evolution – or to speak more properly, of further cosmical changes – might be to dethrone our present ethical conduct from its temporary position as the fittest", we can't on "naturalist principles" get our "standard of higher and lower".⁵⁸ But as Huxley himself has no other basis for his philosophy other than the principles of evolution, Seth believes that he can't truly solve this issue.

But if this is so, I still ask the evolutionist who has no other basis than the struggle for existence, how he accounts for the intrusion of the moral ideas and standard which presume to interfere with the cosmic process, and sit in judgment upon its results? This question cannot be answered so long as we regard morality merely as an incidental result, a by-product as it were, of the cosmical system.

It is according to Seth the fundamental issue with Huxley is that he can't explain the emergence of that moral sense in man which stimulate his "unwavering condemnation of the universe", because of his loyalty to naturalism. As such, the dualistic strife placed between man and nature can't find its solution and the existence of morality in Huxley's own hypothesis, rather it finds its solution in Seth's idealism.

⁵⁶ Seth, "Man's Place", p. 41.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 43.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 42-3.

The moral and spiritual life remains, in short, unintelligible, unless on the supposition that it is in reality the key to the world's meaning, the fact in the light of which all other phenomena must be read. We must be in earnest, I have already said, with the unity of the world, but we must not forget that, if regarded merely as a system of forces, the world possess no such unity.

The reason why his supposition of the spiritual life is the key to the world is because it preserves the unique identity of man which Huxley alluded to, as it gives a basis for upholding an all-inclusive unity in the world. The world acquires unity

...only when regarded in the light of an End of absolute worth or value which is realised or attained in it. Such an End-in-itself, as Kant called it, we find only in the self-consciousness life of man.⁵⁹

It's correct to conclude that Seth's problematization of Huxley lies in pointing to how his idea of evolution can't lead to a unified vision of the world, just as the social Darwinist's idea of evolution, although having a sense of unity, compromises the spirituality of man. The convergence of both principles can only be found in his idea of man's ethical life as the end and unity of the world.

The importance of having a "correct" philosophy.

What could one say concerning what Jones and Seth believed to be the true issues underlying the debate? What is the debate truly centred on according to them?

On reviewing their problematizations, presuppositions and alternative ways of understanding the issue of the topic, what seems to reverberate in their lectures is their interest to deal with the framing of the idea of evolution within a correct philosophy. It is only then that its ethical aspects can be truly comprehended. The debate between them, Huxley and the social Darwinists isn't really conditioned by an attempt to attack the idea of evolution itself, rather it is construed around illustrating how evolution's ethical implications must be understood according to their different idealist presumptions.

Boucher explains that the idealists, as well as the social Darwinists, recognised the attractiveness of the hypothesis of evolution, since its manner of explanation was universal. It can be used to explain all kinds of phenomena, natural and human. This universality of the theory seemed to allude to the possible convergence of all disciplines on a singular hypothesis,

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.44

which was a positive thing for both groups.⁶⁰ He explains that evolution was conducive to the idealist manner of philosophizing, since they, as well as the Darwinist's challenged the old static and fixed worldview in philosophy. Yet the idealists challenged the naturalist and scientist postulates upon which the Darwinists formulated their understanding of evolution. Although they, like the social Darwinists, believed in the continuity between man and nature, and in the fundamental unity of the world, they differed upon what they unity entailed and how the progression of evolution should be explained.⁶¹ It is important to note that Darwin's evolutionary theory wasn't the first idea of evolution in history. The idealist, relying heavily on Hegel and German idealism, preferred the Hegelian version of evolution over the Darwinian. Although both posited a unity in the world, which was crucial for the idealists, the Hegelian idea of evolution was teleological and spiritual. The development in nature was seen as the fulfilment of mind in the progression from a lower state to a higher state. Thus that which is at a lower level, can only be explained in reference to the higher.⁶²

The notion that idealists in the evolutionary debates were mostly interested in illuminating the nature of the principles that should form the basis upon which evolution is understood, is clearly reaffirmed in the lectures of Jones and Seth. It can be correctly argued, in line with Boucher's general characterization of the idealist contribution to the evolutionary debate, that Jones and Seth, in attacking Huxley's positions, were primarily interested in further promoting the doctrines of idealism. Even if both speak of the unity between nature and spirit, the mindful progression of the world from the lower to the higher and the fallacy of explaining the higher by the lower, there are crucial differences between them which Boucher hasn't explored. It is clear how their loyalty to different forms of idealism effected the way they presented and promoted their idealist presuppositions in this debate.

Seth's personal idealist presupposition that the spiritual life of ethical is the end of the world, lead him to believe that the unity of the world is in the worth of man's personal agency, and the entire lecture aims at proving this point. Nature progresses from the lower forms of organism, to the moral spirit of man. In that final stage it finds its end and purpose. This is brought out even more explicitly in a subsequent publication of his lecture which contained a preface with an explanation of the general philosophical framework which the lecture rested upon. The information of this preface could be argued to be an afterthought. But the reason why this argument

⁶⁰ Boucher, "British Idealism and Evolution", p. 310

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 308.

⁶² Ibid, p. 311.

isn't correct is that Seth states all essays in the publication rests upon the unity of this contention. The preface is simply a latter clarification of what that contention is. In it he explains that the lecture intended to enforce the worldview of "ethicism" in opposition to narrow intellectualism, or humanism in opposition to naturalism. The humanist or ethicist worldview emphasizes man's personal agency, whose reality escapes the operations of science and the speculations of metaphysics.⁶³

Whereas Seth place ethics over science and metaphysics, Jones entire lectures is conditioned by his presupposition that metaphysics is *the* fundamental discipline. Since for him, the discipline which truly deals with the world as a "whole" is metaphysics, he argues against Huxley by showing how his understanding evolution and its ethical aspect is wrong because he as a biologist can't do proper metaphysics. Huxley can't deal with the whole as a whole, therefore he posits the part, naturalist nature, as a whole. Furthermore he, as an absolutist, in contrasts to Seth doesn't see the unity of the world in man's ethical agency. Rather he sees it in the mutual partnership between man's intelligence and nature's intelligibility. It is for him only metaphysic which can allude to this convergence of intelligence and intelligibility and thus strike a balance between moralizing nature and naturalizing man. It is also the only discipline that can strike a balance between optimism and pessimism, by viewing the current evil as a means for a progressing good.

The importance in this which must be emphasized is that this difference isn't only internal, it also effected the way they attacked Huxley, and therefore it also effected the formation of the debate. Seth choose to understand Huxley dualism in a more positive way since it, for him, amounted to the criticism of the naturalisation of man. Jones didn't see much positivity in his dualism, except for how it indicated the limits to that way of thought which Huxley is involved in. The former sought to prove how Huxley's arguments is supporting his personal idealism. Whereas the latter wanted to show how the limitation in his thought which gave rise to his dualism, proved the superiority of metaphysics. Thus for Seth the debate is really about reaffirming the superiority of the ethical role of man in the world, and for Jones the debate is conditioned upon proving how metaphysics is *the* intellectual endeavour which can truly grant philosophers and scientists a unified vision of the world.

⁶³ Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, *Man's Place in the Cosmos and Other Essays*, v-vii, 2nd edition, (Edinburgh; W. Blackwood and sons, 1902). Source; <https://archive.org/details/mansplaceincosmo00seth>.

The idealist method of argumentation.

How did Jones and Seth promote for their ideas in the debate? What methods and strategies of argumentations and strategies did they employ?

As lectures are types of “speech acts”, their performative dimension is intimately bound with their intellectual content. In the lectures of Jones and Seth there are many instances of the usage of rhetorical devises, and some of them are more intriguing than other since these also have explicit intellectual implications for the debate. They are clear example of how a way of arguing can itself function as an argument, how the doing of something is itself a statement. A commonality between Jones and Seth is that they never seem to plainly refute any position. Their tactic is to instead to integrate the position which they identify as problematic into their own principles, perhaps in order to show in the debate the superiority and the universality of their manner of understanding evolution.

Seth argued for his ethical idealism by showing how the debate until his contribution to it was fixed in strife and ambiguity.⁶⁴ This ambiguity was a caused by the incongruous applications of different naturalist principles on the idea of evolution. Huxley and the social Darwinists, although both being loyal to naturalist evolution, were at strife for that reason. The former denied continuity between men and thus he saw man as divorced from nature by his humanity, as the former denied the uniqueness of man because of their naturalist monism. Yet both did this in loyalty to the idea of natural evolution. Thus, what could be called Seth’s main strategy of arguing was his attempt to show how this divergence finds its relief in his ethicism. Thus he established his position in the debate by schematizing the dialog as a progression of an idea. This idea shows itself as firstly as simple natural monism, which subdues man into nature, then it is contradicted by its opposing position of Huxley’s dualism, which severs man from nature. Finally it finds its solution in the advanced monism of idealism, where the unity of the world is secured, as well as the superiority of man. In conclusion, Seth argued against Huxley, not by refuting him, but by portraying him as an idealist unaware of his idealism.

What, then, is Professor Huxley’s final attitude? The lecture breathes throughout the loftiest temper of ethical idealism.⁶⁵

As it was mentioned above, some of these ways of arguing weren’t simply a rhetoric, they were themselves part of the argument. Seth’s way of arguing is clearly an example of the Hegelian

⁶⁴ Seth, “Man’s Place” p. 30.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 46.

dialectic; the progression from thesis, to antithesis and finally to synthesis. The social Darwinist's monism is the thesis, its antithesis is Huxley's dualism. Finally they find their resolution in the synthesis, Seth's ethical idealism. Thus the conceptual place of the idealism was seen at the level of the synthesis. It is never itself a thesis or antithesis, rather it resolves contradictions. Thus it can be said that the "speech act" of Seth's idealism, and perhaps idealism at large, wasn't to refute or dismiss the opinions of the opponent. Rather it was to show how the idea of the opponent is in fact progressing towards the idealist hypothesis. Although Boucher explained these forms of evolutionary ethics in the terms naturalist (social Darwinist), ethical (Huxley's dualism) and spiritual (Seth's and fellow philosopher's idealism) ethics, he didn't explore how Seth's schematization of them follow the Hegelian dialectic.⁶⁶ It is possible that the works of other idealist also utilized this idea in their argumentation, since the idea of dialectic is a part of the idealist tradition. Thus it would be interesting to see if and how idealists utilized different forms of idealist logic in such debates, since this would reveal something deeper about their way of arguing and the nature of their arguments.

A similar rhetorical strategy, which also has intellectual bearing, can be found in Jones's lecture. Jones argued against Huxley's thesis by describing the position taken by the great proponent of Darwinian evolution as not truly evolutionary. Since for him evolution implied continuity, any theory which claimed to be based upon evolution, whilst denying unity, wasn't truly evolutionary. Although his case isn't an example of the Hegelian dialectic, it is nevertheless based on that idealist "speech act" which entails the demonstration of how idealism is the superior framework of thought which can integrate opposing truths. Thus Jones argued against Huxley by claiming that he, as a biologist, doesn't have the right cognitive tools to deal with the antagonism of pain and pleasure in nature and the perceived dualism between man and nature. Although Jones stated that there is a need to demonstrate the centrality of pain in nature and to make a careful discrimination between nature and man, this distinction must ultimately be resolved in a unity. But that unity can't be perceived by science or any other philosophy than metaphysics, since they are often characterized by the "either-or" tendency of ordinary thought.

[...] ordinary thought is one-sided, and rarely able to hold before itself the opposing aspects of a concrete truth.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Boucher, *The British Idealists*, xvi-ii.

⁶⁷ Jones, *The Moral Life*, p. 9.

It was very common amongst idealists to speak of anything other than *the* idealist science, which is often identified with metaphysics, as “ordinary” or “abstract”. This way of addressing the proponent also has a Hegelian origin. In the parlance of British empiricism, abstract refers to the general concepts in the mind and concrete refers to the particulars of sense perceptions. But in the parlance of Hegelian idealism, concrete can refer to that which is complex, many-sided and contains many interconnection. Whereas abstract can refer to a simple and one-sided thing torn away from any interconnection. Therefore that which is concrete is that which is real, since that which is real, mind or spirit, is a process which comprehends many things.⁶⁸ Jones believed that although science is justified in making statements about the part which it studies, these statements are never comprehensive since they are based on abstractions.⁶⁹ Thus he sees Huxley’s dualism as based on that abstraction.

I find Mr. Huxley dealing with a fragment as if it were a whole, and passing judgment upon a mental abstraction, as if it were the real object.⁷⁰

It can therefore be concluded that the strategy that Jones used in arguing against Huxley entailed him pointing out that if Huxley truly wants understand evolution concretely and therefore comprehensively, he shouldn’t do biology. Rather he should do idealist metaphysics.

Boucher pointed to the usage of this type of logic in the evolutionary debates in his explanation that the idealists posit various modes of interpretation the world, of which the scientific is one. According to them, these modes can’t reach truth, rather they fall under it, since “truth” isn’t a mode but a “union of coherence of comprehensiveness”. That is, truth contains these various modes, and naturally, the idealist held that the principles of their doctrine was more capable of embracing that manifold and complex truth. Boucher description is which is clearly reaffirmed in the lecture Jones. A general point he makes which is also reaffirmed these lecture is the fact that the idealist generally integrated the idea of evolution by showing how the Darwinian naturalist version isn’t as comprehensive as the Hegelian spiritual version.⁷¹ It is important however to emphasize how this wasn’t perhaps solely an idea or a way of arguing alone, but that it was both at the same time. The references to the Hegelian tradition was both a way of stating an argument and argument in of itself.

⁶⁸ Philip T. Grier, “Alterity and Communitarity”, in. Shaun Gallagher, ed., *Hegel, History, and Interpretation*, p. 177 (Albany; State University of New York Press, 1997).

⁶⁹ Jones, *The Moral Life*, p. 28-29.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷¹ Boucher, “British Idealism and Evolution”, p. 311.

4. Conclusion.

The intention with this study was to reconstruct the idealist perspective in the philosophical, debates concerning the evolutionary theory and ethics by studying the lectures delivered by Henry Jones and Andres Seth Pringle-Pattison. As it was mentioned, the intention with this study wasn't simply to interpret the contents of the lecture, nor to describe the idealist contribution to the topic of the debate. Rather it was to reveal something about how they, as idealist, constructed the debate by their way of identifying the underlying issues in Huxley thesis how they directed the debate to the illumination of them. As it was mentioned the wider intention with this study was to allude to the intellectual flexibility of the theory of evolution by showing somethings of how the idealist, as a group largely opposed to naturalism, integrated the idea.

It's possible to be conclude that Seth's and Jones' main problematizations of Huxley's antagonism, what it presupposed and the alternatives with which it was combated, was conditioned by the intention to criticize the philosophy which gave rise to his antagonism. Both of them presupposed the fundamentality of the unity of the world, and both saw the idealist doctrines as being that overarching framework of thought which can truly comprehend the truth of evolution. Yet it is clear that they were interested in orienting the debate to different ends. As Jones, in contrast to Seth, was interested in resurrecting the traditional superior role of metaphysics, he saw the debate as being centred upon that issue. His entire criticism of Huxley was conditioned by that point. By arguing that metaphysics is the science that is "concrete" and deals with the whole, whereas ethics, psychology and natural science only deal with abstracted parts, he went about directing the debate to the illustration of the need of metaphysics in it. If Huxley, as a scientist, means to draw conclusion from evolution concerning man and nature, he shouldn't do biology. He must do metaphysics. Jones' solution of the problem also attest to his attempt to illustrate the superiority of metaphysics. He believed that the idea of the union between the intelligibility of nature and the intelligence of man and their partnership in producing ethical goodness, can't be reached by science. It can only presume it, whereas metaphysics is according to him the discipline which can uncover this continuity and convergence.

Whereas Seth was interested in promoting the "ethicist" worldview, he, in contrast to Jones, treated the idea of the ethical life of man as the true end of the world as a fundamental presuppositions. Thus he saw the debate as enticed by the failure of evolutionists, Huxley and the social Darwinists, to arrive to this point. Therefore he led the debate to the demonstration

of his worldview by showing how the debate is unconsciously progressing toward their synthesis in the principles of his personal idealism. That the true solution of the controversy lies in the doctrine of personal idealism; the spiritual life of man as the end and unity of world.

In conclusion, the idealists helped to construct a philosophical debate on evolution by arguing that evolution can't be properly comprehended, in its ethical aspects and also in general, if it's not understood according to the doctrines of idealism. This has been attested to by the earlier research, mainly done by Boucher, but what the earlier research has failed to show is how the difference between the absolute and personal idealism effected the formation of the debate. The earlier research have also recognised that the idealists' way of arguing included the idea that Hegel was a better evolutionist than Darwin. Yet there hasn't been a full examination of how different forms idealist logic, such as the Hegelian dialectic, was a way of arguing and a part of the argument itself.

Boucher mentioned that there is a shortage in the study of idealism's role in the debates on evolution. One can perhaps say, as mentioned before, that there is therefore shortage in the understanding the different intellectual roles evolution played in late 19th century British thought. Since the idealist contribution to the evolutionary debates entailed partly the demonstration of how evolution is best understood in the light of idealism, the study of their works can lead to deeper understanding of those different roles. This is so because the philosophical appeal to evolution is often associated only with various types of scientism's or naturalisms. The idealist reception of evolution and the methods by which they received it, shows how evolution was understood and appealed to in a variety of ways, besides the naturalist ways.

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