

Oscar Wilde and Victorian Psychology

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
the University of Leicester**

by

Nazia Parveen

School of English

University of Leicester

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Abstract:

This thesis examines Oscar Wilde's theories of art in connection with specific debates ongoing in Victorian psychology as it emerged in the periodical press. By cross examining Wilde's periodical contributions with psychological theories, concepts and discussions disseminated through periodicals this thesis offers a contextual account of Wilde's creativity. Scholars generally look to Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks* to gain an insight into his interaction with scientific culture. While the notebooks are an invaluable source to scholars they only cover Wilde's learning in the 1870s and therefore exclude the influential context of the 1880s when he was engaged as a journalist for numerous periodicals and newspapers.

Chapter one will demonstrate how reading Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* alongside neighbouring articles in the *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* reveals the hidden context of psychology in which the editors of the issue attempted to establish the text. The second chapter explores Wilde's engagement in the disputes over psychological nomenclature alongside the psychology of George Henry Lewes, James Sully and other contributors. The third chapter will investigate the network in which Wilde's reviewing for the *Pall Mall Gazette* established him. Wilde's exchanges with aesthetic theorists and fellow reviewers Sully and Grant Allen will also be documented.

The fourth chapter will demonstrate how Wilde creatively engaged with theories of atomism, emotionalist psychology and physiological aesthetics. The final chapter will examine the ethical questions posed by Wildean aesthetics in relation to scientific naturalism. Wilde originally communicated his theories through periodicals but also delivered lectures (which were reported in magazines), as well as eventually transforming his periodical articles into book publications. While this thesis places the onus on the periodical formats of Wilde's texts, his lectures and revised editions of his writings will also be examined where relevant.

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Introduction

Oscar Wilde is acknowledged as a powerful writer and dramatist whose influence has resounded across continents, and whose cultural importance reverberates through many forms of media. He is known as a self-cultivating 'dandy', or performer, a 'wit' who dominated London dinner parties. His personality, his plays and novel have been appropriated by cinema. Wilde has been championed by gay right activists, and summoned for the causes of satire, or wherever the subversive or disenfranchised have needed the conviction of Wildean wisdom.¹ He is one of the most visible Victorians in modern media and is thought to fit accommodatingly with twentieth and twenty-first century culture. He is one of the few figures who can be mentioned in the same sentence on a discussion of both Greek and postmodern thought. Nonetheless, even with all the critical texts published on Wilde, biographical, formalist and contextual, the ongoing performances of his plays, reprints of his works and publication of his letters, as well as the endless citations of his sharp quips and quotes, the specific context in which his aesthetic theories developed remains an understudied area in Wilde scholarship.²

This thesis aims to offer a historicist account of Wilde's engagement with Victorian psychology as it emerged in the periodical press. I argue that it is essential to understand the contemporary debates ongoing in psychology in order to fully grasp Wilde's aesthetic theories and creativity. I further maintain that Wilde's contribution to

¹ Regenia Gagnier states that in San Francisco Wilde is known as being Irish and gay, and many undergraduates at Magdalen College, Oxford, imitate him because they think he was radical and an iconoclast. 'Review [Untitled]', *Nineteenth Century Literature*, Vol. 56, No.2, A Celebration of the UCLA Sadleir Collection, Sept., 2001, p.279, (pp.276-279).

² Alexandra Mullen offers an overview of the proliferation of Wilde media in 'The Oscar Wilde Industry', *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1, Spring 2001, pp.125-132.

psychology shaped its methodological approach to understanding and representing mental states, as well as the epistemological direction of many areas within psychology and literary criticism. Wilde's aesthetic theories have been examined in a variety of ways. For example, Nicholas Frankel has documented the aesthetic choices behind Wilde's book designs and decorations.³ Regenia Gagnier has looked at the ways audiences responded to British aestheticism in the 1890s.⁴ Michael Helfand and Philip Smith have interpreted Wilde's aesthetic theories through Hegel's system of contraries.⁵ Richard Ellmann has famously examined Wilde's theories of art through his personal predilections.⁶ Ian Small has offered a historical account of aestheticism in relation to economics, historiography, psychology and biology.⁷ By investigating Wilde's engagement with the periodical press this study attempts to supplement the existing approaches to Wildean aesthetics by offering a contextual understanding. I argue that by reading Wilde's journalism alongside specific debates ongoing in psychology, the intellectual atmosphere that shaped his ideas can be recaptured by cross-referencing his works with that of his fellow contributors. The result of this approach is that it allows us to view Wilde in a dialogue with a range of writers contemplating subjects that were of crucial importance to the development of both psychology and literary criticism. The following examination will discuss Wilde's periodical contributions as part of the ubiquitous nature of Victorian psychology. As will be explained in the first chapter, Victorian psychology had no specialist outlet so it depended on the periodical press to diffuse its eclectic subject matter, and to help

³ Nicholas Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000) p.1.

⁴ Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1986) p.1.

⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A Portrait of the Mind in the Making*, Philip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helfand, eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) p.22.

⁶ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987) p.240-251.

⁷ Ian Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) pp. 64-88.

cultivate a rapport between its contributors who came from widely different intellectual backgrounds. Periodicals and newspapers were a dominant form of communication which represented the cultural and intellectual concerns of Wilde's time.

Josephine Guy observes that 'What may be loosely called Wilde's critical writing encompassed a variety of forms, including long essays, fictional dialogues, an introduction to collections of poems, and letters to the press, as well as short reviews of exhibitions, lectures, performances, and contemporary books of many kinds.'⁸ Before the publication of Wilde's texts in book form the primary medium for their dissemination was the periodical press. Wilde wrote reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Dramatic Review*. Some of his poems were published in the *Irish Monthly* and the *Dublin Magazine*. He penned essays for heavyweight periodicals such as the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Nineteenth Century*. He edited the *Woman's World* from 1887 to 1889, and published fiction in *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *Court and Society Review*, and *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. His lectures were reported across the Atlantic, in Europe, and in various British journals.⁹

Wilde's creativity is generally viewed as being part of 'Decadence', 'Symbolism', 'Aestheticism', or '*fin de siècle*' literature. However, the root of his art theories cannot be comprehended alone through a study of artistic and literary 'movements'. When discussing Wilde's social circle he is often grouped amongst artists such as James McNeil Whistler, Aubrey Beardsley, Charles Ricketts and Max Beerbohm as well as poets and

⁸ *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Historical Criticism, Intentions, The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Vol. 4, Josephine Guy., ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. x.

⁹ *The Ladies Treasury* for example, often gave accounts of Wilde's lectures on dress. The magazine was aimed at women and published a range of fiction, and commentaries promoting virtue, hearth and home. Anon., 'Mr Oscar Wilde on Ladies' Dress', *The Ladies Treasury: A Household Magazine*, Friday 1 Jan., 1886, p.52.

novelists such as André Gide and Stéphane Mallarmé. Wilde is commonly associated with the actresses Sarah Bernhardt, Lillie Langtry and Ellen Terry. Tomoko Sato and Lionel Lambourne argue that the interactions between these figures led to new ideas and works which 'were born to form a legend in *fin de siècle*'.¹⁰ By examining Wilde's creativity and theories in the broader intellectual context offered by periodical literature this thesis will offer a historical account of Wilde without exaggerating his loyalties to any particular clique.

The following chapters will examine the exchange between psychologists and Wilde on issues concerning language, perception, aesthetic composition, representation, emotion, or mental states, and numerous psycho-physiological theories and concepts propounded in the periodical press. As will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, Wilde's engagement with debates over aesthetics, emotion, perception, mental states and language constituted the very subject matter of Victorian psychology. I argue that Wilde conceived psychology as the foundation to artistic creation, and to literary criticism. Likewise, he imbued psychology with the understanding that the art-object and literary criticism provided a route into understanding consciousness and the development of mental character. Wilde saw the potential of the art-object as psycho-analysts conceived the power of art therapy in the twentieth century. Each chapter will show Wilde demonstrating the interdependency between psychology and literary criticism. Nicholas Frankel observes that Wilde was deeply fascinated with the emergent discipline of psychology and considered *Dorian Gray* a contribution to the formation of

¹⁰ *The Wilde Years: Oscar Wilde & the Art of his Time*, Tomoko Sato & Lionel Lambourne, eds., (London: Philip Wilson Publishers Limited, 2000) p.6.

psychology.¹¹ This thesis will show Wilde engaging with multiple facets of psychology. It is important to understand that a wide range of literature constituted 'psychology'. For example, discussions about subjectivity or mental states could be channelled metaphorically and metonymically in novels, plays, reviews as well as in more formal essays dedicated wholly to the question of consciousness, or to questions of social significance. The growing body of literature on aesthetics, emotion, the relation between aesthetics and ethics, the nature of perception and knowledge were all connected to the budding discipline of psychology.

According to Small, psychology was attractive to writers who lacked an institutional affiliation.¹² This is because, as the following chapter will show, psychology did not have a disciplinary identity and was disseminated widely across the periodical press. Moreover, Small states that 'Psychology defined its object of study, the mind, in terms of individual perceptions, impressions, and desires'.¹³ Perceptions, emotions and impressions could be conveyed and discussed in very different forms within a periodical or magazine. Victorian 'psychology' was therefore a fluid designation. It incorporated the wide ranging debate around the nature of the aesthetic which was inevitably linked to perceptions, impressions, emotions and ethics. It was, argues Small, psychology's onus on subjectivity and on the importance of the individual that drew Wilde to its subject matter. The following chapters will offer a nuanced way of looking at Wilde's interaction with psychology. I will demonstrate that for Wilde, literature was innately psychological because it was made from one individual's creative energies which were transmitted to

¹¹ Nicholas Frankel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray, An Annotated and Uncensored Edition*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011) p.129.

¹² Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.64.

¹³ Ibid.

another individual's mind. Furthermore, the subject of aesthetics has a history of being read alongside psychology. This thesis will explicate the symbiotic relations between Wildean aestheticism and psychology.

The nexus of psychologists and writers I examine in relation to Wilde have not previously been given detailed attention by Wilde scholars. Perhaps, because of the chronological proximity between Freud and Wilde, critics have explored the theories of Freud in reference to Wilde's sexuality. Scholars have also examined Wilde through the theories of Lacan, and Barthes in connection with subversive structures, and the philosophy of language.¹⁴ It is often forgotten that these theorists inherited intellectual discussions from their Victorian predecessors who were already talking about aesthetics, desire, identity, the self, consciousness, and philosophising about the nature of language. In *Conditions for Criticism* (1991) Small examines intellectual culture between 1865 and 1890. He criticises the contemporary scholastic attempts to 're-read' or 're-write' aspects of literary history through issues that are of concern to twentieth-century debates. A reading of Wilde's texts through the theories of Foucault, or Derrida for example encourages fresh interpretations, and is useful to understanding the trajectory of Wilde's critical thinking. However, such readings do not provide insights into the intellectual culture of Wilde's day. In this thesis I do not attempt to represent Wilde as a psychologist. What this thesis will demonstrate is how questions relating to psychology were also

¹⁴ Daniel O'Hara likens Wilde to Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan: 'For Wilde, as for Lacan, the subject is constituted in language [...]. For Wilde, as for Derrida and de Man 'it is language, [...] that influences, and revises [...]. For Wilde, as for Foucault certain forms of language, certain discourses [...] enforce a discipline on the subject over which he or she has little control'. 'Review: Prophetic Criticism: Oscar Wilde and his Postmodern Heirs', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Summer 1984, p.251, (pp.250-259). More recently, Frankel looks to postmodern theories to explain Wilde's choice of book bindings, plates, fonts and other bibliographic detail. Frankel documents how Wilde's book versions of periodical publications were consciously designed, illustrated and crafted as decorative objects with a textual meaning of their own in connection with textual theories by Roger Chartier, Norman Feltz and Jerome McGann. *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books*, p.7.

contemplated and engaged with by Wilde. Even though psychology was kaleidoscopic in nature and incorporated elements from a wide range of disciplines, this thesis demonstrates that Wilde's interaction with matters relating to the body, soul and mind can be pinpointed with precision. He displays an intense fascination with different aspects of individual and social psychology.

There are many more lines of enquiry that need to be investigated when considering Wilde's journalistic contributions besides his challenging and assimilating Victorian psychology. However, this thesis focuses on understanding Wilde's aesthetics which, as will be seen throughout the following chapters, are closely connected to the budding discourse of psychology. If time and space permitted, an examination of Wilde's plays would further demonstrate how psychology was critical to his staging and direction of performances. This thesis will explore Wilde's engagement with psychology as it was disseminated in the periodical press. Wilde's interaction with psychology in *Salome* (1893), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), or *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), is a continuation of his preoccupation with psychology in his journalism. Nevertheless, studying the printed plays alone would be insufficient to explore Wilde's engagement with psychology in the theatre. This is because for Wilde the actual performance was vitally important to aesthetic affect. An investigation into Wilde's staging and managerial directions would therefore take the focus away from Wilde's journalism to which this thesis will pay close attention.

While the focus in this thesis will remain on Wilde's periodical contributions, inevitably his published volumes like *Intentions* (1890) will also be referenced. This is because the book editions of Wilde's periodical texts have undergone revisions and are

the most widely distributed form of his periodical works today. In instances where changes to the periodical texts have been made where the original content is edited, or supplemented as is the case with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (hereafter referred to as *Dorian Gray*), the complete 1890 version of the text will be referenced, and significant differences between the two variants noted. The observations relating to Wilde's engagement with psychology in this thesis cannot be separated from his book editions. However, by examining the periodical format of his texts I will uncover the relations between Wilde, his co-reviewers and the editorial frame to which he contributed. I believe that the context of psychology, or psychological aesthetics as disseminated in the periodical press, cannot be uncovered purely by an examination of Wilde's book editions. The main reason for this is because the process of converting the periodical texts to book publications is a complex practice worthy of documentation in itself.

Laurel Brake argues that the book format obfuscates the original context in which an author's writings are published. The periodical form effaces the idea of one 'author' whereas the 'collected work' of a writer leads scholars to view books as the 'work of art', and the focus of 'individual performance', 'genius', and 'memorability'.¹⁵ Brake observes that 'meaning is produced by the specificities of the location of writing'.¹⁶ The place of publication, the position of the article in relation to its neighbouring ones, the format of the text, the very spacing, colour and font, the issue number and volume all provide a contextual understanding of the contributions that compose the issue. Each article in the periodical is 'irrevocably linked'.¹⁷ In this way the periodical formed a 'communal gathering' of writers in a systematic yet eclectic format. It was this intellectual and

¹⁵ Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges*, p.66.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.55.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.56.

commercial exchange of culture in which Wilde was engaged as a journalist. His texts were interwoven within the 'matrix of other pieces constituting the issue in which they appear'.¹⁸ Wilde's periodical writings are therefore the theoretical and contextual backbone to this thesis.

[...] he must be familiar with the history [...].¹⁹

Guy and Small have investigated Wilde the 'jobbing journalist'.²⁰ They document Wilde's contracts and examine how the competitive conditions of the periodical press motivated his self-plagiarism. To Guy and Small, Wilde is no 'aesthetic purist'. Their materialist reading shows Wilde's interest vested in 'bags of red gold'. According to Guy and Small, Wilde used the phrase in correspondence when discussing future or potential earnings he may receive from a particular play, or work.²¹ Guy and Small emphasise the monetary incentive that writing, and particularly writing plays, had for Wilde. Nevertheless, essay writing was an important means of a steady income for the vast majority of contributors as will be demonstrated with Wilde's co-reviewers such as the belletrist Grant Allen, and the psychologist James Sully. It was less important for writers to contribute to periodicals if they could afford to finance themselves while writing for book publication. John Stokes has provided Wilde scholars with new knowledge about the contexts of Wilde's journalism and is currently editing along with Mark Turner a major edition of Wilde's journalism. This thesis aims to contribute to new insights into Wilde's journalism which is a fertile, but neglected, area of Wilde studies.

¹⁸ Laurel Brake, 'Writing, Cultural Production and the Periodical Press in the Nineteenth Century', *Writing and Victorianism*, J.B. Bullen, ed., (London: Longman, 1997) p.54.

¹⁹ Oscar Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism; With Some Remarks on the Importance of Doing Nothing: A Dialogue' [Part II], *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 28, Sept., 1890, p.436 (pp.435-459).

²⁰ Josephine Guy and Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.15.

²¹ Josephine Guy and Ian Small, "'How many Bags of Red Gold": The Extent of Wilde's Success as Dramatist', *ELT Press: 1880-1920*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1999, pp.283-297.

The following chapters will read Wilde's journalism synchronically. His periodical texts will be read in the place of publication, and in relation to various journals and magazines which have a topical, temporal, and contextual connection to Wilde's creativity.²² The onus will rest on Wilde's engagement with psychological literature, or mental science with the aim of offering an account of Wilde's aesthetic theories in connection with specific theories and debates ongoing in the periodical press. Since the publication of *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks* (1989) edited by Michael Helfand and Philip Smith, scholars have tended not to probe Wilde's engagement with science further. Their groundbreaking commentary demonstrates the impact of Wilde's reading of scientific and philosophical texts upon his writings.

By examining Wilde's interaction with fellow journalists this thesis will show the evolution of his thinking about science and specifically the nascent science of psychology. Wilde's Oxford notebooks are the only source available to scholars that document his engagement with science. This thesis will draw on the notes made by Wilde whilst he was at Oxford. However, I will attempt to go beyond the Oxford notebooks and show Wilde's exchanges with fellow journalists. The Oxford notebooks are static entries in the sense they are summaries of Wilde's Oxford reading and his views whilst he was at Oxford between the years 1874 and 1878. I will continue to reference the notebooks because they are crucial to Wilde's thinking. Nonetheless, this thesis will demonstrate that the Oxford notebooks are the preface to Wilde's understanding and engagement with Victorian psychology. This is because I capture the heated debate ongoing between the 1850s and 1890s that characterised the evolution of psychology and literary criticism.

²² Mark Turner, 'Time, Periodicals, and Literary Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 2006, p.315, (pp.309-316).

This debate is not captured in the Oxford notebooks because they are observations by Wilde as a student at Magdalen College, Oxford. While I draw from Wilde's Oxford notes I challenge the interpretation presented in Helfand and Smith's commentary. This is because Helfand and Smith have wholly based their interpretation of how Wilde was influenced by scientists and philosophers on his 'Notebook kept at Oxford' and 'Commonplace Book' which are believed to span the years 1874 to 1878.²³ The Oxford notebooks focus on Wilde's erudition from the 1870s. This thesis will concentrate on the 1880s period in which Wilde was energetically engaged as a journalist shaping psychological and literary discourse and theory.

The Oxford notebooks are a primary source for numerous scholars interested in Wilde's engagement with science. Heather Seagroatt, for example, offers a refreshing examination of the psychological theories at work in *Dorian Gray*. She criticises Helfand and Smith for focussing on 'hard science' and neglecting Wilde's engagement with psychology. Nevertheless, her claim about revealing Wilde's engagement with contemporary psychological debate lacks contextualisation beyond the reference to Wilde's Oxford notebooks. For instance, her statement that Lord Henry and Dorian 'reject the one fundamental principle that mentalism and behaviourism share – the surface/depth model' is supported by a textual reading.²⁴ No reference to the topical debates ongoing in the periodical press regarding the 'surface/depth model' is mentioned. When Wilde's writings are correlated with psychological literature, as will be seen below, his engagement with psychology reveals a context hidden to view at present in Wilde studies.

²³ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.4.

²⁴ Heather Seagroatt, 'Hard Science, Soft psychology, and Amorphous Art in 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Vol. 38, No. 4, Autumn 1998, p.750, (pp. 741-759).

The Oxford notebooks are an excellent source for Wilde's reading but they are not comprehensive. The notebooks do not represent the pluralistic intellectual culture in which Wilde engaged as a journalist. By only focussing on Wilde's Oxford learning scholars offer reductive readings lacking a cultural understanding of Wilde that excludes his intellectual growth after the 1870s. The main problem with Helfand and Smith's commentary is that all of the wonderful, new insights into Wilde's reading of any theorist nearly always lead to the conclusion that he appropriated each theorist, to create a sort of Hegelian dialectic to reconcile different manifestations of the 'material' and 'spiritual'. According to Helfand and Smith, 'Wilde sees modern England, dominated by materialism in philosophy'.²⁵ In 'Wilde's critical theory' lies a 'metaphysical basis which unifies contradictory ideas'.²⁶ For Wilde, 'human perfection was expressed in the Hellenic harmony of body and spirit'.²⁷ Even 'Good historical research depended crucially on the historian's imaginative ability to select and interpret facts, which were manifestations of the spirit existing in harmony with empirical research'.²⁸ This constant reference to the harmony of mind and matter or idealism and realism diminishes the value of Helfand and Smith's critical observations, and narrows our understanding of Wilde's engagement with science.

Helfand and Smith's commentary does not see past Hegel's synthesis and remains focussed on presenting a non-contradictory grand theory of art by Wilde. For instance, the linguist and teacher to Wilde Max Müller is said to have influenced Wilde through his belief that language was a divine gift which developed in accordance with ethnology. For

²⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.69.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.45.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.47.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.93.

Wilde, Müller 'reconciled Darwin's materialist explanation of human life with religious belief'.²⁹ So too the writings of the historians William Edward Lecky and Henry Thomas Buckle, also accommodated rationalist and spiritual explanations of the soul.³⁰ Likewise, Herbert Spencer's 'philosophy not only reconciled scientific assumptions with a belief in the ideal; his evolutionary theory provided Wilde with a biological explanation for the existence of innate ideas in the mind [...]'.³¹ Furthermore, 'Wilde used Clifford's explanation and justification of intuitive ethics to develop further his reconciliation of evolutionary theory and philosophical idealism'.³² Helfand and Smith wrongly state that Ruskin's influence on Wilde is due to Ruskin seeing 'no contradiction between his spiritual and vitalist interpretation of life, and scientific explanations offered by Darwin'.³³ Jonathan Smith demonstrates that Ruskin was repelled by Darwinian explanations of life and especially the relation between sexual selection and aesthetics as will be seen in the next chapter.³⁴ The attempt to correlate Wilde's theories into a unified mass creates interpretative misunderstandings about the complex debates ongoing in the periodical press.

Not all of Wilde's interpretation of the above philosophers and scientists, or his aesthetic ideas rebound off Hegelian dialectics, or attempt to 'reconcile', or 'accommodate' Helfand and Smith's perceived bipolar notion of 'materialism' and 'spiritualism'. They argue that 'Wilde inverted the materialist assumptions of science and

²⁹ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

³² *Ibid.*, p.30.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.11.

³⁴ Jonathan Smith, *Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp.164-165.

reconciled it with Hegelian idealism'.³⁵ Wilde is said to have demonstrated throughout his work the 'Hegelian recognition that one approaches truth through the apprehension of contraries'.³⁶ For Wilde, 'human perfection was expressed in the Hellenic harmony of body and spirit'.³⁷ Wilde 'offered art as a cure for the anxiety of materialists like Pater who doubted the metaphysical reality of the human soul'. Wilde 'posits a single spirit in both art and politics that generates the dualities of history'.³⁸ Nearly each example given above sees Helfand and Smith returning to Hegel and his system of contraries. Their view of Wilde's engagement with science is too linear, too neat, and too orientated around synthesising his theories of art into a complete philosophy. As Guy comments, the role of critics is not to try to create a unity of criticism. There are inevitably going to be parts of Wilde's oeuvre that do not correspond, connect, or even make sense.³⁹ The following research shows that while Hegel may have been hugely influential to Wilde in the 1870s, by the end of the 1880s Wilde's thinking had been enriched through discussions in the periodical press. The research presented here rejects an understanding of Wilde's writings as an expression of synthetic unity. This thesis shows his work as part of a concatenation of ideas that were disseminated within the body of discourse named 'psychology'.

Helfand and Smith offer insights into an intellectual culture bypassed by critical predecessors like Ellmann. Helfand and Smith disprove brilliantly Peter Morton's

³⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.59.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.48.

³⁹ Josephine Guy, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism: A (Con) Textual History', *Contextual Conditions*, Joseph Bristow, ed., (Toronto: Toronto Press, 2003) (pp.59-85) p.60.

suggestion that Wilde was 'ill-informed' about the scientific culture of his day.⁴⁰ The notebooks show that Wilde had a sophisticated understanding of scientific culture. Nevertheless, the focus on Wilde's Oxford notebooks alone does not demonstrate the real extent of his engagement with Victorian science, or, as I argue, the nascent discipline of psychology. The Oxford notes do form the basis to many of Wilde's aesthetic theories which is why I will continue to reference them. However, the theories that he was reading were topical in a broader intellectual culture. These theories, as will be shown below, were debated in the periodical press among writers from political, theological, literary, historic as well as scientific backgrounds. This criticism is not intended to undermine the pioneering research undertaken by Helfand and Smith. These critical observations are simply to show that there exists a rich, under-researched and over-assumed context for Wilde's aesthetic theories. The Oxford notebooks are not a complete 'portrait of the mind in making' as the subtitle of Helfand and Smith's edited volume suggests. This is because the notebooks do not stretch beyond the 1870s period and so completely miss out the decade of the 1880s to which this thesis will pay acute attention.

Smith's approach in 'Wilde in the Bodleian' (2005) is a more representational view of Wilde's broad reading of books and periodicals. Smith traces Wilde's library borrowings during and after his Oxford days. Unfortunately though, no records of his library borrowings exist. Nonetheless, after searching the extant entry books of the Bodleian, Smith establishes information about some of Wilde's requests. For instance, he is said to have frequented the library to borrow the *North British Review* (1865 and 1878)

⁴⁰Peter Morton, *The Vital Science. Biology and the Literary Imagination 1860-1900*, (London: George Allen & Unwin 1984) p.149.

as well as the *Edinburgh Review* (1850). Smith speculates that Wilde would have probably consulted the former periodical for its fifty-eight page review essay concerning John Stuart Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865). Smith also uses A. M. Stedman's guide to exam preparation to cross reference texts that Wilde had noted in his Oxford notebooks. Other sources recommended by Stedman not mentioned in Helfand and Smith's commentary were Jouffroy's *Introduction to Ethics* (1840), and Alexander Bain's *The Emotions and the Will* (1859).⁴¹ Chapters three and four will demonstrate how Bain's volume proved to be a seminal text to Wilde and a whole new generation of psychologists.

[...] a beauty-sense separate from the other senses.⁴²

The most under-estimated aspect of Wilde's engagement with psychology was with that of psychological aesthetics which was bypassed by Victorian critics. Both psychology and aesthetics involved the theorising and examination of phenomenological concepts. The experimental psychologist sought 'facts' about appearance or aspects of events, objects and experiences. Perception, imagination, introspective and affective states as caused by external stimuli were the subject matter of psychology, art and literary criticism. Wilde's theories of art are overwhelmingly concerned with how art, specifically literature, affects and influences cognition, and perception. This thesis will show how his writings experiment with impression and affectation. Chapters three and four will illustrate how Wilde explored the composition of aesthetic stimulation as it was mediated through the art-object. The art-object could be the wrapper or binding of a book, it could be a painting, a poem, a novel, a review of a volume, or a theatrical

⁴¹ Philip E. Smith, 'Wilde in the Bodleian,' *ELT*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2005, p.287, (pp.279-295).

⁴² Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.450.

production. In any one of these mediums the compositional attributes consisted of form, colour, sound and their harmonic arrangements.

This research presents many like-minded thinkers who probed into the interrelations between the arts and sciences. Joseph Jones, in his call for 'The Need of a Society for Experimental Psychology' (1886), observed that the two arts of drama and fiction have the closest connection to psychology.⁴³ Jones exemplified his point by referring to George Eliot, to whom Sully dedicated a whole article in the journal of psychology and philosophy named *Mind*, and George Meredith, whose method Wilde applauded.⁴⁴ Eliot and Meredith, argued Jones, have passed their lives in 'examining and exhibiting the processes of other's men's minds'. Jones commented that this fusion of psychology and art is an 'unworked field for psychologists' with the potential to be cultivated by society.⁴⁵ Wilde was not only part of the intellectual debate which discussed the subtleties of psychology and literary criticism and their interdependence, but he also directed and cultivated discussions in a variety of forms with psychologists, as will be seen in the following chapters.

Chapter three will show how Wilde's theories belonged to the context of psychological aesthetics of which Sully and Allen were key proponents. The researcher in the 'unworked field' of art and psychology referred to by Jones was named a 'psychological aesthetician' by Allen. As chapters three and four will show, the

⁴³ Joseph Jones, 'The Need of a Society for Experimental Psychology', *Mind*, Vol. 11, No. 41, Jan., 1886, p.51, (pp.49-54).

⁴⁴ In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' Wilde says that Meredith 'is a prose-Browning'. Wilde comments that Browning was interested in psychology or the 'processes by which thought moves', p.126 & p.127. In 'The Decay of Lying', Wilde states 'Ah! Meredith! Who can define him? His style is chaos illuminated by flashes of lightening: as a novelist he can do everything, except tell a story: as an artist he is everything, except articulate', p.40.

⁴⁵ Jones, 'The Need of a Society for Experimental Psychology', p.51.

‘psychological aesthete’ was interested in understanding and examining the mental and sensory operations involved when experiencing the art-object in the context of evolutionary science. Wilde expanded the category to include the psychology of the soul which he mixed with physical and physiological theories. It was the medium and creativity Wilde used in discussing psychology, aesthetics and literary criticism that made him stand apart from other aesthetic theorists. I suggest that Wilde was undoubtedly the most successful populariser of psychological aesthetics. However, his contribution to the psychology of aesthetics has largely been overlooked because both academics and general readerships are more interested in Wilde’s sexuality, wit and plays than the intellectual framework that conditions his creativity. The following research documents the contextual history of Wilde’s so-called ‘formalism’ and in doing contributes to the history of British formalism.

As argued above, any attempt at defining ‘psychology’ is futile and fraught with complexity. This is because the open nature of the periodical press allowed communication between different writers who argued about concepts like emotion, consciousness, ethics and aesthetics in a variety of technical and creative ways. However, as will be explained in the first chapter, there were general characteristics of that body of literature that contributed to the evolution of psychology. Literature in generalist periodicals naturally assumed the relationship between psychology and art which had been nurtured by the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge a century before. In his essay on Coleridge, whose interest in association theory and philosophy is well documented, Pater described Coleridge as possessing a ‘psychological interest’, and often employed the term

‘curious-soul-lore’ as a synonym for ‘psychology’.⁴⁶ The term ‘curious-soul-lore’ perpetuates a sense of the ‘mystery’ of the mind-body relations. In using ‘lore’, a word from Old English as opposed to the usual Latinate term ‘psychology’, or suffix ‘-ology’, Pater perceived the psychological body of knowledge as a less scientized subject. The word ‘lore’ accepts anecdotes, beliefs, and what the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls ‘traditional facts’, unlike ‘-ology’ which indicates a science or discipline which denotes a nuanced, formal kind of literature of the senses, psyche, or soul.⁴⁷ As will be demonstrated in chapter two, Wilde like Pater chose a looser, less scientific term to denote the ‘study of the soul’. For Pater there was ‘so much in modern philosophy’ that was merely “‘*spectra*’”.⁴⁸ For Pater, as for Wilde, the ‘psychologist’ was a ‘more minute observer or student than other men of the phenomena of mind’.⁴⁹ Chapter two will show how keenly Wilde softened scientific terms in the same way as Pater’s coinage of ‘curious-soul-lore’, and by doing so influenced fellow psychological aestheticians to develop a nomenclature unique to psychological aesthetics.

The terms ‘psychology’, ‘psychologist’ and ‘psychological’ had a long history of featuring in critical responses to art and literature. Hippolyte Taine, a French philosopher who held the position of Professor of Esthetics and the History of Art at the École des Beaux-Arts, stated that a novelist ‘is a psychologist, one who naturally and involuntarily represents psychology in action, and that he is neither more or less.’ The novelist, according to Taine, ‘depicts the growth of principles or passions, how they originate, how they progress, and in what they result, and delights in exhibiting those which afford the

⁴⁶ Walter Pater, ‘Coleridge’, *Appreciations*, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1924) p.99.

⁴⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, www.oed.com, [Accessed 23 Feb., 2011].

⁴⁸ Pater, ‘Coleridge’, *Appreciations*, p.98

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.82.

largest amount of pleasure'.⁵⁰ I will demonstrate how Wilde made acute observations about human nature in *Dorian Gray*, and how psychologists like Sully drew on character psychology in novels to make observations about human nature. In turn, this delineation of character psychology opened up questions about the affect of the imagination on the mental development and actions of the spectator. In their reviews both Sully and Wilde observed the same principles.

In 'George Eliot's Art' for *Mind* Sully, for example, described 'psychology in fiction' as the unfolding of the 'germs of action', the illustration of the activities of the 'imagination', 'desire', 'impulse and counter impulse'.⁵¹ Wilde agreed, stating that psychology in fiction meant not simply the visible world, but the inner world of the mind which he stated included perception, feeling, the cycle of thought, 'the growth and progress of passion', and the 'spiritual development of the soul'.⁵² Like Eliot, Wilde incorporated, and reacted to the psychological debate ensuing around him as chapters two and three will show. As a reviewer Wilde learned how contemporary creative writers adapted science and psychology. In the *Pall Mall Gazette* when reviewing *Melchior* (1885), an epic poem by W. G. Wills, Wilde remarked on the way Wills made 'a most artistic use of that scientific law of heredity' which, Wilde commented, 'has already strongly influenced the literature of this century'.⁵³ Wilde cited Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the 'dullest masterpiece of the century' as another example where theories of heredity were woven into the plot.⁵⁴ Wilde observed that Wills practised the same

⁵⁰ Anon., 'M. Thackeray', *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, Vol.1, No. 7, Saturday 1 Jul., 1865, p. 211, (pp.210-214).

⁵¹ James Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', *Mind*, Vol. 6, No. 23, 1881, p.392, (pp.378-394).

⁵² [Oscar Wilde], 'The Butterfly's Boswell,' *Court and Society Review*, Vol. 5, 20 Apr., 1887, p.378.

⁵³ [Oscar Wilde], 'A Modern Epic', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 41, No. 6241, 13 Mar., 1885, pp.11-12.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

‘psychology of the novelist’ as Eliot.⁵⁵ Wilde refers to the psychological elements of fiction or narrative development in many reviews as will be seen in the following chapters. Wilde never overtly associated himself with psychology or science in the way Sully and Allen tried to shape their positions as psychologists. As the analysis in the forthcoming chapters will demonstrate, Wilde clandestinely engaged with psychology, always asserting the superiority of the imaginative and creative medium, but always conscious about his innovative contribution to the progression of psychology and literary criticism.

Wilde’s use of ‘psychology’ is difficult to pin down, but his numerous uses of the term reflect the epistemological plurality voiced by different thinkers. His earliest reference to psychology is the most simplistic. In the *Commonplace* book he wrote that the Greeks were behind in psychology because ‘images are given to us clear in their plasticity like a statue bathed in visible sunlight’. However, he remarked that psychology was ‘a branch of knowledge in which the Greeks were always behind [...]’.⁵⁶ Wilde may be referring to ‘psychology’ as an examination of states of consciousness or mental processes which concrete forms of art like statues could not capture. In another note, Wilde quoted Aristotle who stated mind ‘is nothing before it exercises itself’, and Hegel who remarked that mind ‘was a subject, a process, not a substance’.⁵⁷ This thesis will show Wilde creatively experimenting with numerous conceptions of mind and its expression. It is important to understand that Victorian psychology was far from the tight knit discipline that we perceive it to be today. The multifaceted nature of Victorian psychology may seem concerning to those who wish for a more watertight definition.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Oscar Wilde’s Oxford Notebooks*, p.138.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.148.

However, no such definition can be offered because the late Victorian decade was a period of transformation for psychology which was in the process of formation. It is Wilde's contribution to psychology and the debates ongoing between writers that that will form the basis to the following investigation.

In *Conditions for Criticism* Small gives an excellent historical account of how aesthetics and psychology intersect. He establishes that the debates ongoing in psychology over perception and representation crossed over into the terrain of aesthetics. The exchanges between writers on the nature of aesthetic response, or 'affective states', says Small, generated concepts and terminology that were shared by Pater and Wilde. The following chapter will reveal how much scholars have underestimated the extent to which Wilde's aestheticism shares the same structures and language as that of psychology. Small attributes the rise of the psychology of affective states to the theories of Charles Darwin, Spencer and Bain. It was their theories which were amalgamated and elaborated upon by proceeding artists and psychologists. Contrary to the popular representation of Wilde's view of art as being separate from action I will show that he encouraged free associations, desires and dreams. He also argued strongly that the art-object or the 'aesthetic' could be a medium of training emotion, perception, associations, and as a consequence, could influence everyday behaviours and actions.

Chapters three and four will investigate how Darwin's theories of natural and sexual selection shaped an understanding of aesthetics in the natural and artistic world. His views on the functionality of form, colour and sound were the backdrop to investigating aesthetic perception for evolutionist psychologists and artists. Herbert

Spencer's ideas are also crucial to Wilde's evolving thoughts about art and psychology. In Spencer's brief chapter on 'Aestho-Physiology' in his *Principles of Psychology* (1855) he maintained that 'aesthetic products' were the result of 'non-life serving' functions. This is to say that aesthetic feeling was the result of excess energy that was left over after the body had performed vital functions. Like Spencer, the psychologists James Ward and William James, Wilde maintained that the perception and feelings arising from the art-object were no different to those experienced outside the constructed medium of art.⁵⁸ Alexander Bain's crucial influence on Wilde and the psychological aestheticians will also be examined. Bain was the first psychologist to attempt to understand 'Ideal Emotion' in physical terms. His theories inspired psychologists to investigate the psychology behind aesthetic affect, and stimulated artists to explore new forms of aesthetic gratification.⁵⁹ Besides Darwin, Bain, and Spencer, Sully translated and popularised the researches of Hermann Von Helmholtz.

Helmholtz had first opened up the connection between the fine arts and the physiological conditions necessary to evoking certain moods in the observer in his lecture 'On the Relation of Optics to Painting'. He confessed that stepping into the sphere of the arts forced him to conclude that the sensuous was by no means a 'low', or secondary principle in the study of art.⁶⁰ When contemplating the art-object from a psychological point of view Helmholtz believed it necessary to ask 'What effect is to be produced by a work of art, using this word in its highest sense?' He responded generously, arguing 'It should excite and enchain our attention, arouse in us, in easy play, a host of slumbering

⁵⁸ Herbert Spencer, *A System of Philosophy: Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 2, (William & Newgate, London, 1881) [1872], p.646.

⁵⁹ Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and The Will*, 3rd ed, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1875) p.105.

⁶⁰ Hermann Von Helmholtz, Translated by E. Atkinson, *Popular Scientific Lectures*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1962) p.285.

conceptions and their corresponding feelings, and direct them towards a common object, so as to give a vivid perception of all the features of an ideal type [...].⁶¹ This passage was echoed by Pater in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873).

In *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* Pater deliberated on the nature of art and encouraged an introspective study of the art-object. What Helmholtz described as the role of the 'psychologist' in the passage above, Pater called the 'aesthetic critic' whose task it was to ask 'What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure?'⁶² Pater emphasised 'me', and the unity of conceptions the art-object aroused in 'me'. Helmholtz, however, used the objective pronoun 'us'. To speak about 'us' infers that a universal statement may be made about 'us', but Pater's 'me' objectifies subjectivity. In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' (1890) Gilbert claimed that the 'highest form of criticism really is the record of one's own soul'. Gilbert added that criticism was 'more delightful than philosophy because its subject matter was concrete not abstract, real and not vague'.⁶³ These remarks by Gilbert were part of a broader debate about the position and relations between the literary critic as exemplified in the figure of Wilde, and the psychologist, the latter of whom increasingly turned to a physiological understanding of aesthetic response, and introspection as will be shown in chapter three.

According to Small, psychology 'had arrived at a theory of aesthetic perception which was strikingly close to that enjoined in the polemic of the aesthetes'.⁶⁴ In

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, Adam Phillips, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 'preface'.

⁶³ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.143.

⁶⁴ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p. 75.

Conditions for Criticism Small observes that psychological terms such as 'relative', 'impression', 'discrimination', and 'pleasure' appear in Wilde's works too.⁶⁵ However, to understand the nature of the interaction between aestheticism, or Wilde's aesthetics, and psychology, periodical literature needs to be examined. It is through an examination of periodical literature that Wilde's exchanges with psychological aestheticians will reveal the broader intellectual culture in which Wilde engaged. He agreed with Allen and Sully that the 'hierarchy of the arts [...] must be founded on a psychological basis [.].'⁶⁶ Wilde was guided by the fundamental principle of the psychological aesthete. This was that art appealed primarily to the 'faculties and sentiments'.⁶⁷ His view demonstrates that Wilde was not engaging in an abstract or embryonic kind of formalism that tends to be associated with him today. This thesis will give Wilde scholars a firm contextual grasp of the important debates that forged his creativity and intellectual persona. Wildean aesthetics are part of the history of aesthetics and psychology. His ideas have had a rippling affect that dominates contemporary literary theory and aesthetic theory but without the recognition of Wilde's contribution. Moreover, the rich periodical literature that has been selected and correlated to form a narrative about Wilde and psychology in the following pages encourages scholars to further pursue the lines of inquiry that time and space does not permit to be fully treated here.

As will be seen, even though Wilde drew from the same sources of psychology and philosophy as the psychological aestheticians Allen, Sully, Edmund Gurney and Vernon Lee, Wilde's aesthetic theories did not receive the same kind of attention enjoyed by his fellow thinkers. Across the periodical press, Wildean aestheticism carried no

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.79.

⁶⁶ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.140.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.115.

intellectual value beyond its love for affectation. Wilde's posing for photographs in furry coats, silk stockings and trilby hats showed he was willing to perform for a living. Critics may have perceived this as less scholastic, less serious and certainly more self-promoting than Wilde's critical predecessors like Pater. Wilde's blatant self-promotion did not bode well with institutions represented by the 'Art Professor at the University', or publishing houses like Macmillan's.⁶⁸ Brake remarks that Macmillan's decision not to publish Wilde shows he was an intellectual outcast. Macmillan's was perceived as a respectable publishing house because it refused to circulate 'immoral' books like *Dorian Gray*.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the accusations of charlatanism should not distract scholars from trying to understand the contextual and intellectual basis to Wilde's criticism and creativity in whatever medium he presented his craft. This thesis will attempt to give a historical account of Wilde's aesthetic theories by providing a detailed analysis of periodical literature which bears a topical, linguistic or intellectual affinity with Wilde's journalism. By examining periodical literature synchronically this thesis will show Wilde amongst a new network of thinkers.

Lastly, this thesis will not attempt to recast Wilde as a psychologist. This research will demonstrate how Wilde shaped literary theory and both aesthetical and psychological thought. This thesis will demonstrate that Wilde's views and ideas are part of the context of Victorian psychology, and in particular psychological aesthetics. The following five chapters will show Wilde engaging with psychologists who disseminated their theories in the same circles, and periodicals as Wilde. His aesthetic theories interact,

⁶⁸ In the tale 'The Happy Prince' the 'Art Professor' demands that the statue of the Happy Prince is pulled down declaring 'As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful'. Wilde disparages this utilitarian view of beauty and criticises the authoritative view representative of university education which as Small states was increasingly ousting the non specialist, Oscar Wilde, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, (New York: Everyman's Library, 1995 [1888]) p.25. Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.88.

⁶⁹ Brake, *Subjugate Knowledges*, pp.68-69.

overlap, accept and reject those by his fellow intellectuals. This thesis can by no means offer a complete historical account of Wilde's aesthetic theories. Nevertheless, the analyses will account for some of his popular ideas and theories which excite curiosity amongst scholars. This thesis will show Wilde engaged with both deeply theoretical and popular kinds of Victorian psychology. Some of the theories that Wilde appropriates such as the theory of associationism, or some of the psycho-aesthetic laws, illustrate the psychological depth of his writings, as well as the methods he used to penetrate the psyche of his audience. Finally, the research presented in the following chapters gives readers the opportunity to radically review their perception of Wilde, and challenge many of the clichés that have become a part of 'Wilde-lore'.

Chapter one:

Oscar Wilde, Victorian Psychology, and the Periodical Press

I have a foolish habit of reading periodicals.⁷⁰

Over the last two decades scholars have been keen to show how periodical literature opens up a special window to Victorian culture.⁷¹ For those interested in the interrelations between science and literature the periodical press offers rich and complex engagements. Susan David Bernstein states that according to the Waterloo Directory, over five hundred periodicals published articles on science.⁷² Scholars working on the SciPer project, or Science in the Nineteenth Century Periodical, argue that Victorian print media is an immensely rich source for understanding the cultural role of science in nineteenth-century Britain.⁷³ The SciPer scholars have attempted to capture the hybrid intellectual culture of the periodical press in an online database. The database collates science literature as disseminated in sixteen periodicals with reference to six hundred individual writers and two thousand five hundred articles. Nevertheless, it is difficult to represent the quantity and quality of literature offered by the periodical press. This is because there were an estimated one hundred and twenty-five thousand periodical and newspaper titles issued in England alone.⁷⁴

The periodical press was pivotal to the evolution of the nascent discipline of psychology. Rick Rylance states that psychology was defined by debate and was diffused

⁷⁰ Oscar Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism; With Some Remarks on the Importance of Doing Nothing: A Dialogue' [Part I], *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 28, Jul., 1890, p.136, (pp.123-147).

⁷¹ Susan David Bernstein, 'Periodical Partners: A Context for Teaching Victorian Literature and Science', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Winter 2006, p.383, (pp.383-397).

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.388.

⁷³ *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical*, <http://www.sciper.org/>, [Accessed 24 Feb., 2011].

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

widely. He emphasises the crucial role played by generalist periodicals in spreading the subject matter of psychology as a 'common', 'not specialised', 'intellectual and cultural concern'.⁷⁵ The contributors to psychological debate came from an assortment of backgrounds. The periodical press nurtured interaction between writers of all kinds. Psychology was not the intellectual property of any one specialist. Its matter defied subject boundaries and engaged a whole spectrum of writers from theologians to physicians, artists, biologists, politicians, evolutionary theorists, educationalists, musicians, and philosophers. Writing on a number of topics was a common practice in Victorian culture. Figures such as John Ruskin, George Henry Lewes and Grant Allen for example, were polymaths and published on a variety of subjects. These 'Renaissance men' were able to contribute to a number of subjects because disciplines were in the process of formation. However, subjects were undergoing specialisation and were becoming increasingly less accessible to the non-specialist.

Victorian psychology was turbulent, unwieldy, rich and diverse. Psychologists struggled to reign in their subject matter. However, the mass of terrain that psychology covered was not a disadvantage for this discipline in the making. The periodical press fuelled argument which was the life-blood of psychology. Periodicals such as the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Nineteenth Century* appealed to many readerships. Rylance explains that the questions posed in generalist literature about psychology were of concern to the public.⁷⁶ Contributors to psychology debated questions of character and external, social and environmental factors influencing human behaviour. Mental health,

⁷⁵ Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.7.

⁷⁶ Rick Rylance, "The Disturbing Anarchy of Investigation': Psychological Debate and the Victorian Periodical", *Culture and Science in Nineteenth-Century Media*, Geoffrey Cantor et al., eds., (Hants: Ashgate, 2004) p.239.

the nature of free-will, the co-existence of body and soul, or consciousness, as well as the important question of which methodology was most likely to yield answers, were all issues of vital public importance.

Like the psychologist, the role of the 'literary critic', or the professional literary scholar, was also an undefined, eclectic and non-specialised one, and only really began to emerge towards the end of the nineteenth century. Small explores the looseness of literary criticism, whose contributors, he argues, were marginalised by academic institutions in the same way as psychologists, who were on the periphery of cultural and methodological authority.⁷⁷ Intellectuals like Lewes and Leslie Stephen whose editorships and views shaped Wilde's thinking categorised knowledge in flexible, unbiased and culturally democratic ways. For example, Stephen sorted literature into three areas. The first was the literature of 'facts', the second was 'speculative' literature which bound knowledge together, and the third included the 'imaginative'.⁷⁸ These sorts of descriptions did not serve to categorize or compartmentalise the interconnections between different sorts of knowledge. Laurel Brake notes that periodical literature up to the late 1890s demonstrates the 'medley of activity' by writers who in 'retrospect are regarded as literary critics'.⁷⁹

The periodicals to which Wilde contributed like the *Fortnightly Review* or the *Nineteenth Century* invited readers to engage with numerous subjects by different writers in a collective volume. The generalist nature of these periodicals meant that fictional pieces were placed alongside articles on physiology, philosophy, physics,

⁷⁷ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.64.

⁷⁸ Leslie Stephen, 'Philosophic Doubt', *Mind*, Vol. 5, No.18, Apr., 1880, p.161, (pp.157-181).

⁷⁹ Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender & Literature*, (New York: New York University Press, 1994) p.3.

theology, or social reform. The formatting of the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Nineteenth Century* and others like the *Cornhill Magazine* encouraged participation from a cross section of writers. Within the periodical press writers and editors fought over factors such as pay, word length, and editorial involvement or bowdlerisation. Writers with similar backgrounds might often be asked to contribute to a particular topic of interest by an enterprising editor as will be demonstrated in chapter three with the *Pall Mall Gazette* for which Wilde penned hundreds of reviews. As will be shown throughout this thesis the versatile nature of psychology meant that it could be accommodated in a variety of periodicals and newspapers, and in an assortment of forms.

The first journal of psychology and philosophy was established and financed by the psychologist Alexander Bain in 1876 and was entitled *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*. Bain's former student George-Croom Robertson was the editor. He expressed the view that there was no shortage of literature on psychology or philosophy. It was just 'mixed with lighter literature in the pages of miscellaneous magazines.'⁸⁰ It is the relationship between the literature of psychology in these 'miscellaneous magazines' and Wilde's journalism that will be explored in the forthcoming chapters. Bain had personally funded *Mind* to provide psychologists with a platform in which to debate. However, contributors also continued to write about psychology and philosophy in various periodicals. Psychology was a multifaceted area of knowledge which the breadth and depth of the periodical press helped mould into a coherent subject. It did this by opening up debates of psychological concern to a wide range of writers. The fact that psychology did not have a formal outlet made it more open to debate. Psychological controversies fuelled discussions which connected articles from

⁸⁰ 'Editor', 'Psychology and Philosophy', *Mind*, Vol. 8, No. 29, Jan., 1883, p.2, (pp.1-21).

across the periodical press. What made psychology even more amenable to the competitive and commercial conditions of the periodical press was that its very methodology was highly disputed. Psychology had various methodological approaches which were inevitable given that psychology's subject matter stretched across various schools of thought, and was open to be debated upon by any writer who had knowledge to contribute.

In the 'Prefatory Words' to the first issue of *Mind* Croom-Robertson stated that the psychologist was called upon to discuss many areas of overlapping knowledge. Psychology included:

[The] physiological investigation of the Nervous System in man and animals, by which mental science is brought into relation with biology and the physical sciences generally; objective study of all natural expressions or products of mind like Language, and all abnormal or morbid phases up to Insanity; comparative study, again objective, of the manners and customs of Human Races as giving evidence of their mental characteristics, also of mind as exhibited by the lower Animals [...].⁸¹

'No such statement', acknowledged Croom-Robertson, 'can come near to exhausting the subject matter of psychology'. He added that 'logic, aesthetics and ethics [...] have an obvious relation to the different aspects of mental culture'. This is because these three categories are entwined within the subject of 'modern psychology' as they are bound to

⁸¹ 'Editor', 'Prefatory Words', *Mind*, Vol. 1, No.1, Jan., 1876, p. 3-4, (pp.1-6).

‘Knowing, Feeling and Willing’. From a philosophical point of view, Croom-Robertson argued that it is ‘needless to justify the consideration of the true, the beautiful and the good in a journal whose subject matter is Mind’.⁸² Aesthetics was a popular but obscure area of psychology. The obscurity originated from the fact that aesthetics being the ‘science of sensitive knowing’, or the ‘science of the beautiful’ as termed by the ‘father’ of aesthetics Alexander Baumgarten, involved the analysis of emotion which was highly subjective and empirically impenetrable.⁸³ Aesthetics crossed into the domains of science and art. For this reason aesthetics caught the attention of artists, poets, as well as mathematicians, biologists and physicists. In 1974 ‘psychology’ was dropped from the subtitle of *Mind* and has ever since been known as a journal of ‘philosophy’ only.⁸⁴ This has much to do with the specialist niches, or off shoots of psychology such as clinical, social and criminal psychology all of which have their own methods and different epistemologies.

Given Wilde’s active role in the periodical press as an editor, reviewer, essayist and writer of fiction it is short sighted to suggest that his reading of scientific and philosophical texts terminated with his graduation from Oxford. Stokes suggests that Wilde scholars should assume that he had ‘read everything’.⁸⁵ So too Guy and Small state that as a journalist Wilde had to ‘know something about every subject’.⁸⁶ Wilde’s periodical contributions show he had gleaned knowledge from across the periodical press. However, throughout this thesis I will read Wilde in connection with specific

⁸² Ibid., p.5.

⁸³ Nicholas Davey, ‘G(ottlieb) Alexander Baumgarten’, *A Companion to Aesthetics*, 2nd ed., Stephen Davies, Kathleen Marie Higgins et al., eds., (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) p.162.

⁸⁴ D. W. Hamlyn, ‘A Hundred Years of Mind’, *Mind*, Vol. 85, No. 337, Jan., 1976, p.2, (pp.1-5).

⁸⁵ John Stokes, ‘Inaugural session: Late-Victorianism and Modernism: The Making of Modernity: A new symposia series at the University of Birmingham’, 19 May 2010.

⁸⁶ Guy and Small, *Oscar Wilde’s Profession*, p.44.

periodical literature, or psychological debate. For example, he was aware of the ‘violent controversy [...] raging between the Duke of Argyll and Mr Huxley’ with ‘article following article with fearful rapidity’.⁸⁷ Wilde wrote a short review of a lecture by ‘Mr. Courtland Palmer, of New York’ for the *Court and Society Review* in May 1887. In his lecture, Palmer argued that ‘geniuses’ should debate in the presence of people in evening dress. Impassioned public debates would make misunderstanding and misinterpretation ‘a thing of the past’.⁸⁸ Wilde commented that Argyll and Huxley would benefit from Palmer’s suggestion. This shows that Wilde was aware of the controversies of scientific naturalism as they were argued out in the periodical press.

Wilde understood the polemics that framed each periodical. Only the urban papers the ‘*Pall Mall*’, ‘the *St. James*’, ‘the *Globe*’ and ‘the *Echo*’ could have been delivered to the family home in Buckingham in ‘Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime’ (1887). Colonel Goodchild ‘wanted to read the reports of a speech he had delivered that morning at the Mansion House, on the subject of South African Missions, and the advisability of having black bishops in every province’. For ‘some reason or other’ the colonel had a ‘strong prejudice against the *Evening News*’.⁸⁹ These metropolitan dailies competed with one another and sensationalised news. Divorce and murder were popular subjects for papers like the *Evening News*, which is why Lord Arthur Savile checks it to see if he had succeeded in murdering his uncle, the Lord of Chichester.⁹⁰ As will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, the periodical press, its structures and polemics is knitted into Wilde’s texts, and cannot be divorced from Wilde’s journalistic endeavours.

⁸⁷ [Oscar Wilde], ‘Should Geniuses Meet’, *Court and Society Review*, Vol. 4, May 1887, p.414, (pp.413-414).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Oscar Wilde, ‘Lord Arthur Saville’s Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy’ [parts V and VI], *Court and Society Review*, Vol. 4, No. 150, 25 May 1887, p.496, (pp.495-7).

⁹⁰ *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals: 1800-1900*, www.victorianperiodicals.com, [Accessed Sunday 19 Feb., 2011].

Glimpses of the social circles familiar to Wilde are also present in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' which Wilde published at the height of his journalistic career. In 1887 Wilde was reviewing regularly for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and was about to embark on the editorship of the *Lady's World* which Wilde renamed the *Woman's World*. Guy and Small state that throughout the 1880s Wilde threw himself into journalistic circles as well as working his way up to 'high' society. In 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' Wilde describes the 'wonderful medley of people' at Lady Windermere's reception:

Gorgeous peeresses chatted affably to violent Radicals, popular preachers brushed coat-tails with eminent sceptics, a perfect bevy of bishops followed a stout prima-donna from room to room, on the staircase stood several Royal Academicians, disguised as artists. [...] Lady Windermere returned to the picture gallery, where a celebrated political economist was solemnly explaining the scientific theory of music to an indignant virtuoso from Hungary [...].⁹¹

Wilde colours the passage with his humorous prejudices. However, the crowd depicted above embodies the intellectual atmosphere of the periodical press. With such a variety of figures in Wilde's social and journalistic life the periodical press was elemental to his learning and intellectual outlook. How Wilde perceived the links between knowledge surrounding him as a reviewer and the arguments he presents in his articles can be detected. For instance, in 'The Decay of Lying' (1889) Wilde states that art should not degenerate into the tedium that characterises the lectures at the Royal Society.⁹² The

⁹¹ Oscar Wilde, 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy' [Part I and II], *Court and Society Review*, Vol. 4, No. 149, p.447, (pp.447-450).

⁹² Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying: A Dialogue', *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 25, Jan., 1889, p.46, (pp.35-56).

lectures were advertised below his reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette* so he would have been aware of their subject matter. As an example, below his review 'A Literary Pilgrim' for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1886, Professor Oliver Lodge's lecture on 'Fuel and Fire' is listed along with its date, time and location.⁹³ Wilde knew about the hot topics of the day. He was aware of what was being talked about in society and what was fashionable. His social scenes and social relations are engrained within his writings.

Wilde's reviews are strewn with references to contemporary psychological debates. He knew about spiritualism, hypnotism, theosophy and occultism. Many spiritualists adopted what Janet Oppenheim describes as an 'animistic vision of closely interconnected parts all bearing the mark of the cosmic soul, or world force, or ultimate spirit.' For the occultist, states Oppenheim, 'there is no sharp distinction between matter and spirit, tangible and intangible [...].'⁹⁴ In an imaginary interview, *Punch* ridiculed Wilde by portraying him as an occultist who declares 'my real Love is my own Kosmic soul, enthroned in its flawless essence'.⁹⁵ This was a reference to Wilde's poetry, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, he understood and critiqued theories which responded to the debate over the distinction between mind and matter such as Hylo-Idealism. Hylo-Idealism was a monistic doctrine formulated by the retired army surgeon Robert Lewins and his friend Constance Naden to whom Lewins was a mentor. The Hylo-Idealistic philosophy proposed to fuse a 'thoroughbred subjectivism amounting to solipsism to a dogmatic materialism', in an attempt to eradicate the dualisms between

⁹³ [Oscar Wilde], 'A Literary Pilgrim', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 43, No. 6580, 17 Apr., 1886, p.5.

⁹⁴ Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism, and Psychical Research in England 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p.160.

⁹⁵ Anon., 'Oscar Interviewed', *Punch*, Vol. 82, Saturday 14 Jan., 1882, p.14.

mind and matter.⁹⁶ Wilde supplemented his tale 'The Canterville Ghost' (1887), originally published in the society and gossip magazine the *Court and Society Review*, with the subtitle 'A Hylo-Idealistic Romance' in the 1891 edition.

An intentional friction is set up throughout 'The Canterville Ghost' between the spiritual and the material. The modern American Otis family move into 'Canterville Chase' which is haunted. The family represents the material 'New World' which can never sufficiently communicate with the 'Old World' or, the 'fourth dimension' inhabited by the ghost. The mismatch between the two worlds is rendered disparately in Wilde's description of the agues suffered by the ghost. 'His nerves' are said to be 'completely shattered,' 'a shock to the nervous system' likewise 'paralyses' him, and he is defeated by Washington's mischievously placed jug of water which wets the ghost to the 'skin' leading to a 'severe cold.'⁹⁷ The incongruence between the physical and spiritual render them ridiculous because a spiritual entity cannot be troubled with the pains of the nervous system. Philip Smith states that he does not see how Wilde's tale of 'the miraculous salvation of a reprehensible British ghost through the intercession of a virginal American girl' has anything to do with Hylo-Idealism.⁹⁸ However, Guy states that the original story appears without the 'allusion' to 'Hylo-Idealism'. Wilde chose to enhance the title in 1891 but the theory of Hylo-Idealism, argues Guy, was propounded by Lewins and Naden in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Guy proposes that it was only the posthumous publication of Naden's writings by Lewins in 1891 that drew Wilde's attention to the philosophy. Nevertheless, given Wilde's knowledge of numerous philosophical theories it is not

⁹⁶ Robert William Dale, 'Constance Naden', *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 59, Apr., 1891, pp.508-522.

⁹⁷ Oscar Wilde, 'The Canterville Ghost' [part II, III and IV], *Court and Society Review*, Vol.4, 2 Mar., 1887, p.207, (pp.207-211).

⁹⁸ Philip E. Smith, 'Robert Lewins, Constance Naden, and Hylo-Idealism', *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 25, No. 4, Aug, 1978, p.308, (pp.303-309).

improbable that he knew about Naden's engagement with Hylo-Idealism when he reviewed her 1887 volume *A Modern Apostle and Other Poems* in *Woman's World*.⁹⁹

As the editor of *Woman's World*, Wilde observed that many female poets seem to 'love to grapple with the big intellectual problems of modern life'. He noted that science, philosophy, and metaphysics form a large portion of their subject matter.¹⁰⁰ Wilde had read widely on the subject of mind and matter as will be explored in chapters three and four. He was acutely aware of the kind of theories and doctrines circulating in the periodical press, and took part in public spectacles of scientific demonstration like the 'muscle-reading' demonstration at the *Pall Mall Gazette* offices. Wilde also attended a séance at Keats's House in Hampstead.¹⁰¹ Wilde was familiar with the volumes on dreams and spirits by Edmund Gurney and F. W. H Myers.¹⁰² The Psychical Society was established in 1882. Myers and Gurney, its founders and foremost proponents, fought to establish their psychical research along with the nascent discipline of experimental psychology.¹⁰³ Wilde confessed, 'most modern mysticism seems to me to be a method of imparting useless knowledge in a form that no one can understand.' He stated that 'Allegory, parable, and vision have their high artistic uses, but their philosophical and scientific uses are very small.'¹⁰⁴ To Wilde, spiritual psychology was useful for spurring on the imagination. His adaptations of the psychology of telepathy, phrenology, spirits and votaries will be explored in chapter four.

⁹⁹ [Oscar Wilde], 'Literary and Other Notes by the Editor', *Woman's World*, Vol. 1, 1888, pp.81-82.

¹⁰⁰ [Oscar Wilde], 'Editor's Notes', *Woman's World*, Vol. 1, 1888, p.133.

¹⁰¹ The muscle-reading demonstration was held at the offices of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and will be explored in chapter three. *The Ladies Treasury* reported that Wilde attended a séance by Mr. W. Irving Bishop, 'the "thought reader"' at Keats's house, Hampstead. The company consisted of the Prince of Wales and Lillie Langtry. Wilde was accompanied by Frank Miles and Whistler. Anon., 'On-Dits and Facts of the Month', Friday 1 Jul., 1881, p.419.

¹⁰² Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.53.

¹⁰³ Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism, and Psychical Research in England 1850-1914*, p.249.

¹⁰⁴ [Oscar Wilde], 'Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, Vol.2, 1889, p.224.

The terms 'spiritualism' and 'materialism' crop up frequently in debates within which Wilde was engaged so it is important to define them. 'Spiritualism' and 'materialism' were not straight-forward dichotomies as advocates and critics often used the terms interchangeably, and as terms of abuse. To call someone a 'materialist' could be offensive as it connoted worldliness, or 'amorality' to those who held religious beliefs. Equally, to be labelled as someone who has the methods of a spiritualist could be construed as an attack on an individual's working methodology. Typically, the 'materialist' explained the world through 'material' or physical explanations which excluded phenomena that could not be verified through inductive, deductive, or empirical methods. There were many thinkers however, who strove to investigate phenomena under strict scientific conditions, but acknowledged that a purely material understanding of life was incongruent with the totality of human experience. Thomas Henry Huxley, John Tyndall and Lewes are examples of such thinkers. 'Spiritualists' did not necessarily reject an empirical understanding of the world, but were more inclined to support a creationist world view. This is not to say that evolutionary accounts of existence were rejected. On the contrary evolutionary theory was embraced and accommodated within the creationist view of life. The scientific naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace who developed the theory of evolution by natural selection independently whilst Darwin was also formulating the theory, openly declared himself a spiritualist.¹⁰⁵ Spiritualists welcomed the investigation of invisible phenomena or forces and were generally more open to accepting emotional responses than the 'materialist'. Spiritual psychology included hypnotism, mind-reading, or animal magnetism, the communication with the dead as well as an interest in cosmology, astrology and numerology.

¹⁰⁵ Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988) p.106.

In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' Wilde acknowledged the arbitrary notions of 'spiritualism' and 'materialism' noting that:

[...] men are the slave of words. They rage against materialism, as they call it, forgetting that there has been no material improvement that has not spiritualised the world, and that there have been few, if any, spiritual awakenings that have not wasted the world's faculties in barren hopes, and fruitless aspirations, and empty or trammeling creeds.¹⁰⁶

In the context of psychology, as will be explored in the next chapter, psychologists like Lewes were increasingly propounding the view that matter could not be separated from mind.¹⁰⁷ Wilde agreed, but his argument was not without a complex revision of Lewes's position as chapters two and three will demonstrate. Wilde noted the different kinds of psychology and the underlying disputes over its epistemology. He differentiated between the 'physiological' which 'investigates bodies in their normal or healthy condition', and the 'pathological' which 'investigates bodies in their abnormal and unhealthy condition.'¹⁰⁸ He noted that 'Comparative anatomy shows us that, physically, man is but the last term of a long series which leads from the highest mammal to the almost formless speck of living protoplasm which lies on the shallow boundary between animal and vegetable life[,] so does comparative psychology or the anatomy of the mind'.¹⁰⁹ This note shows Wilde perceived no dichotomy between the 'physiological' and 'psychological'.

¹⁰⁶ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.138.

¹⁰⁷ George Henry Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism' [Part I], *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 112, Apr., 1876, p.479, (pp. 479- 493).

¹⁰⁸ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.160.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.164.

The Oxford notes clearly demonstrate Wilde's support of the physical basis to the mind. He wrote 'while psychology rests on the physiology of the nervous system the popular notion of mind is that it is a metaphysical entity seated in the head like a telegraph operator – modern science contends it is a function of [the] brain'.¹¹⁰ Wilde remarked that terms such as 'dull insensate matter', and 'cold dry rational', are expressions which 'ought to be relegated to the already overstocked collection of ignorant theological abuse [...]'.¹¹¹ The 'ignorant theological abuse' or the 'spiritual tyranny' refers to the view of clergy that a dissection of physical life negated the 'soul' or 'spirit'. Tyndall assured theologians that the mystery of consciousness and its manifestation in the physical cells of the body would remain a mystery the answer of which 'we will never know'.¹¹² These different aspects and definitions of psychology show Wilde registered the history and epistemological contentions within the science of the mind and body, at a critical time for psychology's development.

It is uncertain as to whether Wilde had access to *Mind* at Oxford. Smith's examination of the Bodleian Library Papers Entry Books makes no mention of the journal. However, *Mind* covered many of the subjects which Wilde engaged with in his Oxford notebooks. His teacher Müller for example penned 'The Original Intention of Collective and Abstract Terms' (1876). Wilde had read Edward B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, and Custom* (1871).¹¹³ Wilde had also read Herbert Spencer's works on sociology and psychology. Tylor contributed to *Mind* and wrote a critical commentary on 'Mr Spencer's

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.167.

¹¹² John Tyndall, 'Belfast Address', *Fragments of Science: A Series of Detached Essays, Addresses, and Reviews*, 9th ed, Vol. II, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902) p.184. The 'Belfast Address' was originally delivered before the British Association on 19 August 1874.

¹¹³ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.202.

Principles of Sociology' (1877). Lewes also wrote for *Mind*. Chapters three and four will show how his writings on aesthetics influenced Wilde and a whole school of psychologists and imaginative writers.

The course content of the Literae Humaniores which Wilde was studying was criticised in the first issue of *Mind*. Part of the Literae Humaniores required students to demonstrate a 'competent proficiency' in language, Rhetoric, Moral Philosophy, as well as the 'Elements of the Mathematical Sciences and of Physics'.¹¹⁴ Writing in 1876, Mark Pattison initiated a series of articles investigating the study of philosophy at the most prestigious universities of Britain, Europe and North America. 'Philosophy at Oxford' was under scrutiny first.¹¹⁵ Pattison criticised the Oxford system for nurturing theological and religious interests rather than investing money into speculative philosophy. He argued that philosophy had no existence outside its being an 'appendage of [...] classical training'.¹¹⁶ The Oxford curriculum promoted the study of the nature and origin of knowledge, the history of logic in Greece to the time of Aristotle, the theory of syllogism, the comparative study of science, and the principles of historical evidence. Pattison criticised the 'literary composition' of the Literae Humaniores and believed it did not make students 'thinkers'.¹¹⁷ Pattison's disapproval was part of a larger debate about psychology's epistemology which was waged in the pages of generalist periodicals as well as in *Mind*.

¹¹⁴ W. H. Walsh, 'The Zenith of Greats', M. G. Brock and M. C. Curthoys, eds., *The History of the University of Oxford: Nineteenth-Century Oxford, Part 2*, Vol. VII, (Oxford: Clarendon press, 2000) p.311, (pp.311-326).

¹¹⁵ Mark Pattison, 'Philosophy at Oxford', *Mind*, Vol.1, No. 1, Jan., 1876, pp.82-97.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.90.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp.90, 93.

[...] he must know the materials [...] and the method on which he used them.¹¹⁸

Rylance refers to the 1850 to 1880 period as one of ‘high psychology’. It was an ‘unshapely, accommodating, contested, emergent, energetic discipline, filled with dispute and without settled lines of theory or protocols of investigation’.¹¹⁹ This thesis will not differentiate between ‘high’ and ‘low’ psychology and will view phrenology, ‘spiritual psychology’, and psychological aesthetics– all of which Rylance excludes in his otherwise impeccable account of Victorian psychology– simply as ‘psychology’. This is because the differentiation between ‘high’ and ‘low’ psychology is a retroactive response that serves to compartmentalise knowledge for the sake of twenty-first century scholarly concerns about what should be classed as ‘psychology’. Roger Smith states that Victorian psychology was in the process of being shaped by various outlooks and ideas. It did not delimit itself to any one area of knowledge, or refer to a specific science.¹²⁰ Psychological debate was characterised with a self-conscious awareness of its own value. Psychologists did not cease to question what constituted psychology. For this reason, argues Smith, spiritualism or mesmerism cannot be excluded from the history of psychology or relegated to the category of ‘low’ culture. Throughout the 1870s, 1880s, and the early 1890s psychologists debated whether psychology should, or could be a science in the same way as physics or chemistry. The second chapter of this thesis will demonstrate how arguments between psychologists were essentially debates about the suitability of psychology’s nomenclature and terminology to its epistemological direction. In brief, as a

¹¹⁸ Wilde, ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’, p.436.

¹¹⁹ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.7.

¹²⁰ Roger Smith, ‘The Physiology of the Will, Mind, Body and Psychology’, *Science Serialized*, Geoffrey Cantor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2004) p.83.

subject with a wide range of contributors from diverse backgrounds the proposed method of investigating the body/mind was a source for heated conflict.

Psychologists of the soul were influenced by theological doctrine and regarded purely biological explanations of bodily functions as the 'devilish trinity', in Rylance's words. This 'unholy' trinity consisted of 'materialism, radicalism, and atheism' although a writer did not have to be an agnostic, or an atheist, to employ the empirical method. Biologists such as Huxley were aware of the shortcomings of a strictly empirical methodology and were often embroiled in debates about materialism. Time and time again in periodicals like the *Fortnightly Review*, Huxley maintained that 'if the belief in God is essential to morality, physical science offers no obstacle'.¹²¹ Huxley openly rebuked writers for mixing politics, religion and the objective study of the workings of the body. The 'safety of morality', argued Huxley does not lie in the adoption of 'this or that philosophical speculation'. Huxley affirmed that 'all our knowledge is a knowledge of states of consciousness'.¹²² Our thoughts, argued Huxley, 'might be delusive, but cannot be fictitious'.¹²³ Physical science was 'materialistic' explained Huxley, because it correlated 'all the phenomena of the universe with matter and motion'.¹²⁴ To offer physical explanations of the universe did not and could not satisfy the spiritualistic yearnings of humanity. Huxley accepted the limitations of physical science which 'knows nothing of the feelings of sweetness and satisfaction'.¹²⁵ It is important to state that even though there were different types of psychologist there was no one single definition.

Rylance refers to Bain as a 'natural historian of the feelings,' but this is retroactive and

¹²¹ T. H. Huxley, 'Science and Morals', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 40, Dec., 1886, p.800, (pp. 788-802).

¹²² T. H. Huxley, 'On Descartes: Discourse Touching the Method of Using One's Reason Rightly and of Seeking Scientific Truth', *Macmillan's Magazine*, Vol. 22, May 1870, p.76, (pp.69-80).

¹²³ Ibid., p.71.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p74.

¹²⁵ Huxley, 'Science and Morals', p.791.

historically inaccurate as Bain was a prominent psychologist widely read by his contemporaries and successors.¹²⁶

Smith explains that 'psychology', 'psychological' and 'psychologist' were used in multiple ways with no clear indication that the terms bore any semantic relation.¹²⁷ Writers used 'philosopher', 'metaphysician' and 'psychologist' distinctly and interchangeably. For example, in 'How to Tell a Story' (1873), published in *Good Things for the Young of All Ages*, an illustrated monthly magazine for children with a broad Christian outlook, the writer contemplated the qualities that separated the novelist from the historian or the psychologist.¹²⁸ The writer stated:

If the observer's mind is so made that he instinctively pays about equal attention to the persons, and the events, and the feelings of the persons, and if he is also much given to thinking about cause and effect, we find he may make what we call a philosopher, or a metaphysician or a psychologist.¹²⁹

The difference between the 'philosopher', 'metaphysician' and 'psychologist' is not apparent. All three pay attention to 'persons', 'events', and the 'feelings of the persons'. What was becoming evident in the impassioned debates about epistemology was that psychology had the potential to be an empirical science whereas philosophy and metaphysics were considered mere speculation, or the preface to psychology.

¹²⁶ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.211.

¹²⁷ Smith, 'The Physiology of the Will, Mind, Body and Psychology', p.83.

¹²⁸ *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, Laurel Brake & Marysa Demoor et al., (London: Academic Press, 2009) p.254.

¹²⁹ Anon., 'How to Tell a Story', *Good Things for the Young of all Ages*, Saturday 1 Nov., 1873, p.10, (pp.10-13).

Take another example in the *Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal* in 1879. The journal covered sports from chess to steeple chasing and also included book reviews on opera, theatre and music. In one passage the reviewer remarked 'Poor Mr Cox was an ardent disciple of spiritualism. He did not, however, openly assume the English name of the ghostly votaries, but called himself a psychologist, which, as you know, is precisely the same thing in Greek'.¹³⁰ Here, 'psychology' is assigned its etymological origin which to the Greeks meant the study of the soul.¹³¹ On similar lines, one writer in the *Inspirationalist Hearth and Home* defined psychology as 'spiritualism, thought-reading, fortune telling and palmistry'. These were all 'professed media of looking behind the veil to see what has been, is, or will be'.¹³² Psychological discussion on any topic centred back to questions about its epistemology. Spiritualist psychology had a popular following and was promulgated through palmistry demonstrations as well as séances. However, the emergent school or 'new psychology' looked to physiology or biology for its methodological validity. British psychologists such as Sully flocked to Germany to study under the leading physiologists of the time like Herman Von Helmholtz and Wilhelm Wundt.

Rylance categorizes Victorian psychology into the 'discourse of the soul', the 'discourse of philosophy', the 'discourse of physiology in general biology', and the 'discourse of medicine'.¹³³ These 'discourses' were disseminated in creative forms as well as formal or technical essays that were reminiscent of the type of article submitted to

¹³⁰ Anon., 'The Man about Town', *The Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, Saturday 29 Nov., 1879, Vol. 18, No. 916, pp.1177-1118.

¹³¹ Rylance, "The Disturbing Anarchy of Investigation': Psychological Debate and the Victorian Periodical', p.240.

¹³² Anon., 'The Inspirationalist: Miss Nina Kennedy', *Hearth and Home*, Vol. 1, No. 14, Thursday 20 Aug., 1891, p.446.

¹³³ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture*, p.21.

Mind. Bain and Croom-Robertson desired to attract writers who would help nurture an empirical, inductive methodology that would procure 'objective' results. However, in dealing with the phenomenological such as intellection, perception, representation, conception, and imagination psychologists felt defeated. In reviewing *Mind* seven years after its establishment Croom-Robertson could not hide his disappointment at psychology for not having metamorphosed into a positive science.¹³⁴ Psychologists seeking to develop an empirical methodology looked to other sciences such as biology, physics and natural science to investigate mental and physical states. On the other hand, psychologists of the soul were eager to include introspection and an acknowledgement of the soul to explain how consciousness interacted with the body. Other writers believed that psychology was in fact a speculative method rather than a practical science.¹³⁵ All of the differing views will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

So far this chapter has tried to explain why it is important to examine Wilde's journalism alongside the formation of psychology in the periodical press as well as the working methodology that will be adopted. Next I will demonstrate all of the above arguments in the example of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. *Dorian Gray* was originally published in this Philadelphia-based monthly which was previously known as *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine: A Popular Journal of General Literature, Science, and Politics*.¹³⁶ The title itself reveals how literature and science were part of one culture, but with increasing bifurcation and specialisation became separated and professionalised. Robert M. Young explains that there existed a 'common intellectual culture' which became fragmented towards the 1870s and 1880s. This fragmentation led to increasingly specialised journals

¹³⁴ 'Editor', 'Psychology and Philosophy', *Mind*, Vol. 8, No. 29, Jan., 1883, p.2, (pp.1-21).

¹³⁵ J. A Stewart, 'Psychology: A Science or a Method?', *Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Oct., 1876, p.445, (pp.445-451).

¹³⁶ *The Waterloo Directory of English Periodicals*, [Accessed 20 Feb., 2011].

and societies. As a result, further demarcations grew so that science was no longer homogeneously disseminated with culture and religion.¹³⁷ The type of psychology that *Lippincott's* American managing editor Joseph Marshall Stoddart included was what Rylance terms the 'discourse of the soul'. This kind of psychology, explains Rylance, usually discriminated 'higher minds from lower', women from men, and 'civilised' from 'primitive'.¹³⁸

Exponents of the 'discourse of the soul' disseminated literature about faith. The motto of the American *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, for instance, was 'Philosophy can bake no bread, but it can give us God, Freedom and Immortality'.¹³⁹ L. S. Hearnshaw states that spiritualistic manifestations have ancient roots, but the modern spiritualist revival was an American endowment.¹⁴⁰ The issue of *Lippincott's* containing the 1890 version of *Dorian Gray*, as will be discussed below, was one such example where faith was interwoven with theories on electro-magnetic waves, the nature of air-currents, and chiromancy. An anonymous critic of the *Daily Chronicle* damned *Dorian Gray* for representing 'Man [as] half angel and half ape'.¹⁴¹ Significantly, the critic dismissed the 'rest of this number of *Lippincott's*' as 'articles of harmless padding'.¹⁴² However, an examination of the type of articles 'padding' *Dorian Gray* reveals new insights into how the novel was perceived in the spectrum of debate over what constituted psychology,

¹³⁷ Robert M. Young, *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p.127.

¹³⁸ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.27.

¹³⁹ Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States Through 250 Years, 1690-1940*, (New York: Macmillan, 1941) p.386.

¹⁴⁰ Hearnshaw offers the following account of the American inspired revival of Spiritualism: In 1848 'Mr and Mrs Fox and their two daughters were troubled by unexplained knockings. Kate Fox believed that the cause of the sounds was intelligent and that communications were being received by the spirit of a murdered pedlar. Thus Kate and her sister became the first modern mediums, professing to be able to communicate with lost relatives'. *A Short History of British Psychology 1840-1940*, (London: Methuen & Co, 1964) p.16.

¹⁴¹ Stuart Mason, *Oscar Wilde: Art and Morality*, (London: Frank Palmer. Red Lion Court, 1907) p.66.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.69.

and, as will be explored in chapter five, why *Dorian Gray* was received with criticism that aligned it with 'materialistic' accounts of science.

[...] the critic will certainly be the interpreter.¹⁴³

Every periodical supported a particular philosophy which it tried to enforce through its content. James Knowles, for instance, used the *Nineteenth Century* as a battleground in which to instigate encounters between exponents and critics of scientific naturalism.¹⁴⁴ Knowles tried to stage debate between conflicting parties to allow the audience to arrive at their own understanding of the issue under discussion. Significantly, Wilde published 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' which depicted a dialogue between two fictional characters in the *Nineteenth Century's* July and September issues of 1890. Wilde's creative-criticism mirrored the dialogic nature of the periodical in its setting up of a dialogue between Gilbert and Ernest. 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' will be explored in further detail in the next chapter. As Brake maintains, Wilde's texts were shaped by the specificity of their relation to other texts. In the eyes of those supporting the theory of associationism, (or, the psychology of connecting and combining ideas) periodical literature by its very nature promoted a culture of associations between articles and periodicals.¹⁴⁵

According to the theory of associationism human perception comprised of succession, similarity, contrast and co-existence.¹⁴⁶ An idea discussed in the very first article in a periodical may resonate through neighbouring ones. With numerous articles packed into one volume, periodicals gave readers the opportunity to juxtapose and

¹⁴³ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.436.

¹⁴⁴ *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, p.xviii.

¹⁴⁵ Alexander Bain, 'On Associationist Controversies', *Mind*, Vol. 12, No. 46. Apr., 1887, (pp. 161-182).

¹⁴⁶ T. H. Huxley, *Hume: With Helps to the Study of Berkley*, (London: Macmillan & Co, 1901) p.81.

correlate ideas. This ‘associationism’ might function on a broader scale so that readers could connect, compare, and contrast discussions happening simultaneously across the periodical press. To what extent the editor’s hand played a part in the order and positioning of the content depended highly on whether the periodical, or newspaper in question was a daily, weekly, fortnightly, quarterly or annual. One imagines the more frequent the publication, the more rushed the positioning of the material by the editor, and therefore the less time spent on considering the inter-relations between articles. However, the editor had to be sure that all of the contributions promoted the philosophy of the periodical or newspaper in question.¹⁴⁷ As will be shown below with the *Lippincott’s Magazine*, the editor had to think carefully about the types of articles adjoining controversial texts like *Dorian Gray* so as to soften its anticipated reception.

Frankel makes some important bibliographic observations about how the form of *Lippincott’s* structured *Dorian Gray*. Frankel states that although Wilde wrote *Dorian Gray* specifically for the *Lippincott’s Magazine* the front page subordinates the novel’s title underneath the ‘larger programme’ of the ‘*Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*’.¹⁴⁸ At the same time while Wilde’s novel was the lead text it was grouped among articles such as ‘The Cheiromancy of Today’, ‘Keely’s Contributions to Science’, and ‘The Powers of the Air’. Frankel says that the *Lippincott’s* text is one of the most “Victorian” of all Wilde’s ‘major works’.¹⁴⁹ This is because the 1890 version of *Dorian Gray* was densely spaced and printed on cheap machine-made paper.¹⁵⁰ The ‘Victorian’ *Lippincott’s* text controlled the excess and luxuriance encouraged by the book by stripping Wilde’s tale of all colour and

¹⁴⁷ Joanne Shattock, ‘Showman, Lion Hunter, or Hack: The Quarterly Editor at Midcentury’, *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England*, Joel H. Wiener, ed., (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982) p.166, (pp.163-183).

¹⁴⁸ Frankel, *Oscar Wilde’s Decorated Books*, p.140.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.139.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.140.

sensory delight because of its economic production. Wilde had more control of the design of his book editions. According to Frankel, Wilde had 'established something of a reputation for the design of his books'. His *Poems* (1881) for example, was bound in white vellum with a gilt trellis pattern.¹⁵¹ Wilde also had a hand in the design of *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* (1882) by his friend Rennell Rodd. Wilde chose the title of the book and the design of the pages which he recommended should consist of 'delicate flower ornament' like roses and apple blossoms.¹⁵² Wilde tried to make the font, typeface, binding, and paper mimic the provocative content by choosing indulgent and sensuous designs, colours and materials. This appeal to the senses will be explored in detail in chapters three and four.

The *Lippincott's* publication may not have simulated the same physical affect induced by Wilde's baroque style of writing as the twenty chapter book that came to be known as the 'authoritative' edition. However, *Lippincott's* grouping of the novel amongst literature of the soul advertised the text as another psychological study. In fact the editors of *Lippincott's* were accused by critics desiring to dampen the sensational reception of the novel, of shamelessly advertising or 'puffing' up what was considered a 'dangerous' and 'immoral' text. An anonymous review believed to be penned by *Lippincott's* editors was sent to various newspapers remarking of *Dorian Gray* that 'as a study in psychology it is phenomenal'.¹⁵³ Wilde denied to have 'sanctioned the circulation of an expression of opinion', and argued that Messrs Ward & Lock cannot 'be primarily

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.139-140.

¹⁵² *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis, eds., (London: Fourth Estate, 2000) p.167.

¹⁵³ The full 'puff-positive' as called by 'A London Editor' reads: 'Viewed merely as a romance, it is from the opening paragraph down to the tragic and ghastly climax- full of strong and sustained interest; as a study in psychology it is phenomenal; and judged even purely as a piece of literary workmanship, it is one of the most brilliant and remarkable productions of the year', Mason, *Oscar Wilde: Art and Morality*, p.55.

responsible for its appearance'.¹⁵⁴ Scholars such as Joseph Bristow have contrasted the American and British versions of *Lippincott's*, but the articles following *Dorian Gray* have been relatively forgotten. The American edition included an extra twenty-five pages not found in the British version. Furthermore, the British issue excluded Felix L. Oswald's 'The Powers of the Air' and replaced it with 'The Indissolubility of Marriage' by Elizabeth R. Chapman. The British edition also added an anonymous piece entitled *A Dead Man's Diary*, which was by Coulson Kernahan, who was Wilde's editor for the 1891 book edition of *Dorian Gray*.¹⁵⁵

The British edition of *Lippincott's* seemed to consciously address Lord Henry's criticisms of marriage through Chapman's 'The Indissolubility of Marriage'. In *Dorian Gray* Lord Henry tells Dorian:

You know I am not a champion of marriage. The real drawback to marriage is that it makes one unselfish. And unselfish people are colourless. They lack individuality. Still, there are certain temperaments that marriage makes more complex. They retain their egotism, and add to it many other egos. They are forced to have more than one life. They become more highly organized, and to be highly organised is, I should fancy, the object of man's existence.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.58.

¹⁵⁵ Elisabeth Lorang, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray in Context: Intertextuality and the *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*,' *Victorian's Periodical Review*, Vol. 43, No.1, Spring 2010, p.21, (pp.19-41).

¹⁵⁶ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.60.

While Lord Henry openly affirms he is no 'champion of marriage', he also entertains the evolutionary notion that an organism progresses toward greater and greater multiformity, or structural differentiation. Life moves from the simple to the complex. Marriage might be beneficial for its ability to multiply the ego which might lead to a higher level of organisation which, according to Spencerian thought, is the pinnacle of an efficient society.¹⁵⁷ Lord Henry's view of marriage is therefore founded on a naturalistic basis rather than on 'middle-class' values such as faithfulness or propriety. He jokes that he has a theory that 'it is always the women who propose to us, and not we who propose to women. Except, of course, in middle-class life. But then the middle classes are not modern'.¹⁵⁸ The antonym of 'modern' for Wilde was 'medieval' which he associated with 'barbaric' and ascetic practices. Lord Henry's view of marriage as an outdated and oppressive institution was highly subversive. Perhaps the editors of the British *Lippincott's* edition included Chapman's article to create some sort of neutrality for the reader, or to show a sense of proprietorial responsibility for circulating controversial material.

In 'The Indissolubility of Marriage' Chapman pleaded for divorce to be abolished. Like Lord Henry's statements above which were founded on a naturalistic basis, Chapman also attempted to defend her position from the perspective of scientific naturalism although her reasoning was vague. For example, she maintained that '*Nature* plainly dictates permanent marriage as the true human relation'. Moreover, 'instinct' and 'hereditary experience', she claimed, is 'strongly on the side of indissoluble marriage'. Furthermore, 'Physiology and Hygiene also point to temperance, not riot'. In countries

¹⁵⁷ Bruce Haley, 'Wilde's "Decadence" and the Positivist Tradition', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 28, Winter 1985, p.219 (pp.215-229).

¹⁵⁸ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.63.

where divorce was high, argued Chapman, 'licentiousness' prevailed.¹⁵⁹ Elisabeth Lorang argues that Chapman's article engages in a dialogue with contemporary ideas about marriage and with Lord Henry's arguments in *Dorian Gray*.¹⁶⁰ Again, perhaps to demonstrate that *Lippincott's* was a responsible magazine, the British editors included *A Deadman's Diary* which engaged with the topic of 'sin', or sexual 'licentiousness'. The piece began with the sentence, 'At last there came a time, even in hell, when the burden of my sin lay so heavily upon me, that I felt I could bear it no longer, [...]'.¹⁶¹ Through *A Deadman's Diary*, the British *Lippincott's* further reinforced the religious consequences of leading a hedonistic lifestyle like that of Dorian's. Below I focus on the American edition to demonstrate how the issue was crafted around Wilde's text, and also because the three leading articles following *Dorian Gray* in the American issue all addressed debates within psychology that also appear in *Dorian Gray*. The content of the remaining articles in both of the editions of *Lippincott's* cannot therefore be detached from the subject matter or content of *Dorian Gray*.

In the American edition *Lippincott's* positioned *Dorian Gray* alongside psychological texts which dwelt on invisible operations, or 'old psychology' such as phrenology. Phrenology, as will be explored in the following chapter, was perceived to be out dated and incompatible with the increasingly biological accounts of the connection between the body and mind. Wilde's engagement with psychology is mostly ignored by Victorian critics and yet, *Dorian Gray* is by far the most complex text in the magazine. This is because Wilde deals with epistemological issues of psychology head on as will be

¹⁵⁹ Elizabeth Rachel Chapman, 'The Indissolubility of Marriage', *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* [British edition], Jul., 1890, p.154, (pp.154-155).

¹⁶⁰ Lorang, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray in Context: Intertextuality and the *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*,' p.32.

¹⁶¹ [Coulson Kernahan], 'A Dead Man's Diary,' *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* [British edition], Jul., 1890, p.150, (pp.150-151).

demonstrated in the next chapter. The other articles, however, merely set out to reassert a broad Christian ascendancy. 'Cheiromancy of To-Day' for example was written by Edward-Heron-Allen with whom Wilde corresponded. Wilde wrote to Heron-Allen on 19 February 1890 stating that he will visit him in St James's Street to 'discuss the wicked Lippincott if you are at home'.¹⁶² This suggests that Wilde was aware of whom the other contributors were, and what subjects would be included in the rest of the issue. Heron-Allen published short novels and stories under various pen-names. Many of his earlier tales reflected his fascination with the periphery between science and the occult. Heron-Allen's article on chiromancy was the next major article after Wilde's story.

In the 'Cheiromancy of To-Day' Heron-Allen asserted that the arrangement of lines on the human hand could decipher a person's character. He also believed his method of hand-reading followed deductive grounds of investigation. Heron-Allen argued that unlike facial expressions which may be contorted to veil nerve discharge, the hand preserved the same expression of our 'natural bent'.¹⁶³ The reader is then presented with analyses of hands of all shapes and sizes. However, many of Heron-Allen's observations did not follow deductive reasoning. For instance, he argued that 'a short and thick hand with the thumbs small and turned back' denoted 'crass ignorance and sluggishness of intellect;' a hand seldom found in 'civilised countries' except 'perhaps in the squalors of east end London'.¹⁶⁴ Heron-Allen's article complimented the physiological contortions manifested in Dorian's portrait.

¹⁶² *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.424.

¹⁶³ Edward Heron Allen, 'The Chiromancy of To-Day: the Evolution of an Occult Science,' *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 46, Jul., 1890, p104, (pp. 102-110).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.106.

Contrary to Heron-Allen's assertion that his findings were produced following the deductive method his observations were hardly universally valid. Heron-Allen reinforced biologically deterministic theories whereas Wilde's rendering of Dorian's physical infallibility was a critique of the tyrannical phrenological theories like those of the Swiss phrenologist Johann Kaspar Lavater. Lavater consigned a kind of 'fatalism of the physique' to human behaviour. Both Heron-Allen and Wilde engage with phrenological discourse as will be explored in chapter five. Besides their pieces being published together, Wilde and Heron-Allen were on friendly terms and had exchanged books. Wilde had asked Heron-Allen to write a horoscope decreeing the fate of his first born son Vivian.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, while Heron-Allen was lecturing in America, Wilde had sent him a copy of 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime.' In their correspondence, Wilde expressed a deep desire to have the tale published in an American magazine and even asked Heron-Allen if he could sell the story for him to any 'enterprising editor.'¹⁶⁶ Wilde was aware that 'psychological studies' were popular with 'American Magazines'.¹⁶⁷ American magazines with a theological bent were suitable spaces for publication for tales like *Dorian Gray* and 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime' that openly affirmed the spiritual, or presented the unexplained.

'Keely's Contributions to Science' by Clara Jessup Bloomfield-Moore was the next major article to follow Heron-Allen's. Her piece was one among countless studies circulating in the periodical press which relied on 'unknown' magnetic forces to counteract the pervading theories of 'iatro-mechanism', which viewed humans as a

¹⁶⁵ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.245.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.328.

¹⁶⁷ In a review of a novel entitled *Helen Davenant* Wilde observed that the author Violet Fane could have been 'more economical' and that out of the same material could have 'made two novels and half a dozen psychological studies for publication in American Magazines', [Oscar Wilde], 'Literary Notes', *The Woman's World*, Vol. 2, 1889, p.222.

combination of machine and spirit.¹⁶⁸ Bloomfield-Moore was a poet, novelist and philanthropist. Her predominant area of interest was the researches of the American inventor and philosopher John W. Keely. He fused together his researches in vibrations with mechanics and philosophy. Keely claimed to have found a new 'power'. He attempted to invent radionic machines which he believed could heal the body through their electro-magnetic waves of energy.¹⁶⁹ Bloomfield-Moore was an avid follower and penned numerous articles on Keely for the Theosophical Publishing Society and other anonymous pieces for various periodicals.¹⁷⁰

In 'Keely's Contributions to Science', Bloomfield-Moore set out to rescue Keely from accusations of charlatanism.¹⁷¹ In doing so she outlined how Keely's application of mechanics to the 'unknown force' or 'ether' contributed to an understanding of vibration. 'Ether' was seen as a 'medium' through which 'spirit' and 'matter' interacted. It was thought to permeate the universe and was believed to have a separate existence from the body.¹⁷² According to Keely and Bloomfield-Moore, the magnetic, electric and etheric vibrations that constituted heavenly bodies also ran through the mineral, animal and vegetable kingdoms.¹⁷³ The molecules that composed heavenly bodies sent their currents along 'our nerves'. She explained:

The force that controls planetary suspension, which Kepler foretold
would be revealed by God to man in this century, Keely shows to be

¹⁶⁸ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.84.

¹⁶⁹ Mrs Bloom-field Moore, 'Keely's Contributions to Science', *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 46, Jul., 1890, p.118, (pp.111-123).

¹⁷⁰ *American National Biography*, John A. Garraty & Mark C. Carnes, eds., Vol. 15, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp.741-742.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² *Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained, Magic, Occultism & Parapsychology*, Richard Cavendish., ed., (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1974) p.83.

¹⁷³ Bloomfield-Moore, 'Keeley's Contributions to Science', p.118.

the sympathetic relation which exists between the terrestrial flow and celestial etheric radiation; teaching that the great universe of planetary masses, associated as it is with the celestial etheric sympathetic flows, bears the same relation to the physical organism that celestial radiation bears to the will-force emanating from the brain, - a pure illustration of the control of the celestial mind over the terrestrial.¹⁷⁴

This 'ether' can be likened to a kind of 'protoplasm of the soul', and was seen to provide a scientific explanation of free-will. Bloomfield-Moore's 'mind over matter' stance typified the position of numerous psychologists of the soul.

The question of invisible forces and free-will dominated *Dorian Gray* as will be explored in detail in chapter five. The amalgamation of physics and chemistry with philosophy and theology was a familiar tendency of numerous psychologists of the soul, or 'Theosophical theory' which was a belief in the mysterious elements of nature and presented a deliberate move towards mystical philosophy or occult theory.¹⁷⁵ With his blend of theosophical spiritualism and 'music of the spheres', Keely's researches were more representative of psychology of the soul than the physiological, and experimental investigations of German professors whose work was disseminated by psychologists such as Sully. Bloomfield-Moore made it no secret that Keely's researches on the 'unknown power' were an opportunity to assert 'the omnipotent and all pervading Will-force of the Almighty'.¹⁷⁶ Chapter four will demonstrate how Wilde adapted physics to his aesthetic

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.114.

¹⁷⁵ *Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained: Magic, Occultism and Parapsychology*, p.249.

¹⁷⁶ Bloomfield-Moore, 'Keeley's Contributions to Science', p.119.

theories. As will be shown, unlike Bloomfield-Moore, Wilde's reasons for appropriating physical laws were aesthetic rather than theologically motivated.

The third significant article in the American edition of *Lippincott's Magazine* was by Felix L. Oswald. His piece continued the theme of 'invisible powers'. Like his co-writers he published numerous works on natural science and psychology. Some of his books included *Zoological sketches: a contribution to the out-door study of natural history* (1883), *Household remedies for the prevalent disorders of the human organism* (1886), and *The cause and cure of intemperance* (1887) among others on religion and health. In 'The Powers of the Air', Oswald wondered at the 'discoveries of the nineteenth century', and the 'progress of science'. 'Invisible disease-germs are known to decide the question of life and death', and 'Invisible currents of a mysterious force carry our messages' in a speed superior to the 'best broom-bestridding witch'.¹⁷⁷ The 'empty air', remarked Oswald, has even been found to 'possess potencies exceeding those of all twenty-seven varieties of aërial demons enumerated by the author of "The Enchanted World"'.¹⁷⁸ Like Wilde, Heron-Allen, and Bloomfield-Moore, Oswald dwelt on the fantastical and seemingly magical attributes of scientific discoveries. According to Roger Luckhurst, there was a historical shift from the 1870s onwards where literature dwelt on mental states or phenomena that exceeded the explanations offered by physical science.¹⁷⁹ Wilde was part of this shift.

¹⁷⁷ Felix L. Oswald, 'The Powers of the Air', *Lippincott's Magazine*, Vol. 46, p.150, (pp.150-154).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy: 1870-1901*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.181-182.

Oswald's greater argument consisted of elaborating on the insufficiency of inductive methods to explain the rash movement and velocity of cyclones and storms.¹⁸⁰ In the article he depicts storms and tornadoes as having a kind of will of their own, or a conscious power. Gales 'wreck their rage', a storm 'manages to rally its forces'.¹⁸¹ Oswald gives various accounts of wood-cutters, helmsmen and other witnesses of tornados who remain mystified about the 'promiscuous way' storms have '*twisted* out' trees by their roots, or on the mysterious 'sudden shifts of the gale', and 'strangely fitful gusts' that leave pedestrians clinging onto telegraph poles.¹⁸² He remarks that it is 'curious' that the 'manifold inquiries' into the causes of storms and cyclones have not yielded 'more definite results'.¹⁸³ This 'rage' and 'intensity' of storm-winds, states Oswald, 'would often tempt one to say that heaven and earth wished to return to their original chaos'.¹⁸⁴ The term 'original chaos' evokes the suggestion of geological explanations of the earth's development from a mass of crashing sea waves to the gradual subsiding and settling of land and water. Overall, the sense of mystery dominates all three articles by Heron-Allen, Bloomfield-Moore and Oswald.

The analysis of the articles published alongside Wilde's novel demonstrates that unlike the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review*, which thrived on dispute between exponents and critics of scientific naturalism, the American edition of *Lippincott's* refused to stage any debate. Instead, it made a concerted effort to uphold the values and traditions of its proprietors by offering theological or spiritual investigations of the soul, and other invisible forces. Frank Mott's observation that

¹⁸⁰ Oswald, 'The Powers of the Air', p.152.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.150.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.154.

Lippincott's gave 'distinguished attention' to science must be closely scrutinised, for science could be clothed in the guise of religion and politics. In art, mystery was welcomed as a 'magical' coating of the subject; as a literary device it was deemed to beautify the art-object. In science, mystery was the prayer of the religion. *Lippincott's* padded out a context in which to interpret *Dorian Gray*. This is the context of speculative psychology, although the complex extent of Wilde's engagement with psychology was hardly paralleled by the adjacent articles as the following chapters will demonstrate. As Brake observes, the appearance of a writer in a periodical did not necessarily mean the acceptance of the polemical frame.¹⁸⁵ This was the case with the publication of *Dorian Gray* in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*.

Even with the more regulated British edition of *Lippincott's* the majority of immediate press coverage dwelt upon the mysterious 'immoral' aspects of *Dorian Gray* which thereby conditioned the narrative to be read as a moral or 'immoral' tale. This leads us to ask whether the novel's appearance in a religious conscious magazine rendered it more 'sensational?' How different might its reception have been if published in the *Nineteenth Century* alongside Huxley's 'The Lights of the Church and the Light of Science,' or in the *Contemporary Review* which became more open to independent opinion, but was originally Church minded? The above examination demonstrates that *Lippincott's* tried to control the critical response of *Dorian Gray* by 'padding' out the rest of the magazine with, as one anonymous critic remarked, 'harmless articles'.¹⁸⁶ Wilde's narrative belonged to psychological literature as well as to the domain of romance and fancy. Alongside articles expressing the mystery of the universe and the presence of the

¹⁸⁵ Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges*, p.9.

¹⁸⁶ Mason, *Art and Morality*, p.69.

‘almighty will’ of God *Lippincott’s* enforced the notion of *Dorian Gray* as a morality tale. Wilde’s treatment of his subject is complex, but the text is not free from the politics structuring the other narratives in the American or the British edition. An understanding of Wilde’s engagement with science is intricately connected to the ‘matrix of other pieces’ constituting the issue.¹⁸⁷ Some of the issues raised by the articles examined here will be explored extensively in the following chapters.

¹⁸⁷ Brake, ‘Writing, Cultural Production and the Periodical Press in the Nineteenth Century’, p.54.

Chapter two:

Creating a Medium: the Nomenclature of Psychology and Wilde's Aesthetics

How shallow were the arbitrary definitions of ordinary psychologists! And yet how difficult to decide between the claims of the various schools.¹⁸⁸

This chapter will explore how Wilde's engagement with debates over psychological terminology and nomenclature shaped his artistic creativity and literary criticism. The examination below will link specific debates ongoing in psychology with Wilde's approach to understanding and expressing aesthetic states, the nature of consciousness and mental processes. This chapter will compare and contrast Wilde's engagement with language with that of other psychologists debating and negotiating psychological terminology and nomenclature. In order to understand Wilde's increasingly sophisticated interaction with psychological debates over language, the analysis below will begin by examining his poetry and then move on to document his adaptation of psychological nomenclature in his periodical writings. To understand the relevance of Wilde's aesthetics to psychological arguments over language, it is essential to understand the underlying disagreements amongst psychologists over epistemology.

Rylance argues that there were 'four different *languages* for psychology'. He distinguishes between 'the discourse of the soul, 'the discourse of philosophy', 'the discourse of physiology' or biology in general, and 'the discourse of medicine'.¹⁸⁹ Such classifications were never explicit as discussions overlapped between these so-called

¹⁸⁸ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp.47-48.

¹⁸⁹ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.21.

‘discourses’. Writers from each school battled to assert their respective methodology which caused linguistic confusion. Rylance explains:

Victorian psychologists created endless, prolix, classificatory distinctions in their efforts to get to grips with [psychology’s] discursive turbulence and cognitive and semantic revolution. Often they sorted by schools (the Empirical, the Rational school, the Inductive school, the Compromise school). [...] They classified according to psychology’s supposed objectivity or subjectivity, its science or its philosophy [...]. They quarrelled over the distinctions to be made between the soul and the mind, the mind and the brain [...]. Sometimes, indeed, Victorian psychology can appear a gigantic taxonomic exchange, an extravaganza of categorization.¹⁹⁰

Rylance describes a fertile and engaging area of knowledge which attracted contributors from various backgrounds. He also stresses the point that Victorian psychology was fraught with disagreements about what constituted ‘psychology’.

The empiricist psychologists demanded that psychology follow the experimental route of observation, deduction, and eventual systematisation. Some writers condemned physicists, who saw the human organism as little more than a machine. The psychologists of the ‘soul’ responded to mechanical theories by dwelling on the invisible, ethereal nature of substances like electricity and magnetic forces, as seen with Bloomfield-

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.16.

Moore's article on Keely's vibrations in the last chapter. According to psychologists of the 'soul', 'ether', later proved as a nonexistent substance, was the mysterious 'essence of matter' that ran 'its currents along our nerves'.¹⁹¹ Others believed that psychology was a 'critique, a method, a certain thoughtful attitude in science, morals and literature'. It was the 'critical examination of my own adult opinions, desires and tastes in relation to present objects'.¹⁹² This latter stance allied psychology more with Paterian literary criticism than with biology.

In *Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry asks, could we ever make 'psychology so absolute a science that each little spring of life would be revealed to us?'¹⁹³ Lewes maintained that psychology could only develop as a science through semantic and linguistic agreement. He contributed to philosophy and literature in a wide range of periodicals including *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the *Fortnightly Review*. The scope of his subjects was no less copious.¹⁹⁴ He was widely read in French, German, Greek and Old English literature. In addition to being a journalist, Lewes was also a novelist, playwright, and actor.¹⁹⁵ Rylance states that Lewes's 'flexible and omnivorous intelligence' is a testimony to an 'intellectual milieu and cultural ethos that embraced science and literature, philosophy and empirical work' of his time.¹⁹⁶ It is Lewes's philosophical and psychological work that will be focussed on below.

In the second number of *Mind*, Lewes wrote 'What is Sensation?' (1876). The article was a deliberate attempt to stabilise psychological nomenclature. Lewes called on

¹⁹¹ Bloomfield-Moore, 'Keeley's Contributions to Science', p.114.

¹⁹¹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, pp.111, 117.

¹⁹² Stewart, 'Psychology: A Science or a Method?', p.451.

¹⁹³ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.48.

¹⁹⁴ *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, <http://wellesly.Chadwyck.co.uk>, [Accessed 10 Sept., 2010].

¹⁹⁵ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.251.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

the British Association, or the Royal Society, to encourage psychologists to assemble a list of strictly defined terms, whose meaning was indisputable.¹⁹⁷ He picked the term 'sensation' to illustrate the necessity for semantic agreement. Lewes argued, 'sensation [...] will be found employed with such widely different meanings, even in the same treatise, as to render many propositions in which it occurs, truisms, or transparent absurdities, according to the interpretation'.¹⁹⁸ He elaborated:

The physiologist finds himself compelled to speak of 'unconscious sensations' if he would explain many phenomena. To the psychologist, on the contrary, such language is nonsense, equivalent to 'unfelt feelings', or 'invisible light.' And there is reason for both. The physiologist is considering the organism and its actions from their objective side, and endeavouring to trace the physical mechanism of the observed phenomena. These he has to interpret in terms of Matter and Motion. The psychologist is considering the organism and its actions from their subjective side, as facts of Consciousness and not as facts of a physical order at all.¹⁹⁹

By the 1880s, it was clear that there was no psychologist of the mind who was not also the psychologist of matter. Psychologists were increasingly aware that the 'objective side' and 'subjective side' must be considered together in the discussion of the body or mind.

¹⁹⁷ G. H Lewes, 'What is Sensation?', *Mind*, Vol.1, No.2, Apr., 1876, p.157, (pp.157-161).

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.158.

Wilde absolutely understood that psychology rested on the physiology of the nervous system. In his *Commonplace* book he wrote that ‘there can be no knowledge of human nature without knowledge of the Laws of mind (psychology) nor of the Laws of Mind without knowledge of the Laws of Life (Biology)’.²⁰⁰ Wilde’s studies in the *Litterae Humaniores* urged him to take account of contemporary issues in psychology and philosophy. At the same time, psychologists were trying to carve out a disciplinary identity for themselves in periodicals like *Mind*, which was the platform for all ontological, epistemological and linguistic debate. Furthermore, the Physiological Society was also established in 1876, and the *Journal of Physiology* was founded in 1878. During the late 1870s Wilde tried to establish himself as a poet. For him, the best poetry was interwoven with ‘human passions and feeling’. The *Commonplace* book shows Wilde thinking about emotions and feeling in terms of the ‘vascular’ and ‘nervous system’.²⁰¹ Wilde’s notes about the relations between body and mind in his Oxford notebooks surface in his early poetry. As Wilde’s career progressed the subject of mind and its manifestation increasingly preoccupied his writing as will be discussed below.

In the poem ‘Charmides’ written between 1878 and 1879 Wilde describes the passions in terms of biological language like ‘nerve’ for example. The poem is about a young sailor who lusts after Athena, a Greek goddess. The sailor seeks out her shrine, and ravages her statue. Given the Greek mythological content it is perhaps unusual to use biological and psychological terms to describe the imagined ecstasies experienced by the sailor in raping Athena. The sailor’s ‘nerves thrilled /like *throbbing* violins/ in exquisite *pulsation*’. The words ‘nerves’, ‘throbbing’ and ‘pulsation’ connote a purely physical

²⁰⁰ *Oscar Wilde’s Oxford Notebooks*, p.109.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

excitement bereft of emotion, or an accompanying mental state. Even out at sea the sea-foam is described as blowing through the sailor's 'crisp brown hair *unconsciously*' [*italics mine*].²⁰² While Wilde may have tried to mimic the animal appetites described in the poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Charmides' was the beginning of Wilde's creative mingling of psycho-physiological language with the passions. The poem 'Humanited', also probably written between 1878 and 1879, addressed the subject of unity or the co-existence of mind and matter.²⁰³

Take the following two stanzas from 'Humanited' as an example of Wilde's discussion of mind and matter, or spirit and body:

To make the body and the spirit one
With all right things, till no thing live in vain
From morn to noon, but in sweet unison
With every pulse of flesh and throb of brain
The soul in flawless essence high enthroned,
Against all outer vain attack invincibly bastioned,

Mark with serene impartiality
The strife of things, and yet be comforted,
Knowing that by the chain causality
All separate existences are wed

²⁰² *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Poems and Poems in Prose*, Vol.1, Ian Small, et al., eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp.70, 74.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.266.

Into one supreme whole, whose utterance
Is joy, or holier praise! ah! surely this were governance.²⁰⁴

In the *Commonplace* book Wilde stated that the object and subject, the 'Ego' and 'Non-Ego', 'are really one' and 'harmonised in the "Original Synthetic Unity"' or 'God'.²⁰⁵ The second stanza acknowledges the 'Unity of the Principle of Life', and is almost identical to Wilde's comment in the *Commonplace* book, 'protoplasm is the constant basis of the varying phenomena of life'.²⁰⁶ The divide that Lewes described above between mind and matter in 'What is a Sensation?' is rejected by Wilde in 'Humanited'. The amalgamation of the 'discourse of physiology' with emotive states was becoming increasingly nuanced in psychology during the 1870s.

In 'Humanited' Wilde consciously entwined the metaphysical, celestial and 'mystical', with biological and evolutionary science. He did so as a way of presenting a more rounded human experience of thought and feeling than the physiologists' position as described above by Lewes. Take the following two stanzas for example:

Of Life in most august omnipresence,
Through which the rational intellect would find
In passion its expression, and mere sense,
Ignoble else, lend fire to the mind,
And being joined with it in harmony
More mystical than that which binds the stars planetary,

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.102-103.

²⁰⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.127.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p.111.

Strike from their several tones one octave chord
Whose cadence being measureless would fly
Through all the circling spheres, then to its Lord
Return refreshed with its new empery
And more exultant power, - this indeed
Could we but reach it were to find the last, the perfect creed.²⁰⁷

The four stanzas quoted here from 'Humanited' were the focus of one review of Wilde's poems mockingly entitled 'Swinburne and Water'. The anonymous critic branded Wilde a 'philistine', and called his poetry 'unintelligible'. Wilde's 'outpourings' were considered 'poor' and 'pretentious' stuff. In a word, 'Bosh!' The above four stanzas were even printed in prose in the 'hope of making it a little easier of comprehension'. The critic remarked, 'This is not a joke, not a sham quotation made to throw scorn on the bard'.²⁰⁸ The critic paid no attention to Wilde's efforts to harmonise the 'rational intellect' and 'passion', or 'chain causality' and 'holier praise'. In the poem, Wilde traces the origins of human life to a 'chain causality' connected through protoplasm, a basic component found in both plant and animal cells.

Wilde's choice of the phrase 'chain causality' or the notion of reciprocity where one event causes another may echo Aristotle's thesis on cause and effect. However, the phrase also refers to the evolutionary theory of development from a less complex to a more complex organism. The sentiments of the above stanzas replicate Wilde's Commonplace book notes which conclude that the 'splendour and grace of swift limbs,

²⁰⁷ *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Poems and Poems in Prose*, p.103.

²⁰⁸ Anon., 'Swinburne and Water', *Punch*, Vol. 81, 23 Jul., 1881, p.26.

the grave beauty of girlish foreheads, the physical ecstasy of sensuous life' should not be loved any less because 'the germ of man is to be found in the formless protoplasm of the deep seas'. Wilde wrote 'we turn our eyes not to the deeper depths from which we have sprung, but to the higher heights to which we can rise'.²⁰⁹ In the above stanzas the unity of mind and matter climaxes in a consciousness of the cosmic order. Wilde connects all 'separate existences' into 'one supreme whole'. The 'mystical bond' shared between the intellect and the emotions and the view that 'protoplasm is the constant basis of the varying phenomena of life' together form the 'perfect creed'.²¹⁰ Out of the complex web of cause and effect for Wilde it is the 'mystical bond' between 'rational intellect' and 'passion' that consists of something sacred, celestial, other-worldly and ethereal. 'Charmides' and 'Humanited' show Wilde mediating between the 'discourse of the soul' and the 'discourse of physiology' as termed by Rylance at a time when physiology was distancing itself from the psychology of the soul.

In his article 'The New Psychology' (1879) published in the *Fortnightly Review*, an organ of 'unbiased expression', William Leonard Courtney observed that it was biology which had brought about the recognition of the 'organism' as one of the elements of psychological research.²¹¹ He argued that Bain and Spencer, neither of whom had conducted experimental research like dissection as Lewes had, owed to biology the use of terms such as 'nerve' and 'tissue', 'organ' and 'cell'.²¹² Courtney was a philosopher and journalist. He joined the *Daily Telegraph* in 1890, and edited the *Fortnightly Review* from

²⁰⁹ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.125.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p.111 and *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Poems and Poems in Prose*, p.103.

²¹¹ *The Waterloo Directory*, [Accessed 15 Sept., 2010].

²¹² W. L Courtney, 'The New Psychology,' *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 32, Sept., 1879, p.318, (pp.318-328).

1894. He even contributed an article on 'The Women Benefactors of Oxford' to the *Woman's World* in June 1888 at which time Wilde was the editor.²¹³

Courtney and Wilde corresponded numerous times. In a letter written by Wilde to Courtney in 1889 they discussed psychology. Wilde thanked Courtney for his 'admirable little book on Mill'.²¹⁴ According to Mill, knowledge was circular. The study of the phenomenal world was a 'self-contained process of inference between induction and deduction'.²¹⁵ In his response to Courtney's book on Mill, Wilde stated that 'I have gained nothing from him'. Wilde described Mill as 'an arid, dry man with moods of sentiment'. 'But Darwinism has of course', Wilde told Courtney, 'shattered many reputations besides his'.²¹⁶ Wilde's review 'To Read or Not to Read' (1886) for the evening paper and review the *Pall Mall Gazette*, shows that he had read Mill as well as Lewes, although he reproved both because 'argumentative' books that 'try to prove anything' must be avoided.²¹⁷ Intriguingly, Wilde wrote to Courtney in May 1891 asking him to notice *Dorian Gray*. Wilde confided to Courtney that he was anxious to get the novel 'treated purely from the art-standpoint: from the standpoint of style, plot, construction, psychology, and the like'.²¹⁸ Courtney obliged with a notice on 15 June.²¹⁹ Wilde's reference to 'psychology' here is important because it was a term he frequently employed in numerous reviews whilst working for the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

²¹³ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.277.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.387-388.

²¹⁵ Jose Harris, 'Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18711>, [Accessed 16 Sept. 2010].

²¹⁶ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp.387-388.

²¹⁷ Oscar Wilde, 'To Read or Not to Read', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 43, No. 6521, 8 Feb., 1886, p.11.

²¹⁸ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.481.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Nature is matter struggling into mind [...].²²⁰

In his reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Wilde paid close attention to mental states and subjective experience. He commonly used the phrases 'psychological interest', 'from a psychological point of view' and 'psychological study'.²²¹ He consistently focused on consciousness, the 'spiritual development' of characters, and the 'psychology' or the emotional maturation of characters. For instance, on reviewing a batch of Russian novels, Wilde stated that Tourgenieff 'can distil into a few pages of perfect prose the moods and passions of many lives'. Similarly, Wilde praised Tolstoi for conveying '[...] such a fierce intensity of passion and concentration of impulse, a power of dealing with the deepest mysteries of psychology and the most hidden springs of life, and a realism that is pitiless in its fidelity, and terrible because it is true.'²²² The nature of consciousness and its manifestation was a recurring concern for Wilde.

In the Commonplace book Wilde asked 'How [to] pass from matter which is that which has extension to mind which is that which thinks. certain [*sic*] material changes exterior to our organism are always accompanied by certain other material changes inside our organism'. However, Wilde pondered, 'this does not solve the problem of consciousness'.²²³ The 'problem of consciousness' refers to the other question dominating the Oxford notebooks: how does a mental state like consciousness manifest itself in the cerebral cells?²²⁴ In the psychological literature of the 1880s, psychologists were becoming increasingly aware that consciousness was a variable state that consisted

²²⁰ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', pp.441-442.

²²¹ See 'The Letters of a Great Woman,' *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol.43, No. 6544, 6 Mar., 1886, pp.4-5. Also see 'The Poet's Corner' where Wilde critiques the poet for ignoring psychological concepts such as the 'Ego' and 'non-Ego', Vol. 47, No. 7193, 6 Apr., 1888, p.3.

²²² [Oscar Wilde], 'A Batch of Novels,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 6902, 2 May 1887, p.11.

²²³ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.152.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.111-112.

of a series of rapid discontinuities rather than a singular continuity. In *Mind* in 1887 the medical pathologist Henry Maudsley wrote that there were as many consciousnesses as there were sensations, emotions and thoughts, which he described as a 'redness-consciousness,' a 'greenness consciousness,' a 'sourness-consciousness' and so forth.²²⁵ It was this complexity of the ego, along with the synthesis of the aesthetic states with cognitive processes, that Wilde noticed when reading and reviewing novels, poems and plays.

Essentially, the reviews show that, for Wilde, artistic expression and psychology were interrelated. Take for instance 'One of Mr Conway's Reminders', published by Wilde in February 1886. Wilde reviewed Hugh Conway's novel *The Cardinal Sin* (1886). He stated that Conway had invented a psychology of the 'weird and wonderful kind.' If, Wilde mused, 'to raise a goose skin on the reader be the aim of art Mr Conway must be regarded as a real artist.'²²⁶ However, Wilde satirised the form Conway chose to convey this physiological affectation:

[...] so harrowing is his psychology that the ordinary methods of punctuation are quite inadequate to convey it. Agony and asterisks follow each other on every page, and as the murderer's conscience sinks deeper into chaos, the chaos of the commas increases [...].²²⁷

²²⁵ Henry Maudsley, 'The Physical Condition of Consciousness', *Mind*, Vol. 12, No. 48, Oct., 1887, p.490 (pp.489-515).

²²⁶ [Oscar Wilde], 'One of Mr Conway's Reminders', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol.43, No. 6515, 1 Feb., 1886, p.5.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Wilde describes Conway's style as 'slipshod and careless'.²²⁸ Betsy F. Mueller observes that Wilde was implicated in so many aspects of modernist culture. It may seem surprising to critics who agree with her that Wilde's criticism of Conway's attempt at mimicking the 'murderer's conscience' is a critique of 'stream of consciousness', or an embryonic form of it at least.²²⁹ 'Stream of consciousness' as a literary technique is usually connected with William James's *The Principles of Psychology* of 1890.²³⁰ Rylance explains that the actual coinage was introduced decades before James by Lewes, who defined it as the 'action of our minds as we fall between voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious states'.²³¹ It is a flow that 'establishes and maintains our bodily and psychological presence and identity'.²³² The modernist writer, states Rylance, commonly employed expressions of involuted, introspective narratives as a way of articulating multiple processes happening simultaneously, as in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1918-20).

Wilde's dislike for the use of punctuation to articulate expression resurfaced in a subsequent piece seven months after in a review of G. Manville Finn's novel *The Master of Ceremonies* (1886). This time, however, Wilde was too exasperated to withhold the full force of his scorn at Finn's expression. Wilde proceeded to exemplify his case in point:

He-he, hi-hi, hec-hec, ha-ha-ha! Ho-ho! Bless my-hey-
ha! Hey-ha! Hugh-hugh-hugh! Oh dear me! Oh-why

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Betsy F. Mueller, 'Oscar Wilde and the Culture of Russian Modernism', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 4, Winter, 1990, p.469, (pp.459-472).

²³⁰ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.10.

²³¹ Ibid., p.11.

²³² Ibid.

don't you-heck-heck-heck-heck-heck! Shut the-Ho-ho-
 ho-ho-hugh-hugh-window before I –ho-ho-ho-ho!²³³

Here Manville Finn is attempting to convey the impression of a lady coughing. 'This horrible jargon', sneers Wilde, is a 'meaningless monstrosity, on a par with spelling a sneeze' and does not produce the effect it aims at.²³⁴ Novels like Conway's and Manville Finn's led Wilde to conclude that the nineteenth century may be a 'prosaic age', but, he gibed, 'it is certainly not an age of prose'.²³⁵

The question of consciousness and expression reappeared in Wilde's review of Miss Caroline Fitzgerald's volume of poems entitled *Venetia Victrix* (1889). As editor of the *Woman's World*, Wilde reviewed Fitzgerald's volume which was dedicated to Robert Browning. Wilde stated that 'Venetia Victrix', which gave its title to the book, is 'a powerful psychological study of a man's soul'. Moreover, he observed that 'it is not difficult to see Browning's influence'.²³⁶ 'Venetia Victrix' is 'sometimes complex and intricate in expression, but then the subject itself is intricate and complex'.²³⁷ Fitzgerald's 'psychological poem' was about 'a man who to do a noble action wrecks his own soul, sells it to evil and to the spirit of evil'.²³⁸ Wilde commented on the 'marked tendency of modern poetry to become obscure'. Critics, stated Wilde, have ascribed this tendency 'to

²³³ [Oscar Wilde], 'Two New Novels,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 44, No.6709, 16 Sept., 1886, p.5

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ [Wilde], 'One of Mr Conway's Reminders', p.5.

²³⁶ [Oscar Wilde], 'Some Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, Vol. 2, 1889, p.389.

²³⁷ In a review of W. G. Willis's epic poem *Melchior* Wilde states that the poem 'is dedicated to Mr. Robert Browning, not inappropriately, as it deals with that problem of expression of life through music', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 41, No. 6241, 13 Mar., 1885, p. 11.

²³⁸ Wilde, 'Some Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, p.389.

wilfulness and to affectation'.²³⁹ He explained that the origin of this 'obscurity' is 'to be found in the complexity of the new problems, and in the fact that self-consciousness is not yet adequate to explain the contents of the Ego'.²⁴⁰ Wilde locates the problem of 'obscurity' in the murky depths of 'self-consciousness', or the 'Ego'.

In her article 'Wilde, Browning and the "New Obscurity"' (1999), Leslie White argues that Wilde's observations on the 'new obscurity' suggest that the 'new problems' would 'broaden the raw material of art'.²⁴¹ The 'new problems' also 'require stylistic observations that will [...] extend its subject matter and formal possibilities'.²⁴² However, White gives no further explanation about the nature or context of the 'new problems'. In a review of William Cyphers's book on consciousness, Sully who contributed widely to the field of psychological aesthetics, observed that Cyphers's enquiry into consciousness included 'the existence of soul or spiritual entity', 'the relation of the phenomena of the higher moral consciousness to religious doctrine', as well as 'the function and law of art'.²⁴³ In his review of 'Venetia Victrix' and many other reviews in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Woman's World*, Wilde too comments on the relation between 'soul', sin and 'self-consciousness' as well as the function of art in the expression of consciousness. He states, for example, that 'objective forms of art such as sculpture and the drama' no longer suffice for the 'perfect presentation of life'.²⁴⁴ By referring to sculpture and drama as 'objective', Wilde recognised the 'new problems' that arose by referring to any art form as 'objective' in the same way James recognised the object/subject dilemma in the study of psychology. James stated that 'No subjective state, whilst present, is its own object; its

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Leslie White, 'Wilde, Browning, and the "New Obscurity"', *ELT Press*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 1999, p.9 (pp.4-22).

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ James Sully, 'Review: Untitled', *Mind*, Vol. 5, No. 18, Apr., 1880, p.273 (pp.273-280).

²⁴⁴ Wilde, 'Some Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, p.389.

object is always something else'.²⁴⁵ The moment that one begins to analyse the feeling, maintained James, 'the feeling' is modified; the 'act of naming [feelings] has momentarily detracted from their force'.²⁴⁶ The 'new problems' arising in the analysis of the object of study were inherently psychological and linguistic in nature. The 'new problems' suggested by Fitzgerald's poem, presented difficulties for the reviewer or literary critic like Wilde who had to articulate the poem's appeal to an unexplored and unfathomable area of mind like consciousness.

From the point of view of the epistemological conflicts within psychology, Wilde's comments on the 'Ego' and 'self-consciousness' in the review of 'Venetia Victrix' are revealing. He wrote that 'Plastic simplicity of outline may render for us the visible aspect of life; it is different when we come to deal with those secrets which self-consciousness alone contains, and which self-consciousness itself can but half reveal'.²⁴⁷ Wilde saw 'self-consciousness' as the method of comprehending the 'Ego', although he admits it 'is not yet adequate' to do so. 'Self-consciousness' suggests a dependence on one's own senses and impressions. J. A Stewart pursued this line of psychological enquiry in 'Psychology: A Science or a method?' published in *Mind* (1876). Stewart obtained a first class in classical moderations (1868) and in the *Literae Humaniores* (1870) at Lincoln College, Oxford, and was awarded the Newdigate prize in 1868 for a poem on the catacombs.²⁴⁸ For Stewart, 'psychology' was a 'study of experience'.²⁴⁹ 'One's own experiences' could not be classified like the 'biological organs'. Subjective experience

²⁴⁵ William James, 'On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology', *Mind*, Vol.9, No, 33, Jan., 1884, p.1, (pp.1-26).

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Wilde, 'Some Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, p.389.

²⁴⁸ John Murray, 'Stewart, John Alexander (1846–1933)', *ODNB*, [Accessed 8 Sept., 2010].

²⁴⁹ Stewart, 'Psychology: A Science of a Method?', p.446.

could not be a science, but introspection, as Wilde also argued, had its value.²⁵⁰ Rylance explains that one of the problems in psychology was the 'first person/third person' problem. Namely, in reporting or analysing psychological events, should the 'primary introspective stance of the experiencing individual' and the 'natural language of that person's experience' be used? Or, should psychology strive to maintain an objective, scientific stance where the observer remains a third party to the spectacle of phenomena?²⁵¹

The psychologist Bernard Bosanquet wrote *A History of Aesthetic* (1892) and also frequently contributed to *Mind*. He stated that the 'history of Fine Art is the history of the actual aesthetic consciousness, as a concrete phenomenon, aesthetic theory is the philosophic analysis of this consciousness, for which the knowledge of its history is an essential condition'.²⁵² Bosanquet's view is echoed by Gilbert in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'. Gilbert asserts that 'It is through criticism that humanity can become conscious'.²⁵³ Criticism, according to Gilbert, 'can do for us what can be done neither by physics nor metaphysics'. 'It can give us the exact science of mind in the process of becoming. It can tell us how man thought before he learned to write'.²⁵⁴ In the next chapter, I present evidence to suggest that Wilde did not completely reject the study of the art-object as an objective discipline as Small states in *Conditions for Criticism*.²⁵⁵ Small says that Pater and Wilde were engaging in impressionist criticism. If this was the case then so was Stewart who defined 'psychology' as a 'critique, a method, a certain

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p.447.

²⁵¹ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.41.

²⁵² Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetic*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1892) p.2.

²⁵³ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.456.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.128.

thoughtful attitude in science, morals and literature'.²⁵⁶ The very looseness of psychological nomenclature inspired creativity because particular abstract notions required representation. By the time Wilde wrote *Dorian Gray* he had established how to deal with the problem of 'consciousness' which he had been pondering during his reviews. His reviews show that while his Oxford learning gave him a strong understanding of science, he also gleaned knowledge from contemporary scientific debates while working as a 'jobbing journalist' as will be explored further below.²⁵⁷

The man who could call a spade a spade should be compelled to use one. It is the only thing he is fit for.²⁵⁸

From the above analysis it is clear that epistemological debates around psychology were embedded in Wilde's reviews. Moreover, it is apparent from the poetry and reviews quoted above that Wilde believed the 'new psychology', as discussed by Courtney, neglected the human aspects of experience. 'Who that had ever seen a nerve-cell' asks Courtney, 'could be patient on being told that thought was a property of such cells, as gravitation was a property of matter?'²⁵⁹ Courtney quoted Lewes who is said to have smiled at the 'confident statements' which credit certain nerve-cells with the 'power of transforming impressions into sensations, and other cells with the power of transforming these sensations into ideas [...]'.²⁶⁰ Wilde and Courtney agreed with Lewes that biological explanations were too mechanical, and often neglected subjective relations between feeling, sensation and physiological action. All three writers' critiqued mechanical theory or 'iatromechanical thought'. As explained above, 'iatromechanical

²⁵⁶ Stewart, 'Psychology: A Science of a Method?', p.451.

²⁵⁷ Guy and Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession*, p.15.

²⁵⁸ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.159.

²⁵⁹ Courtney, 'The New Psychology', p.321.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

thought' divided humans into body, soul, machine and spirit.²⁶¹ Lewes pressed physiologists to address the heart of the issue. He asked, 'what [...] is the relation between modes of consciousness like volitions, perceptions and emotions, and objective facts like nerve-cells, fibres and centres?'²⁶² Unlike physicists and chemists who worked with a precise set of terms, biological and psychological theorists engaged in disputes that were at bottom verbal.²⁶³

The physicist John Tyndall recognised that when explaining consciousness, 'we meet a blank which mechanical deduction is unable to fill.'²⁶⁴ Lewes located the problem thus:

A sensory impression is transmitted as a *wave of motion*
to the brain, and there being transformed into a state of
consciousness, is again reflected as a *motor impulse*.²⁶⁵

This kind of explanation, argued Lewes, rendered consciousness, motive and feeling as a 'mere aggregate of mathematical relations', with no thought for the subjective aspects of the phenomena highlighted.²⁶⁶ In comparison to the biological references in the poems

²⁶¹ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.85.

²⁶² Courtney, 'The New Psychology', p.321.

²⁶³ George Henry Lewes, 'Consciousness and Unconsciousness', *Mind*, Vol. 2, No. 6, Apr., 1877, p.156, (pp.156-167).

²⁶⁴ The full passage reads: 'Observation proves that [subjective and physical phenomena] interact, but in passing from one to the other, we meet a blank which mechanical deduction is unable to fill. Frankly stated, we have here to deal with facts almost as difficult to be seized as the idea of a soul. And if you are content to make your 'soul' a poetic rendering of a phenomenon which refuses the yoke of ordinary physical laws, I, for one would not object to this exercise of ideality'. 'Science and Value: The Writings of John Tyndall', *John Tyndall: Essays on a Natural Philosopher*, W. H Brock et al eds., (Dublin: Royal Dublin Society, 1981) p.185.

²⁶⁵ George Henry Lewes, 'The Course of Modern Thought,' *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 27, Mar., 1877, p.323, (pp.317-327).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

‘Charmides’ and ‘Humanited’, Wilde’s descriptions of nerve action are far more sophisticated in *Dorian Gray*.

In *Dorian Gray* and the critical-creative essays, Wilde imbued the perfunctory descriptions of human psychology with a poet’s touch. Take the following representation of Sibyl Vane’s mental processes. In the passage she is thinking about her fiancé Dorian or ‘Prince Charming’:

Prince Charming rules life for us now. Then she paused. A rose shook in her blood, and shadowed her cheeks. Quick breath parted the petals of her lips. They trembled. Some southern wind of passion swept over her, and stirred the dainty folds of her dress. ‘I love him,’ she said, simply.²⁶⁷

Given that Sibyl is experiencing passion, a rose is an apt symbol to convey her feeling. Compare Wilde’s passage to Lewes’s description above of the process from ‘sensory impression’, to ‘wave of motion’, to ‘consciousness’. ‘Prince Charming’ is the ‘sensory [mental] impression’. His mental image produces ‘a wave of motion’, that is, the rush of blood to Sibyl’s cheeks which results in a ‘motor impulse’; the trembling ‘petals’ of her lips. The state of consciousness induced is affirmed by the words ‘I love him.’ Nevertheless, the description ‘a rose shook in her blood’ offers an intriguing conception by attributing Sibyl’s psychical state to a physiological as well as an aesthetic origin. As shown above, Wilde frequently used biological language such as ‘cell’ and ‘nerve’. In rendering an emotional state, however, he employs the rose, a flower whose voluptuous form, deep colour and perfume embodies romantic tropes of love and traditional ideals

²⁶⁷ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.49.

of beauty. The aesthetic principles behind Wilde's choice of flowers will be explored in chapter four. For now it is enough to state that flowers provided him with a vernacular for describing psychical states emotively.

In his Oxford notebooks Wilde compared the protoplasm of plants with 'cerebral protoplasm' in the human mind. The protoplasm of plants has only the attribute of what Wilde termed 'irritability'. This means plants only have a capacity for contraction, and not the capability of 'conscious volition' as with cerebral protoplasm. Wilde perceived that the problem of modern science was 'the problem of consciousness' or the manifestation of the 'cell-soul' in the 'amoeba' [*Italics mine*].²⁶⁸ 'Where to the attribute of irritability common to all protoplasmic matter', asked Wilde, 'is added that of conscious volition[?]'²⁶⁹ Like Lewes, Wilde was preoccupied with localising volition. If the cerebral cells of the human brain are not consciousness, pondered Wilde, they are at least the 'organs' by which consciousness manifests itself.²⁷⁰

Wilde resolved to appropriate what Amy King calls the 'botanical vernacular' to articulate the relations between the physiological and the emotive.²⁷¹ Take the following passage from *Dorian Gray* where Wilde renders the awakening of Dorian's sexual consciousness through the representation of cross-fertilisation:

The spray of lilac fell from his hand upon the gravel. A
furry bee came and buzzed round it for a moment. Then it
began to scramble all over the oval stellated globe of the

²⁶⁸ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.112.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Amy M. King, *Bloom: the Botanical vernacular in the English novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.3. King defines the term as 'a language coming out of a wholesale cultural interest in the floral that dates from the eighteenth century taxonomies of Carl Linnaeus (1701-78)'.

tiny blossoms. He watched it with that strange interest in trivial things that we try to develop when things of high import make us afraid, or when we are stirred by some new emotion for which we cannot find expression, or when some thought that terrifies us lays sudden siege to the brain and calls on us to yield. After a time the bee flew away. He saw it creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus. The flower seemed to quiver, and then swayed gently to and fro.²⁷²

King argues that 'stellated' was a popular term used in the vernacular of botany and is here used to describe the lilac's structure. 'Stained', King observes, connotes a more explicit sexual reference since the corolla of a flower is 'stained' by pollen or the 'male sperm'.²⁷³ Moreover, blossoms are known to cover a plant before the production of its fruit or seed. For King, the above description signifies 'a young man on the cusp of his first (homoerotic) sexual experience'.²⁷⁴ The potential for allusions to sex and sexuality in the vernacular of botany concerned Ruskin. Jonathan Smith observes that Ruskin 'chastely' covered the seed-producing parts of plants in pictures in stark contrast to Darwin who explicated their reproductive organs.²⁷⁵ So perturbed was Ruskin by 'ugly' scientific language that he attempted to create a more 'graceful' nomenclature by replacing 'pistil'

²⁷² Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.19.

²⁷³ King, *Bloom*, p.213.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Smith, *Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture*, p.173.

with 'pillar', 'ovary' with 'treasury', and 'style' with 'shaft'.²⁷⁶ Wilde took advantage of the botanical vernacular to express sexuality in a language less inhibiting.

Nevertheless, in *Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry, like Ruskin, expresses contempt for scientific terminology. Lord Henry states:

I was thinking chiefly of flowers. Yesterday I cut an orchid, for my buttonhole. It was a marvellous spotted thing, as effective as the seven deadly sins. In a thoughtless moment I asked one of the gardeners what it was called. He told me it was a fine specimen of *Robinsoniana*, or something dreadful of that kind. It is a sad truth, but we have lost the faculty of giving lovely names to lovely things.²⁷⁷

The 'ugliness' of the scientific names of flowers probably dawned on Wilde as he was learning their technical names from horticulture magazines.²⁷⁸ Grant Allen wrote prolifically on science and literature and especially psychological aesthetics. He made a similar remark in 'The Colours of Flowers' (1882) published in the *Cornhill Magazine*. In the article, he investigated why certain flowers had grown to be red or purple rather than blue or white for instance. In the explanation he offered, Allen discussed 'forget-me-nots'. By name, he added, '*myosotis versicolor*'. Immediately though, Allen begged to be pardoned for using a 'few scientific names just this once.'²⁷⁹ According to Allen, scientific nomenclature could sometimes be 'too precise, definite and unimaginative'. It therefore

²⁷⁶ John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin Love's Meinie and Proserpina*, Vol. 25, (London: George Allen, 1906) p.259.

²⁷⁷ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.159.

²⁷⁸ Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.304.

²⁷⁹ Grant Allen, 'The Colours of Flowers,' *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 45, Jan., 1882, p.25, (pp.19-34).

failed to produce an 'emotional wave' in the same way as 'poetical' words relating to form, colour, sound and sense.²⁸⁰ Even so, Wilde continued to adopt scientific language and create new psycho-aesthetic terms as will be demonstrated further below.

Wilde's knowledge of psychology expanded as an active journalist engaging with topical debates of the day. In writing his poems he lifted material from the Oxford notebook and the Commonplace book to discuss mind and matter. However, he did not refer to his Oxford notebooks every time he wanted to discuss science throughout the 1880s as is the common suggestion amongst academics discussing Wilde and science.²⁸¹ While writing *Dorian Gray*, Wilde admitted that he spent hours scouring a catalogue published by a horticultural firm to learn the names of various kinds of flowers and their technical descriptions.²⁸² Wilde engaged with a variety of media throughout his journalistic career. It is therefore reductive to suggest that the notes he made as an undergraduate at Oxford are sufficient to explain his engagement with Victorian science. Up until this point in the chapter, the analysis has been focussed on Wilde's knowledge of the new psychology, his engagement with debates over epistemology and the problem of expressing consciousness or the ego. In the following discussion, the linguistic relations between Wilde's aesthetics and psychology will be made more explicit through an examination of the psychological language he employs. First, however, a discussion of how critics have approached Wilde's engagement with the language of psychological aesthetics is necessary.

²⁸⁰ Grant Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1877) p.268.

²⁸¹ Michael Wainwright and James Eli Adams in recent conferences for instance, draw on Wilde's Oxford notebooks as the prime source for his engagement with science. Michael Wainwright, 'Darwin, Weismann, and Wilde: Monstrous Heredity in the *Picture of Dorian Gray*', presented at British Society for Literature and Science, Keele University, Thursday 27 Mar., 2008. James Eli Adams, presented 'The Pleasures of Nemesis', at BAVS, Glasgow University, Thursday 2 Sept., 2010.

²⁸² Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.304.

**The aesthetic critic, and the aesthetic critic alone, can appreciate all forms and
modes.²⁸³**

According to Croom-Robertson, the subject matter of 'psychology' was phenomenal. The role of the 'psychologist', he argued, is to be occupied with the laws of intellection and distinguishing 'its modes (perception, representation, imagination, conception &c) according to the various circumstances in which the laws are found at work'.²⁸⁴ As demonstrated above, perception, representation, imagination and conception were subjects of interest to Wilde. Aestheticism was an artistic creed with the aim of heightening aesthetic experience. Small maintains that aestheticism shared similar epistemologies with psychology, but each subject approached the aesthetic object in a different manner. For Small, the critical difference between the 'impressionist criticism' of Wilde and psychology is that the latter attempted to approach art as an object, whereas Wilde celebrated and privileged the subjective responses to art.²⁸⁵ However, as has been explored in chapter one and will be developed further below, psychologists like Ward, and eventually Sully, acknowledged that subjective responses were the only kind that could be conceived in relation to the art-object.

According to Small, the aesthetic movement was founded on the assertion that 'subjective-rather than intersubjective, communal, or objective-experiences of art were the only ones which were valuable or indeed possible'.²⁸⁶ Moreover, Small argues that

²⁸³ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.455.

²⁸⁴ 'Editor', 'Psychology and Philosophy', p.16.

²⁸⁵ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.128.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

psychology 'had arrived at a theory of aesthetic perception which was strikingly close to that enjoined in the polemic of the Aesthetes.'²⁸⁷ He elaborates:

This vocabulary- and the concepts which had generated it- became a familiar rhetoric in the hands of non-specialist writers on psychology. [...] The whole debate generated a series of concepts and a terminology, which, was shared by an entire school of 'impressionist' critics.²⁸⁸

Small recognises it is incorrect to suggest that psychological vocabulary and concepts somehow found their way into literary criticism. He does maintain, however, that the 'practice of contemporary critics indicates a process of gradual realignment in the relationships between bodies of knowledge and the epistemology invoked to validate that knowledge.'²⁸⁹ Small is one of the few scholars to have discussed Wilde in connection with the development of Victorian psychology and aesthetics. The analysis I offer below supplements Small's observations in that I examine Wilde's engagement with specific debates over language and nomenclature in psychology. Small, for instance, observes that psychological terminology like 'impression', 'relative', 'discrimination' and 'pleasure' resounded in the writings of Swinburne, Pater and Wilde.²⁹⁰ Small argues that the 'impressionist criticism of the Aesthetic Movement absorbed and utilized both the conceptual framework and terminology of psychology'.²⁹¹ He states that psychology had 'developed and refined theoretical concepts which speculation in aesthetics could easily

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p.75.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p.78.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

appropriate or use'.²⁹² Small discusses how aestheticism 'absorbed' the terminology of psychology more generally. However, the analysis I offer below draws on recent scholarship like that by Rylance and Roger Smith, who both emphasise the importance of the two way exchange going on between the various contributors to psychology in the periodical press.

As Smith argues, to speak about 'psychological vocabulary' in a period when this vocabulary was under dispute, is problematic because psychology and its nomenclature were in the process of formation.²⁹³ He asserts that Victorian language linking mind and body was awkward, opaque, and unsettled.²⁹⁴ It was this looseness of nomenclature that, as Rylance maintains, allowed theorists from non-traditional intellectual and social backgrounds to debate with those of 'standing and disciplinary identity'.²⁹⁵ Smith elaborates further explaining that as 'a periodical literature, psychology existed equally as an invitation to readers to reflect on their own mental world and conduct'. In this sense, 'psychology was not just the most accessible of sciences, it was a science constituted in the self understandings of readers'.²⁹⁶ While the empiricist school of psychology desired an objective basis there were various other psychologists, as explored above in the example of J. A. Stewart, who shared the ambitions of aestheticism.

In his discussion of 'Aesthetics, Psychology, and Biology', Small recognises that figures like Sully and Allen appropriated and developed Herbert Spencer's theories of 'play'. Spencer argued that 'aesthetic products' resulted from the 'non-life serving

²⁹² Ibid., p.77.

²⁹³ Smith, 'The Physiology of the Will: Mind, Body, and Psychology in Periodical Literature: 1855-1875', p.81.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Rylance, "The Disturbing Anarchy of Investigation': Psychological Debate and the Victorian Periodical', p.239.

²⁹⁶ Smith, 'The Physiology of the Will: Mind, Body, and Psychology in Periodical Literature: 1855-1875', p.100.

function' or 'play'.²⁹⁷ Spencer's short chapter 'Aestho-physiology' dealt with the physiology of 'play' but lacked the sophistication of Lewes's arguments. Spencer never explained the nature of aesthetic feelings. Instead he argued they were largely defined by an 'undefinable consciousness'.²⁹⁸ In contrast, Lewes understood the nature of aesthetics as a core part of literary criticism. He argued aesthetics were the 'à-priori theory of Art – the absolute statement of the conditions, means and end of Art, rigorously deduced from philosophical principles.'²⁹⁹ Lewes's description suggests that the composites of the art-object like form, structure, and style were the very subject of literary criticism. He therefore widened the phenomenological scope of literary criticism to incorporate the philosophy of 'beauty'. At the same time, Lewes broadened the 'aesthetic' so that it was not exclusively confined to the study of the 'beautiful'. In this sense, aesthetics, as Wilde was to also argue, was the philosophy of literary criticism.

Small's account of psychology and aesthetics does not detail how Wilde interacted with his fellow psychological aestheticians like Sully and Allen, or how Wilde disseminated psychological aesthetics. Instead Small examines Wilde's subversions of critical practices like his refusal to footnote or reference citations. According to Small, Wilde was subversive because he acknowledged the 'plurality of origins of aesthetic responses' which gave pre-eminence to the aesthetic critic, rather than the specialised academic critic which institutions increasingly favoured.³⁰⁰ However, as will be shown in the next two chapters, Wilde's perspective was shared by many psychologists and

²⁹⁷ Herbert Spencer. *A System of Philosophy: Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 2, (William & Newgate, London, 1881, [1872]) p.627.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ G.H Lewes, 'Philosophy of Art; Hegel's Aesthetics', *The British and Foreign Review*, Vol. 13, Mar., 1842, p.4, (pp.1-49).

³⁰⁰ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.128.

scientific naturalists. The following chapters will demonstrate how Wilde actively contributed to debates around psychology and aesthetics.

[The] mere shapes and patterns of things becoming [...].³⁰¹

Besides Small, Helfand, Smith, and Bruce Haley have examined Wilde's scientific language. These critics have focussed on Wilde's use of evolutionary concepts. Haley, for instance, states that Wilde owes to Spencer his use of 'highly organized'.³⁰² Moreover, the anthropologist Edward Tylor, argues Haley, is the critical figure Wilde may have read in his understanding of the term 'concentrated race-experience'.³⁰³ 'Concentrated race experience' was the accumulation of a race or family history.³⁰⁴ In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', Gilbert states that the 'transmission of racial experiences' makes 'culture' possible, which can further be perfected by the 'critical spirit'. Like Tylor, Gilbert argues that 'imagination is the result of heredity'.³⁰⁵ According to Helfand and Smith, Wilde learned such evolutionary terms from his reading of Tylor as well as Darwin, Spencer, William Kingdon Clifford and George J. Romanes.³⁰⁶ However, Wilde's consistent use of the terms 'faculty', 'instinct' and 'sense' have not been examined by scholars.

³⁰¹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.30.

³⁰² Haley, 'Wilde's "Decadence" and the Positivist Tradition', p.216.

³⁰³ Haley shows the correlation between Lord Henry's view and that of Spencer's. Spencer, states Haley, argued that 'All organic growth [...] involves differentiation: bodies grow from indefinite incoherent simplicity to definite coherent complexity, thus becoming more 'highly organized', Ibid., p.221. In *Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry states that marriage can make 'certain temperaments [...] more complex'. These temperaments 'retain their egotism, and add to it many other egos. They are forced to have more than one life. They become more highly organized, and to be highly organized is, I should fancy, the object of man's existence', p.60.

³⁰⁴ Michael S. Helfand and Philip E. Smith, 'Anarchy and Culture: The Evolutionary Turn of Cultural Criticism in the Work of Oscar Wilde', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Summer 1978, p.199 (pp.119-215).

³⁰⁵ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.443.

³⁰⁶ Tylor argued that 'Backwards from our own times, the course of mental history may be traced through the changes wrought by modern schools of thought and fancy, upon an intellectual inheritance handed down to them from earlier generations. And through remoter periods, as we recede more nearly towards primitive conditions of our own race, the threads which connect new thought with old do not always vanish

‘Faculty psychology’ consisted of dividing up the human mind into different categories. It claimed to explain different kinds of mental activity by referring to a ‘faculty’ or ‘instinct’. Rylance explains that ‘faculty psychology’ was inherited from the eighteenth century when much time was given to arranging and ordering the faculties.³⁰⁷ According to him, the ‘faculties’ were arranged hierarchically. There were the ‘higher faculties’ such as faith, reason, love, exercise of the free-will and so on. The ‘lower faculties’ were connected to mechanical or biological functions such as sensation, feeling, appetite, and desire.³⁰⁸ The ‘higher faculties’ were deemed to distinguish man from animals. As such, these ‘higher faculties’ were considered *a priori* knowledge or gifts from God that made human beings unique. According to this view, the ‘superior’ faculties could not be developed through experience.³⁰⁹ The notion that certain mental processes or activities could be categorised led psychologists from this school to discriminate between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ minds, ‘primitive’ and ‘advanced’ races, the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ sex.³¹⁰ Slowly, argues Rylance, ‘nineteenth-century enquiry demanded more than verbal tags for commonly understood processes. It wanted to understand the faculties, not as static categories, but as part of multiple, interactive processes’.³¹¹ As a consequence, faculty psychologists were criticised profusely for giving no real explanations for a particular process.

The renowned linguist Müller, who taught Wilde at Oxford, commented on the common misapplication of the term ‘faculty’. He stated that ‘all that is meant when it is

from our sight’, Haley quotes from Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*. ‘Wilde “Decadence” and the Positivist Tradition’, p.221.

³⁰⁷ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.27.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p.40.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p.27.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.39.

said that mankind is endowed with faculties of seeing, remembering, imagining and reasoning', is that 'every man can see, remember, imagine and reason'.³¹² According to Müller, terms like 'faculty' were used to unify mind and matter, or the physical and mental processes, and eliminate the difference between 'ego' and 'non-ego' which is what Wilde attempts to do in his poem 'Humanited' as shown above. Müller made an example of John Stuart Mill who tried to avoid using abstract nouns to talk about sensation and feeling. Mill was mistaken, argued Müller, to think that by saying matter is the permanent possibility of sensation, and mind the permanent possibility of feeling, he could resolve Kant's 'Ding an sich', or the problem of conceiving the 'noumenon' - an event independent of the senses. In his Oxford notebook Wilde wrote that the danger of metaphysics is that 'men are often turning nomina into numina'.³¹³ 'Nomina' means 'name' and 'Numina' is a spirit or deity believed to inhabit certain phenomena.³¹⁴ The note suggests that like Müller, Wilde disapproved of sense-impressions, or the 'noumenon' being interpreted through 'colourless abstractions of a spiritual world, in the vacuity of an infinite with no contents'.³¹⁵ Wilde's critical essays show him trying to dispel metaphysical abstraction from his aesthetic theories by appropriating faculty psychology.

In 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde used terms like 'imaginative *faculty*',³¹⁶ 'imitative *faculty*',³¹⁷ 'imitative *instinct*',³¹⁸ and 'mythopoeic *faculty*' [*italics mine*].³¹⁹ The frequent and consistent use of 'instinct', 'sense' and 'faculty' in his theoretical essays is deliberate,

³¹² Max Müller, 'The Original Intention of Collective and Abstract Terms', *Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Jul., 1876, p.346 (pp.345-351).

³¹³ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.141.

³¹⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary* online, www.oed.com, [Accessed 25 Sept., 2010].

³¹⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.141.

³¹⁶ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.46.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.47.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.48.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.53.

and is therefore of significance to our interpretation of Wilde's theories of art. 'The Decay of Lying' was published in the *Nineteenth Century* which was known for juxtaposing views on a variety of topics.³²⁰ Wilde imitated the *Nineteenth Century's* dialectical method in the form of a discussion between Cyril and Vivian. Vivian reads to Cyril his article advocating 'lying in art' for publication in the short-lived periodical the *Retrospective Review*.³²¹ Vivian weaves together arguments from psychology and philosophy to contest the persistent cries across the periodical press calling for the systematisation of creativity, emotional experience, and aesthetic response. Vivian opposes the methods of Spencer, 'scientific historians, and the compilers of statistics in general', Robert Louis Stevenson, and the French master of the psychological novel, M. Paul Bourget.³²² Stevenson and Bourget were criticised for 'misapplying' scientific methodology by observing and 'describing things exactly as they happen', as in a scientific experiment.³²³ Cyril is positioned in the dialogue to react to, or challenge Vivian's arguments, or supplement the subject in question.

Perhaps what is most telling about Wilde's use of 'faculty' or 'instinct' is that he employs these terms when discussing literary or critical concepts. For example, in 'The Decay of Lying' Vivian states that critics will 'measure imaginative work by their own lack of any imaginative faculty'.³²⁴ A 'great artist invents a type, and Life tries to copy it, to reproduce it in popular form, like an enterprising publisher.' Neither Holbein nor Van Dyke, argues Vivian, found in England 'what they have given us'. 'They brought their types with them, and Life with her keen imitative *faculty* set herself to supply the master

³²⁰ *The Waterloo Directory*, [Accessed 5 Oct., 2010].

³²¹ Isobel Murray states the *Retrospective Review* intended to rouse interest in 'the old venerable literature of the country', *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.587.

³²² Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', pp. 38, 39, 46.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p.39.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.46.

with models'.³²⁵ So too the 'mythopoeic faculty', as Vivian claims, is 'so essential for the imagination'?³²⁶ The conversation continues in the 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' where Gilbert states, 'For it is the critical *faculty* that invents fresh forms. The tendency of creation is to repeat itself. It is to the critical *instinct* that we owe each new school that springs up, each new mould that art finds ready to its hand'.³²⁷ There is also an 'instinct for form'.³²⁸

In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', also published in the *Nineteenth Century* Wilde outlines an aesthetic philosophy in the form of a dialogue between Gilbert and Ernest. The essay deals with numerous subjects from artistic and psychological expression, to the function of art criticism, as well as the relation between art and society. The essay's original title mimics Matthew Arnold's 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' published in the *National Review* in 1864. Wilde renamed 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' as 'The Critic as Artist' in a collection of his essays entitled *Intentions* published in 1891. 'The Critic as Artist' places the critic above the artist, and as an artist in his own right. With greater frequency than in 'The Decay of Lying', Wilde refers to the 'creative *instinct*',³²⁹ the 'beauty-sense',³³⁰ the 'aesthetic *instinct*',³³¹ the 'faith-faculty',³³² the 'aesthetic sense',³³³ the 'cultivated *instinct*',³³⁴ the 'habit of introspection',³³⁵ the critical *instinct*,³³⁶ the '*instinct* of selection',³³⁷ and the

³²⁵ Ibid., p.47.

³²⁶ Ibid., p.53.

³²⁷ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.136.

³²⁸ Ibid., p.137.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

³³⁰ Ibid., pp.143, 450.

³³¹ Ibid., p.453.

³³² Ibid., p.441.

³³³ Ibid., p.147.

³³⁴ Ibid., p.451.

³³⁵ Ibid., p.455.

³³⁶ Ibid., p.456.

‘colour-sense’ [*italics mine*].³³⁸ By assigning behaviour or experience by reference to a system of dispositions called the ‘instincts’ or ‘faculties’ Wilde was engaging with faculty psychology.

‘The Decay of Lying’ and ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’ are reminiscent of the phrenological classifications made by Franz Joseph Gall or George Combe. In *The Constitution of Man* (1828), Combe adopted the ‘classification of faculties’, which he argued, were the basis of his observations.³³⁹ According to Roger Cooter, *The Constitution of Man* was one of the most esteemed and popular books of the second third of the nineteenth century.³⁴⁰ By the 1880s phrenology was seen as a ‘crank’ science, and is often discounted in modern histories of psychology like Rylance’s *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*. As will be explored in chapter four Wilde also mocked phrenology or ‘muscle-reading’. Nevertheless, he borrowed from phrenology’s classificatory system which permitted ‘laws’ to be formed by reference to the ‘moral and intellectual faculties’.³⁴¹

Combe argued that ‘the organs of the mind can be seen and felt, and their size estimated’.³⁴² Moreover, he believed that ‘if mental organs exist at all, they have been bestowed by the creator’.³⁴³ The faculties devised by Combe included the ‘faculty’ of ‘Individuality’; ‘this took cognizance of existence and simple facts’. The faculty of ‘Form’, he argued, rendered a man observant of form. The faculty of ‘Size’ gave the ‘idea of

³³⁷ Ibid., p.126.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 458.

³³⁹ George Combe, *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects*, 8th ed., (Edinburgh: MacLahlan, Stewart, & Co, 1847 [1828]) p.56.

³⁴⁰ Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.120.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p.122.

³⁴² Combe, *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects*, p.56.

³⁴³ Ibid., p.57.

space, and enables us to appreciate dimension and distance'. The faculty of 'Weight' communicated the 'perception of momentum, weight, and resistance; and aids equilibrium'. 'Colouring' gave the 'perception of colours, their harmonies and discords'.³⁴⁴ Combe generically labelled these the 'Faculties which perceive the existence and qualities of external objects'. These were separate from the 'Knowing Faculties' such as 'Locality', 'Number', 'Time' and 'Language'.³⁴⁵ Wilde adapted the 'rhetoric' surrounding phrenology, or what Cooter refers to as the 'metaphoric significance of phrenology's basic form and contents', to literary criticism and psychological aesthetics.³⁴⁶

In 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde uses 'faculty' in a circular fashion reminiscent of the faculty psychologists. However, he is aware of the shortcomings of the term. For instance, his reference to the 'faculty of truth-telling' is comical as it relates to a human attribute.³⁴⁷ Telling the truth is hardly a static characteristic in human nature so cannot be categorised under the phrenological system. Wilde therefore acknowledges the problem within the phrenological enterprise is its dependence on self-referential categories. However, the 'faculty of truth-telling' may also refer to the 'monstrous worship of facts' which is the very issue under discussion in the essay.³⁴⁸ In terms of categorising literary or imaginative concepts though, faculty psychology supports a theoretical model and so is better adapted to literary criticism than physiology. Given the stances of Cyril and Vivian in 'The Decay of Lying', and Gilbert and Ernest in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', it becomes clear to the reader that the 'creative faculty', for example, 'invents fresh forms'. It is also clear that the 'imitative faculty' relates to

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p.61.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science*, p.110.

³⁴⁷ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.38.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

mimicking or reproducing experience although it describes life imitating art, not the artist creating his work to imitate life. Hence the 'imitative faculty' is not even a human attribute. Furthermore, Wilde refers to the 'critical faculty' and the 'critical instinct' with no clear distinction between the two.

As shown above, Wilde understood that physiological psychology involved cells, sensations and impressions. His descriptions in *Dorian Gray* and in his reviews demonstrate that he did not view mental phenomena in terms of 'faculties'. When outlining the 'doctrines of the new aesthetics' Wilde uses 'habit', 'faculty', or 'sense' as a kind of suffix to an existing root word.³⁴⁹ By doing so, literary concepts become a psychological conception. In phrenology, Cooter states that 'No aspect of human behaviour and no action is incapable of allocation in the classification scheme [...]'.³⁵⁰ According to Cooter, Spencer also drew from phrenology his concept of man's adaptation of faculties to organic, psychological and social needs.³⁵¹

The terms 'faculty', 'sense' and 'instinct' were used by a variety of writers in the discussion of abstract concepts or humanistic attributes. A year after the publication of 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' Allen published 'The Celt in English Art' (1891) in the *Fortnightly Review*. In the essay, Allen discussed the ethnological and evolutionary characteristics of the 'beauty-sense' as Wilde termed it in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'.³⁵² 'Sense' was a common term used by faculty psychologists. Wilde clearly refers to faculty psychology when he states that 'there is in us a beauty-sense, separate from the other senses and above them, separate from the reason and of nobler import,

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p.55.

³⁵⁰ Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science*, p.111.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p.113.

³⁵² Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', pp.143, 450.

separate from the soul and of equal value – a sense that leads some to create, and others to contemplate merely'.³⁵³ Gilbert remarks, 'to be purified and made perfect, this sense requires an exquisite environment'.³⁵⁴ This definition of 'beauty-sense' positions Gilbert's perspective alongside faculty psychologists like Hutcheson and Shaftesbury who maintained that there was a special internal sense for the perception of beauty.³⁵⁵ Allen argued that 'beauty', that is, the 'sublime', the 'magical', the 'vast', and 'fanciful', originated from the 'Celt' and 'the Celt only'.³⁵⁶ 'Teutonic art', he argued, had no aesthetic beauty; it was 'crude' in colour, with no feeling and no decorative quality.³⁵⁷ Allen stated that, 'Everywhere racial *taste* and racial *faculty* tend most in the one or the other direction: a tribe, a horde, a nation is pictorial, or else it is decorative: rarely or never is it both alike in an equal degree of native excellence' [*italics mine*].³⁵⁸ In attempting to assert a 'racial fact', Allen adopts the term 'faculty' by way of 'justifying' his assertion through the out-dated authority of faculty psychology.

Also like Wilde, Allen applies 'faculty' to an existing noun or concept, when he claims the aesthetic movement has 'restored and renewed the decorative faculty in our island'.³⁵⁹ In this way, Allen applies 'faculty' to the adjective 'decorative' in the same manner Wilde applies 'instinct' to the 'aesthetic instinct'.³⁶⁰ C.A Mace observes that by its very name, 'faculty' denotes an *a priori* existence.³⁶¹ Allen openly admitted that his 'many years of study, historical, anthropological scientific and philosophical' had convinced him

³⁵³ Ibid., p.450.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ H. R. Marshall, 'The Field of Aesthetics Psychologically Considered', *Mind*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Jul., 1892, p. 363, (pp. 358-378).

³⁵⁶ Grant Allen, 'The Celt in English Art', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 55, Feb., 1891, p.267, (pp.267-277).

³⁵⁷ Ibid., p.270.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.269.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p.272.

³⁶⁰ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', pp. 441, 453.

³⁶¹ C. A Mace, 'Faculties and Instincts', *Mind*, Vol. 40, No. 157, Jan., 1931, pp.37-48.

that religious belief was 'baseless' and 'untenable'.³⁶² This statement makes Allen's use of the term 'faculty' either clumsy or revealing. This is because faculty psychologists believed in the creationist view of life. Allen, however, openly avowed his belief in evolutionary theory and proudly rejected creationism, although as discussed earlier the two were not incompatible. Allen's reference to 'faculty' demonstrates the confusion over what terms were 'psychologically sound'. Or, it may be that faculty psychology was so embedded in the literature of mind that writers unconsciously defaulted to its structures for want of adequate expression.

When discussing the impressions and effects derived from the art-object Sully used the terms 'art-impression',³⁶³ 'art-enjoyment'³⁶⁴ and 'art-pleasure'.³⁶⁵ Similarly, in an earlier essay where Sully optimistically pursued a scientific aesthetics entitled 'Recent Experiments with the Senses' (1873), he referred to 'after-impression', and 'after-effect'.³⁶⁶ All of these terms related to aesthetics or sense impressions. The role of the hyphen in 'after-impression', or 'art-pleasure' was to link 'art', or the art-object with a psychological concept. In this way, Sully's researches in physical aesthetics began to take on a less conceptual and more concrete reality which was indispensable to the establishment of a scientific aesthetics. Psychological aestheticians were aware that their field lacked a terminology that connected the examination of art, aesthetics and psychology. In his experimental researches on aesthetics Sully attempted to create an objective vocabulary exploring after effects and impressions. On the other hand, Wilde

³⁶² Edward Clodd, *Grant Allen A Memoir* (London: Grant Richards, 1900) p.168.

³⁶³ Sully, 'The Undefinable in Art', *The Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 38, Nov., 1878, p.560, (pp.559-571).

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.562.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.564.

³⁶⁶ James Sully, 'Recent Experiments with the Senses', *Westminster Review*, Vol. 98, Jul., 1872, p.169 (pp.165-198).

consciously appropriated the framework of faculty psychology which permitted the systematisation of humanistic processes, and literary concepts.

James B. Brown's 'Ethics and Aesthetics of Modern Poetry' (1878) was published as part of the *Cornhill Magazine's* run of articles on psychology and aesthetics during the 1870s and 1880s. Brown also resorted to the language of faculty psychology in stressing the vital importance of using art to mediate morals and mores. Brown argued that the 'moralist' and 'artist' should 'combine and transfuse themselves into the great soul and common mind of the world'.³⁶⁷ In defending the 'instinct' of morality 'rooted in human nature', Brown asked, 'whether or not it is possible that a human soul can lay aside its ethical *instinct*, and live happily and exclusively for the gratification of its aesthetic *sense*, whether or not a man can successfully detach and lay aside his moral nature [...] [*italics mine*]'.³⁶⁸ He concluded that an '*instinct* rooted in human nature, and hallowed by its most sacred associations, [...] is not likely to be seriously affected by the Lesbian school of poetry or any other' [*italics mine*].³⁶⁹ The Lesbian school was a branch of Greek poetry that originated from the city of Lesbos. The poetry was characterised by a love of physical beauty, the sensibility to radiant scenes of nature, and passionate indulgence in personal feeling.³⁷⁰ It was this Lesbian school of poetry which inspired the aestheticism of Swinburne, Pater and Wilde.

The question posed by Brown about whether the 'aesthetic sense' could override the 'ethical instinct' constitutes the basis of *Dorian Gray* which explores the

³⁶⁷ J. B. Brown, 'Ethics and Aesthetics of Modern Poetry', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol.37, May, 1878, p.575 (pp.569-583).

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p.580.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p.581.

³⁷⁰ Denys Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) pp. 140-141.

consequences of such a premise. Given Wilde is known to have interwoven topical debates into his texts it is very likely that he addressed critics like Brown. Brown uses 'instinct' and 'sense' as a way of reasserting a 'natural' order, an order which was 'sacred' and therefore 'substantiated' through his use of faculty psychology. Allen, Sully, and Brown's use of 'faculty', 'sense' and 'instinct' shows they shared a common understanding of the nature of the aesthetic propensities which was promoted by the *Cornhill Magazine's* decision to publish on psychological aesthetics. Wilde's frequent adaptation of faculty psychology is more self-conscious than that of his fellow writers.

Wilde's comment in his *Commonplace* book that 'Aristotle's theory of habit', gave ethics a 'physical basis' just as 'in our own day we have a physical basis of mind', may illuminate his use of 'faculty', 'sense' and 'instinct'.³⁷¹ When Wilde attaches 'habit' to 'habit of introspection'³⁷², he uses it to add a 'physical' dimension to an abstract concept. The use of faculty psychology, in the sense of defining and allocating a category to behaviours or concepts, renders Wilde's collective creative-criticism a paradigm secured by psychological principles. This means the terms have an independent existence that gives meaning to Wilde's theories of art in the critical essays regardless of the status of these terms outside his theories of art. His use of 'sense', 'habit' and 'faculty' as suffixes creates the effect of a unified aesthetic.

Each linguistic creation formed part of a stock of words which formed the total sum of Wilde's aesthetic. By adding 'sense', 'habit' and 'faculty' Wilde made concepts or processes out of otherwise adverbial or conceptual terms. Whereas the meaning of the words 'faculty' and 'sense' was debated, 'instinct' and 'habit' were more or less

³⁷¹ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.121.

³⁷² Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p. 455.

undisputed terms in natural science. Moreover, 'instinct' and 'habit' create the effect of concretising or making 'physical' the non-physical, or phenomena immune to empirical testing. Wilde's critical and creative works demonstrate a deliberate attempt to conjoin aesthetics and psychological nomenclature in a more nuanced form than his contemporaries. Unlike Allen and Sully who were always trying to find their own scientific niche, Wilde had created one by acknowledging and creatively adapting epistemological conflicts into his dialogues.

I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.³⁷³

The above analysis demonstrates the linguistic and semantic synchronicity between Wilde's theories of art and those of psychologists. The final section of this chapter will examine the epigrammatic form in which Wilde shaped his statements, in reference to the formulaic medium used to express laws in science. Ellmann notes that, in his Oxford notebooks, Wilde constantly moved toward epigram and was already 'condensing large subjects into small, pungent and cadenced phrases'.³⁷⁴ However, Wilde's style became far more formulaic as he developed as an artist. Of Wilde's *Intentions*, for example, the *Pall Mall Gazette* reported that 'there was too much that was the result of a facile formula, a process of word-shuffling'.³⁷⁵ The limited space available in periodicals, observes Michael Patrick Gillespie, meant that Wilde had little choice but to compact his ideas into equation-like statements.³⁷⁶ Contextually this is a fair explanation. Nonetheless, would this technique not have been implemented by many

³⁷³ 'Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis', *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: De Profundis, 'Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis'*, Vol. 2, Ian Small, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2005) p.95.

³⁷⁴ Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.41.

³⁷⁵ Anon., 'Mr Oscar Wilde's "Intentions"', Vol. 53, No. 8156, 12 May 1891, p.3.

³⁷⁶ Michael Patrick Gillespie, *Oscar Wilde and The Poetics of Ambiguity*. (Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 1996) pp.3-4.

other writers who were also confined to the limitations imposed by the same periodicals? Wilde consistently chose the epigrammatic style to convey statements like, 'For in Art there is no such thing as a universal truth', or 'A Truth in Art is that whose contradictory is also true.'³⁷⁷ These two doctrines did not appear in the 1885 essay entitled 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', but in the re-titled version published in *Intentions* under the name 'The Truth of Masks'. Wilde had polished all the essays for *Intentions*. His signature style of conveying certain theories in a concise, almost equation-like manner, though, remained consistent in his periodical contributions and in his revised editions.

In a letter to Marie Prescott playing Vera in his play *Vera, Or the Nihilists* (1880) Wilde wrote, 'Success is a science, if you have the conditions, you get the result', and 'art is the mathematical result of the emotional desire for beauty.'³⁷⁸ Wilde's axiom may be explained by reference to 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' in which Gilbert states that art passes from 'emotion to form'.³⁷⁹ Gilbert suggests that the raw emotion used to create the art-object is conditioned by the form of the art-object in question. Emotion is filtered through the art medium. The number of lines, or rhythmic structure of a poem, the combination of certain tints and shades in a painting, the kinds of words used to tell a story are all controlled and executed to produce a calculated aesthetic affect. Psychological aestheticians agreed, as the next chapter will explore, that emotion in art was proportioned or at least should be structured in accordance to certain aesthetic laws.

³⁷⁷ Oscar Wilde, *Intentions*, (London: The Unicorn Press, ND) p.199.

³⁷⁸ Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.224.

³⁷⁹ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.126.

In the text Wilde wrote in prison now known as *De Profundis* (1905), he stated, 'Whatever is first in feeling comes away last in form'.³⁸⁰ Richard Ellmann states that the conversation of Maurice Rollinat, a poet, artist and musician besides being one of the 'curiosities of Paris', had impressed Wilde who had recorded some of Rollinat's witticisms. One of the quotes include: *Il n'y a qu'une forme pour le beau mais chaque chose individu a un formule: ainsi on ne comprend pas les poètes* [There is only one form for the beautiful but for each object everyone has a formula: for this reason, poets cannot be understood].³⁸¹ 'Poets', wrote Wilde, are the 'original men of science'.³⁸² With his formulas and conditions, the poet, like the scientist, attempted to communicate the unintelligible. Wilde conceived art as formulated emotion. Moreover, his statements appear to follow the syllogistic method. In *Logic: Induction and Deduction* (1879), Bain defined the 'syllogism' as a fully expressed form of deductive inference, that is narrowed down to the particular from the general.³⁸³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that syllogisms contain an argument in the form of two premises consisting of a common or middle term, with a third proposition called the conclusion, resulting necessarily from the other two.³⁸⁴ Wilde's key aesthetic doctrines are expressed through the syllogistic form. Noticeably, he italicises central statements in 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume' (1885), 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', and 'The Decay of Lying'.

In 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume' Wilde writes:

³⁸⁰ 'Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis', p.142.

³⁸¹ Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.215.

³⁸² *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.127.

³⁸³ Alexander Bain, *Logic: Induction and Deduction*, (London: Longmans, Green, & Co 1879) p.1.

³⁸⁴ *OED online*, [Accessed 15 Oct., 2010].

*Archaeological accuracy is merely a condition of fine stage effect, it is not its quality.*³⁸⁵

*Once, however, that the date has been fixed, then the archaeologist is to supply us with the facts, which the artist is to convert into effects.*³⁸⁶

In the essay Wilde calls for archaeological accuracy in historical plays. However, the scientific attention to historical dress, argued Wilde, is only 'really delightful when transfused into some form of art'.³⁸⁷ The aesthetic critic, argues Small, is primarily interested in subjective response, or the 'effects' produced by a certain method.³⁸⁸ The above formulaic 'laws' invert 'facts' into 'effects'. The domain of the scientist is transmuted into the realm of the artist. However, the 'facts' always underline the 'effects'. Take a second example from 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume' where Wilde italicises another key aesthetic principle: '*For the real artist is he who proceeds, not from feeling to form, but from form to thought and passion.*'³⁸⁹ Here Wilde dismisses the notion that the artist starts with raw feeling bereft of logic or reason. Wilde suggests that the artist starts with a calculated concept which he shapes into a passion filled form. Throughout his writings Wilde strongly argued that 'thought' and 'passion' were not disparate modes of consciousness.

³⁸⁵ Oscar Wilde, 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 17, May 1885, p.814, (pp.800-817).

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p.810.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p.808.

³⁸⁸ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.128.

³⁸⁹ Wilde, 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', p.432.

Leslie Stephen contributed 'Wordsworth's Ethics' (1876) to the *Cornhill Magazine* which he edited between 1871 and 1882.³⁹⁰ In the article, he wrote that Wordsworth's psychology 'stated systematically, is rational but when expressed passionately, turns into poetry'.³⁹¹ Stephen compared the poet and the philosopher's form of expression:

The difference is that the poet has intuitions, while the philosopher gives demonstrations; that the thought which in one mind is converted into emotion is in the other resolved into logic; and that a symbolic representation of the idea is substituted for a direct expression.³⁹²

Stephen wrote on literary, historical as well as philosophical subjects. He also submitted articles like the two part piece on 'On Some Kinds of Necessary Truth' (1889) to *Mind*. In that essay, he wrote that 'some truths may be limited by another', and that a 'necessary truth' implies a 'postulate'.³⁹³ However, 'To every 'must' there is an 'if'. 'There is', Stephen argued, 'no such thing as a truth which is absolutely self-supported'.³⁹⁴ Importantly, he referred to the form of algebraic equations. In algebra, he argued, we gain nothing from the identity that $x = x$. Stephen reasoned that 'a proposition may be identical with another in so far as it states precisely the same truths, and yet it may differ

³⁹⁰ *The Wellesley Index*, [Accessed 20 Oct., 2010].

³⁹¹ Leslie Stephen, 'Hours in a Library: Wordsworth's Ethics', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol., 34, Aug., 1876, p.207, (pp.206-226).

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p.206.

³⁹³ Leslie Stephen, 'On Some Necessary Truths (I)', *Mind*, Vol. 14, No. 53, Jan., 1889, p.50, (pp.50-65).

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.51.

in form so as to indefinitely increase our knowledge'.³⁹⁵ In 'Wordsworth's Ethics' Stephen reiterated the findings of his article for *Mind* in a less technical and more literary way.

Stephen argued that psychologists have shown that when 'a man describes (as he thinks) a mere sensation, and says, for example, "I see a house," he is really recording the result of a complex logical process'. 'Thus', he argues 'there is a logic implied even in the simplest observation and one which can be tested by mathematical rules as distinctly as a proposition in geometry'.³⁹⁶ Stephen privileged any man's thoughts with 'greater philosophical insight' 'whether embodied in symbols or worked out in syllogisms'. The 'greater poet', believed Stephen, is 'he [...] whose imagination is most transfused with reason'.³⁹⁷ Stephen understood that when 'we have to find a language for our emotions instead of our sensations, we generally express the result of an incomparably more complex set of intellectual operations'.³⁹⁸ As will be demonstrated further below Stephen's observations are played out by Wilde in his aphorisms and statements about art. In *Dorian Gray*, Wilde frequently describes a 'complex set of intellectual operations'. Take as an instance when Wilde writes that Dorian's 'forehead was throbbing with maddened nerves, and he felt wildly excited [...]'.³⁹⁹ Or, take the description 'From cell to cell of his brain crept the one thought; and the wild desire to live, most terrible of all man's appetites, quickened into force each trembling nerve and fibre'.⁴⁰⁰ These are both examples of sensations or complex mental phenomena being described. Moreover, the description of Sybil Vane's feeling of love for Dorian described above is a conscious representation of an emotive state. For Wilde, like Stephen, 'even when the equation has

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p.207.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.143.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p.153.

been brought to its lowest terms', 'the symbol is a symbol still.'⁴⁰¹ Wilde gained a philosophical understanding of language whilst an undergraduate at Oxford through his reading of Müller, Clifford, and Huxley.

Wilde copied down some of Clifford's observations from his essay 'The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences' in the Commonplace book. Wilde noted that 'no finite number of years can logically warrant the necessity and universality which we undoubtedly attribute to certain truths'. He exemplified his point arguing, 'the accumulated experience of my ancestors for one hundred and fifty million years is no more competent to tell me that the angles of any triangle are equal to two right angles under all possible circumstances, than my experience of the last five minutes'. Wilde referred to this 'universality' as an 'extra-logical psychological fact'. He explained further, the 'extra-logical psychological fact' is 'resultant of a purely automatic act of mind: it is not a logical conclusion from adequate premises'. Wilde basically states that certain truths are *a priori*. For him, 'a universal statement is really a particular statement about the nervous apparatus of thought'.⁴⁰² Following this reasoning, it is clear that Clifford's ideas are inherent in Wilde's statement from 'The Truth of Masks' that 'For in Art there is no such thing as a universal truth', or 'A Truth in Art is that whose contradictory is also true.'⁴⁰³ Clifford was conscious that the measurements, instruments, and language used by humans were only as universal as the mind that created them, and could not be trusted to be universally valid or true for all of eternity.

⁴⁰¹ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.161.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p.134.

⁴⁰³ Wilde, 'The Truth of Masks', *Intentions*, p.199.

Stephen's article 'Wordworth's Ethics' was written at the time Wilde was in Oxford in 1876. In addition to Clifford's essay Wilde may have also read Stephen's article. Regardless of whom Wilde had read, George Levine comments on the similarities between Wilde and Clifford's provocative statements calling Clifford the 'Oscar Wilde of the naturalists'.⁴⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Wilde also noted Huxley's view that a 'necessary truth' was '[A] a convention of language or, [B] propositions the negation of which is inconceivable – a denial of some fact of immediate consciousness'.⁴⁰⁵ Clifford's 'extra-logical psychological fact' and Huxley's two propositions are reincarnated in the following passage from 'The Decay of Lying':

At present, people see fogs, not because they are fogs,
but because poets and painters have taught them the
mysterious loveliness of such effects. There may have
been fogs for centuries in London. I dare say there were.
But no one saw them, and so we do not know anything
about them. They did not exist till Art had invented
them.⁴⁰⁶

This passage shows 'truth' to be a 'convention of language' because the existence of fogs cannot be verified or denied except through the very assertion of language. At the same time, the statement about art inventing fogs becomes a denial of a 'fact of immediate consciousness'.⁴⁰⁷ This is because 'fog' - even if replaced with another noun to describe similar metrological phenomena like mist, smoke, or plume – has always existed as a 'fact

⁴⁰⁴ George Levine, 'Scientific Discourse as an Alternative to Faith', *Victorian Faith in Crisis*, Richard J. Helstadler & Bernard Lightman., eds., (Hampshire & London: Macmillan Press, 1990) p.257.

⁴⁰⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.134.

⁴⁰⁶ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.233.

⁴⁰⁷ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.134.

of immediate consciousness' for humans. Furthermore, the statement about fogs being noticeable or not by Londoners cannot be 'proved' beyond one's own experience of seeing fogs. As such, the assertion that no one noticed fogs in London until artists drew on its incalculable affects in paintings and novels suggests that 'truth' becomes experience which can only be mediated symbolically. The perception of fog becomes an 'extra-logical psychological fact' because its existence depends on a subjective response which can only be validated through art, according to Gilbert.

Like Levine, Gowan Dawson compares Wilde to Clifford who also reversed the 'traditional meanings attached to particular forms of language'.⁴⁰⁸ Jonathan Dollimore states that creating binary oppositions can easily reinforce the order the binaries upheld. The inversion of binary opposites, Dollimore comments, may be perceived as less subversive because it fails to truly disrupt everyday thinking or create a new mode of thought or discourse.⁴⁰⁹ Levine, though, perceives that Clifford's lectures were designed to 'destabilise, to turn the world on its head, so that new possibilities, alternatives to traditional notions of faith and order might come in.'⁴¹⁰ This leads to the question of whether Wilde's manipulations of scientific theory can also be seen as a subversion of scientific expression which carried cultural authority. By conveying subjective 'laws' of aesthetic affect in a formulaic or syllogistic way, is Wilde undermining science, or is he associating himself with the scientific expressions which carry cultural credence? Clifford regarded the 'most abstract statements or propositions in science as bundles of

⁴⁰⁸ Gowan Dawson, *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p.168.

⁴⁰⁹ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) p.64.

⁴¹⁰ Levine, 'Scientific Discourse as an Alternative to Faith,' p.257.

hypothetical maxims packed into a portable shape and size'.⁴¹¹ Sully's adoption of axiomatic statements to explain his aesthetic laws is helpful to discuss how formulaic expression carried authority.

Take, for example, Sully's 'Recent Experiments with the Senses' (1872) published in the *Westminster Review*. The *Westminster Review* was considered to be 'innovative' and 'original'. It also made sure to keep faith in liberalism and human progress.⁴¹² Sully's piece was highly ambitious and followed the work of the German professor of physiology Hermon Von Helmholtz in his experiments on sensation and aesthetic affect. Sully argued that the observation of external stimulus on the sense organs, such as the time taken to become conscious of the sensation of sound at a given distance, could be empirically observed. So could the 'intensity or force of a sensation; its volume in correlation to the area of the sentient surface, and the number of nervous elements acted upon.'⁴¹³ Sully was aware that the methods of experimental science could not capture subjective aspects involved in aesthetic feeling. However, he composed axiomatic statements grounded in physics to render 'universal' statements about sensation. For example, he noted that the 'Intensity of a sensation' is purely a matter of subjective feeling. However, a more 'precise' and 'scientific' statement of the relation between nervous stimulation and sensation, body and mind, suggested Sully, can be expressed as '[...] the feeling of magnitude in our sensation varies with changes in the absolute magnitude of the object [...]'.⁴¹⁴ Sully constructed a mathematical 'law' through his formulaic statement about the 'feeling of sensation', as a way of organising bodily experience 'scientifically', even

⁴¹¹ W. K. Clifford, 'On the Scientific Basis of Morals,' *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 26, Sept., 1875, p.652, (pp.650-660).

⁴¹² *The Wellesley Index*, [Accessed 29 Oct., 2010].

⁴¹³ Sully, 'Recent Experiments with the Senses', p.172.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.173.

though terms such as 'sensation' were ambiguous and often ill defined as explained by Lewes. In his attempt to investigate the duration of 'after-affect' of different coloured lights, Sully formulated 'laws' using the geometric method of expression.

The role of the form of scientific expression cannot be overemphasised in the representation of Wilde's aesthetic formulations either. When asked to define aestheticism by a reporter for the *New York World* on his American tour, Wilde replied: 'It is the science through which men look after the correlation which exists in the arts. It is, to speak more exactly, the search after the secret of life.' The reporter pressed Wilde for further classification, asking: 'You spoke just now of aestheticism as philosophy. Is that your classification, of the *science* [*Italics mine*]?' Wilde responded: 'Assuredly. It is a study of what may be found in art and in nature. It is a pursuit of the secret of life. Whatever in art represents external truth expresses the great underlying truth of aestheticism.'⁴¹⁵ This last statement about the underlying 'truth' of aestheticism as synonymous with 'external truth' or the truths of science, is a far cry from the axiom 'A Truth in Art is that whose contradictory is also true'.⁴¹⁶ The two statements, Helfand and Smith would argue, harmoniously coexist in Wilde's Hegelian inspired 'system of contraries'. However, it is evident that Wilde is talking about 'external truth', as in the 'truths' of nature under the classification of 'science' in the interview, which is wholly different from the context of the second statement. The second statement 'A Truth in Art is that whose contradictory is also true' comes from 'The Truth of Masks' where Wilde confesses that he does not necessarily agree with everything that he has stated in the essay.⁴¹⁷ Understanding the

⁴¹⁵ 'Oscar Wilde's Arrival', *Oscar Wilde: Interviews and Recollections, Volume 1*, E. H. Mikhail, ed., (The Macmillan Press, 1979) pp. 38-39.

⁴¹⁶ Wilde, *Intentions*, p.199.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

context of the statements made by Wilde in relation to the broader subject under discussion is crucial to understanding Wilde's geometrically styled statements.

'A philosophy may, like Spinoza's be apparelled in the most technical and abstruse panoply of logic,' argued Stephen, 'and yet the total impression may stimulate a religious sentiment as effectively as any poetic or theosophic system'.⁴¹⁸ Spinoza expressed his doctrines in the axiomatic form. He systematically set out his observations under the headings 'definition', 'postulate', 'proposition', 'proof' and 'scholium'. Furthermore, scholars refer to his philosophy as 'naturalistic psychology'.⁴¹⁹ This is because he tried to understand 'the nature of particular emotions, their etiology, and to what extent they dominate us'.⁴²⁰ Wilde drew from Spinoza's principles in *De Profundis*. In fact, Wilde had read Spinoza at Oxford and disagreed with his monistic principle that thought and extension were co-existent. Spinoza's theory proposed to solve the 'insoluble mystery' of mind and matter by attributing 'one substance' to 'thought and extension'.⁴²¹ Wilde thought this notion preposterous and refuted Spinoza with Tyndall's argument presented in 'Science and Man' (1877).

Tyndall, noted Wilde, argued that 'raindrops which by the force of molecular action run into frost ferns on the window panes can hardly be said to have consciousness'.⁴²² This same thought crosses the mind of Dorian who asks 'If thought could exercise an influence upon a living organism, might not thought exercise an

⁴¹⁸ Stephen, 'Wordsworth's Ethics', p.206.

⁴¹⁹ Benedict Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, Seymour Fieldman., ed., Trans. Samuel Shirley. (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1982) p.130.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p.17.

⁴²¹ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.165.

⁴²² Ibid.

influence upon dead and inorganic things? ⁴²³ Wilde often transcribed and transported scientific ideas into his creative works and verbalised these ideas in interviews. In an interview for the *Philadelphia Press*, Wilde asserted that 'So far as science comes into contact with our school we love its practical side; but we think it absurd to seek to make the material include the spiritual, to make the body mean the soul, to say that one emotion is only a secretion of sugar, and another nothing but a contraction of the spine.'⁴²⁴ Here Wilde again rejects the monism promoted by Spinoza that saw mind/soul and body as one substance.

As Stephen argued, even though Spinoza's propositions were composed from an 'abstruse panoply of logic' Spinoza conceived a corporeality which physical science precluded in its geometrical expression. Wilde may have disagreed with Spinoza's conception of mind and matter, but he appreciated Spinoza's embracement of the spiritual. Take for instance 'Proposition 5' which is italicised by Spinoza in his chapter 'Of the Nature and Origin of the Emotions'. He writes: '*Things are of a contrary nature, that is, unable to subsist in the same subject, to the extent that one can destroy the other.*' ⁴²⁵ Compare this with Wilde's statement in *De Profundis* 'Hate, you had to learn, is, intellectually considered, the eternal negation. Considered from the point of view of the emotions it is a form of atrophy, and kills everything but itself.'⁴²⁶ Or take Spinoza's Proposition 43 and 44 'Hatred is increased by reciprocal hatred, and is on the other hand destroyed by love. Hatred that is fully overcome by love passes into love, and the love will

⁴²³ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.87.

⁴²⁴ Oscar Wilde: *Interviews and Recollections, Volume 1*, p.45.

⁴²⁵ Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, p.109.

⁴²⁶ Wilde, '*Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis*', p.71.

therefore be greater than if it had not been preceded by hatred.'⁴²⁷ Spinoza and Wilde's statements are strikingly similar in their form and content. The context of *De Profundis* is long and complex. The manuscript was published posthumously. Wilde wrote the piece whilst at Reading Gaol over an extended period of time. Scholars like Ellmann have regarded *De Profundis* as a 'letter' to Alfred Douglas. More recently, Guy and Small argue that Wilde was indecisive about the form his feelings about his imprisonment and relationship with Douglas should take. For Guy and Small the so-called letter was contrived to inspire sympathy, and control subsequent biographical narratives that would dominate Wilde criticism thereafter.⁴²⁸ The above quotations from Wilde's text were directed to Alfred Douglas, to whom the document was addressed.

In expressing his version of events Wilde drew from Spinoza's geometrical statements to substantiate his views. Thus, like the propositions quoted from Spinoza above, Wilde spoke in a philosophic 'truth telling' tone when he stated:

In you hate was always stronger than love. Your hatred of your father was such that it outstripped, overthrew and overshadowed your love of me [...] you did not realise that there was no room for both passions in the same soul. They cannot live together. [...] The faculty in you which love would have fostered, hate poisoned and paralysed.⁴²⁹

Wilde even acknowledged that his observations had a 'psychological basis':

⁴²⁷ Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, p.109.

⁴²⁸ Josephine Guy and Ian Small, 'Reading De Profundis', *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2006, p.147, (pp.123-149).

⁴²⁹ Wilde, '*Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis*', p.66.

Do you recognize now that when I described [hate] as an atrophy destructive of everything but itself, I was *scientifically* describing a real *psychological* fact [*italics mine*].⁴³⁰

From this above quotation it is apparent that Wilde draws from the unclenching 'authority' of scientific language to substantiate his perception of the events between him and Douglas. The most fascinating part about the above quotation is that Wilde underscores the 'fact' that he is '*scientifically* describing a real *psychological fact*' [*italics mine*]. It is difficult to establish what Wilde meant by 'scientifically' describing a 'psychological fact'. He could be referring to the propositional or 'scientific' form of his Spinoza inspired statements. Nevertheless, why does Wilde need to explicate that he is 'scientifically' describing a 'psychological *fact*' when a 'fact' is indisputable [*italics mine*]? If Wilde's phraseology reveals anything it is that the foundations of psychological nomenclature were still shaky and striving for scientific acceptance. But, also, his appeal to scientific language and form was motivated by the lure of its authoritative credulity at least this was the case in *De Profundis*.

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of art.⁴³¹

The above discussion has attempted to demonstrate that it is too reductive to suggest that Wilde simply assimilated the language and conceptual terms of psychology. The comparison of his writings with the articles of Courtney, Lewes, Allen, and Sully has demonstrated that Wilde's engagement with psychological nomenclature is more profound than critics have thus far documented. Wilde understood that the discussions

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p.72.

⁴³¹ Oscar Wilde, 'A Preface to 'Dorian Gray'', *Fortnightly Review*, vol., 49, Mar., 1891, p.481, (pp.480-481).

facilitated amongst psychologists about the representation of mental states for instance, constituted the very subject matter of the literary critic and artist. Secondly, because Wilde understood the psychological nature of his role as a writer whose job it was to manipulate perception, and aesthetic response, he had no problem in challenging the views of his fellow contributors.

Wilde exchanged views on psychology with other journalists like Courtney who discussed the progress of psychology in connection with Spencer, Bain and Lewes. Lewes's influence on Wilde's conception of language, nomenclature and representation is vital to Wilde's aesthetics. His adaptation of the strictures and structures of phrenology to communicate psychological concepts like the 'aesthetic sense', or the 'aesthetic faculty' shows that like Lewes, Wilde accepted aesthetics as a legitimate concern for the literary critic. While Allen and Sully strove for an empirical aesthetics, Wilde acknowledged the scope of sciences like phrenology which offered the aesthetician a method of naming and ordering abstract concepts or human attributes. Wilde actively tried to shape a psychological literary criticism. Even though, as Small states, Wilde and Pater refused to discuss the 'object of study of their particular discipline', Wilde's methods of discussing the art-object were not too different from Allen and Sully's who both used faculty psychology in a less conscious manner than Wilde.⁴³²

Thirdly, Wilde's epigrammatic or geometric statements were influenced by the formulaic methods of scientific expression. As Small states, throughout his writings Wilde desired to 'redefine the relationship between authority and orthodoxy'.⁴³³ The geometric method of expression was seen to entail an inherent logic. It was used to convey 'laws'

⁴³² Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.128.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p.116.

that dictated the fundamental 'facts' of the discipline in question. With the philosophical understanding that any written statement made was self supportive, Wilde shaped his aesthetic views in the form of the syllogism. His use of axiomatic statements show that he shared with Stephen the view that philosophy, or the expression of psycho-physiological phenomena was best suited to the craft of the imaginative writer or poet. Lastly, if as Small states, by the end of the 1890s institutions like Oxford University wanted to stamp out impressionist criticism, then so too did mainstream psychology, which was becoming increasingly empirical, want to dispose of psychological aesthetics. The next chapter will focus on the nexus of writers engaged in discussing psychological aesthetics with Wilde taking centre stage in the debate.

Chapter three: The Psychological Aestheticians

But, to get rid of the details of history, which are always wearisome, and usually inaccurate.⁴³⁴

The previous chapter explored Wilde's engagement with disputes over the language and nomenclature of psychological literature. Chapter three will delve deeper into the contextual background comprising Wilde's engagement with psychology by examining his social and intellectual interaction with fellow aesthetic theorists. This chapter will demonstrate how Wilde's role as a reviewer for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the connections he made as a journalist are important to his psycho-aesthetic theories. Aesthetic theorists debated incessantly what kinds of forms, colours, words and sounds could create a specific aesthetic affect or mental state. Aestheticians attempted to investigate the processes by which an aesthetic affect was created, and whether these processes could be standardised or 'scientized' into psycho-aesthetic 'laws'. Wilde's seemingly abstract references to colour, form, and harmony will be examined as part of the literature of psychological aesthetics. I argue that psychological aesthetics is a crucial context in Wilde studies, but remains relatively unexplored by scholars interested in his art theories.

The term 'psychological aesthetician' was originally coined by Allen in a publication for *Mind* entitled 'Aesthetic Evolution in Man' (1880). In the article, Allen investigated the development of the aesthetic sensibility as it 'evolved' from 'primitive' society to 'cultivated' European society. By analysing the aesthetic preferences of different races and cultures Allen believed his approach more universal than that of

⁴³⁴ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.136.

‘professors of art’ like ‘Mr Ruskin’ and ‘Mr Poynter’. Edward J. Poynter was the first Slade professor of art at University College, London. He was also an artist who painted furniture and designed stained glass.⁴³⁵ This older generation of critics, argued Allen, were ‘too fond of confining themselves to the very highest feelings of the most cultivated classes’.⁴³⁶ The ‘psychological aesthetician’, stated Allen, examined ‘those simpler and more universal feelings which are common to all the race, and which form the groundwork for every mode of aesthetic sensibility’.⁴³⁷ In short, Allen hoped that the ‘psychological aesthetician’ would offer a scientific understanding of how the art-object was constructed.

The basis of every psychological aesthetician’s approach was rooted in an examination of the componential elements of the art-object. Form, colour and sound were the constituents of aesthetic emotion because perception was channelled through the sense of touch, the eye which perceived colour and form, and the ear which sensed sound. According to the evolutionist aesthetics expressed by Allen, ‘beautiful forms, colours, and songs’ dictated the preferences of the animal and human kingdoms. To Allen, aesthetic development resulted from natural selection and sexual selection. These two theories were fundamental to the psychological aesthetics disseminated by Allen, Sully, and Wilde.

In his book *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877) Allen applied psychological and evolutionary theories to poetry, literature, painting, sculpture, music and architecture. *Physiological Aesthetics* was self-financed and made Allen, who always strove to make a

⁴³⁵ ODNB online, [Accessed 18 Apr., 2011].

⁴³⁶ Grant Allen, ‘Aesthetic Evolution in Man’, *Mind*, Vol. 5, No. 20, Oct., 1880, p.446, (pp.445-464).

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

living for 'Nelly and the boys', £50 worse off. Allen struggled to make a living for him and his family throughout most of his career. He managed to sustain a steady income through his periodical contributions of which thousands exist.⁴³⁸ Nevertheless, *Physiological Aesthetics* had made his name known 'in a very modest way', and enabled Allen to popularise aesthetic theory, as well as earn money as a regular contributor to numerous periodicals.⁴³⁹ Almost immediately after the publication of *Physiological Aesthetics*, Leslie Stephen accepted two of Allen's papers, 'Carving a Cocoa-nut' (1877) and 'Aesthetic Analysis of an Obelisk' (1877) for the *Cornhill Magazine*.

In his articles and in the book, Allen aimed to create a formula that would equip the psychologist with an empirical method to help deduce questions such as why certain colours created a particular affect. Why certain forms, lines and curves were more pleasing to the eye? Why one texture was preferred over another, or why certain musical notes summoned a specific emotion? *Physiological Aesthetics* maintained that art could elicit five types of bodily response; mechanical, heat, chemical, electrical, and æthereal undulations. Allen set out to answer those questions 'dismissed by our great living authority', by which he meant Ruskin, like 'Why we receive pleasure from some forms and not from others'. Ruskin argued that such a question was 'no more to be asked or answered than why we like sugar and dislike wormwood'.⁴⁴⁰ Allen spoke for the psycho-physiological approach to aesthetics, or the 'new aesthetics' when he declared that a 'new school of aesthetics has become inevitable', and that 'art-products' are now to be

⁴³⁸ Edward Clodd, *Grant Allen: A Memoir*, (London: Grant Richards, 1900) p.65.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, 'preface'.

judged in the 'sober light of actual evolution', and not by the 'transcendental' and 'dogmatic' principles of Lessing, or Winckelmann.⁴⁴¹

Gagnier credits Allen's *Physiological Aesthetics* as the single greatest influence on developments in late nineteenth-century aestheticism.⁴⁴² However, the crucial heated debates fought out in the periodical press around aesthetics, psychology, and literary criticism are not addressed in her examination.⁴⁴³ Wilde's relation to his fellow aestheticians may appear inconspicuous. This is because he is too often grouped amongst the 'Decadents', or treated as a singular figure standing in defiance against his Victorian counterparts. Another reason why Wilde's relation to the psychological aestheticians has been neglected is because he only ever explicitly referred to aesthetic theories by Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle's *Treatise on Poetry* is 'one perfect little work of aesthetic criticism'.⁴⁴⁴ Moreover, Plato 'had dealt with many definitely artistic subjects, such as the importance of unity in the work of art, the necessity for tone and harmony, the aesthetic value of appearances, the relations of the visible arts to the external world, and the relations of fact to fiction'.⁴⁴⁵ All of these 'artistic subjects' were considered from the psycho-physiological perspective by Wilde and his contemporaries such as Allen and Sully.

All this made me feel as if I were in the innermost circle of men of letters.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴¹ Grant Allen, 'The Growth of Sculpture', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 42, Sept., 1880, p.273 (pp.273-293).

⁴⁴² Regenia Gagnier, 'Production, Reproduction, and Pleasure', *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, Richard Dellamora, ed., (Chicago & London: University of Chicago, 1999) p.130.

⁴⁴³ Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000) p.136.

⁴⁴⁴ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.132.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ James Sully, *My Life & Friends*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin LTD, 1918) pp.134-135.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* was an evening paper consisting of a mixture of political and social commentary, literary reviews, Occasional Notes, advertisements and other fashionable tit bits. Sully and Allen both worked under John Morley's editorship from 1880. Morley was interested in Sully's experiences at Göttingen where he studied philosophy under German professors. Sully's reviews for the paper were anonymous and unfortunately remain so. In his biography Sully reveals that he wrote on a variety of subjects including the 'newer German philosophy', and political issues such as the 'recent advances of Prussia'.⁴⁴⁷ Allen wrote about a variety of subjects including Herbert Spencer whose theories and principles of psychology were highly influential to a whole generation of aesthetic theorists. Morley gradually forwarded Allen in the *Pall Mall Gazette* until he was writing 'turnovers'. A 'turnover' was the article following the header on the front page which had to be written in a style appealing enough to encourage the reader to 'turn the page over', and continue reading.⁴⁴⁸ It is unclear when Allen and Sully met, but they had numerous mutual acquaintances like the anthropologist Edward Clodd who wrote a posthumous biography of Allen.⁴⁴⁹

Sully described Allen as a 'prolific talker' with a mind 'stored with various and curious lore'.⁴⁵⁰ Allen's 'astonishing' literary output, Sully believed, was due to an 'exceptional versatility of mind'.⁴⁵¹ Sully and Allen contributed articles and fiction to the same periodicals. Their publications for the *Cornhill Magazine* under Stephen's editorship were penned during a critical time in the debates around psychology and aesthetics. From October 1879 up until the late 1880s the *Cornhill Magazine* published a string of

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p.134.

⁴⁴⁸ Peter Morton, *"The Busiest Man in England": Grant Allen and the Writing Trade; 1875-1900*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) p.75.

⁴⁴⁹ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.197.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p.272.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

articles on the subject. It therefore played a special part in the dissemination of psychological aesthetics. The majority of these pieces were by Sully and Allen who were simultaneously contributing to *Mind*. Hence, they moved in the same kind of circles, although Sully tapped into a more distinguished social group than Allen.

Sully's work for the *Saturday Review* made him acquainted with the jurist Frederick Pollock who also wrote papers for the Royal Society.⁴⁵² Sully's entry into the Savile Club enlarged his literary and scientific circle. He had met the mathematician William Kingdon Clifford at the Saville, who later asked him to contribute to a symposium of savants and thinkers.⁴⁵³ Clifford's theories were critical to Wilde's thinking as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. Sully was friends with Robert Louis Stevenson and had made the acquaintance of George Meredith, the latter of whom held Sully 'spellbound by his brilliant tabletalk'.⁴⁵⁴ George Henry Lewes invited Sully to the Sunday gatherings at the Priory where he met George Eliot as well as Charles Darwin.⁴⁵⁵ It is important to remember that while this chapter focuses on the context of psychological aesthetics, both Allen and Sully wrote on an array of subjects. Allen was a polymath. He wrote about art, mineralogy, ethnology, physiology, ethics, folklore, as well as numerous novels and short stories. Sully was also versatile and penned many reviews. He researched on dreams, baby science, and optics. He also contributed fiction to *Harper's Magazine* and the *Cornhill Magazine*.⁴⁵⁶

The exact details of Wilde's appointment at the *Pall Mall Gazette* are unknown. Anya Clayworth suggests that it may have followed on from his letters to the editor about

⁴⁵² ODNB Online. [Accessed 14 June 2011].

⁴⁵³ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.249.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p.133.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p.164.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p.197.

dress after his lecture on dress reform was reported by the paper on 2 October 1884. Clayworth claims that Wilde had no contact with the paper prior to the correspondence and 'seems to have had no social connections that would have created an opening for him'.⁴⁵⁷ According to Guy and Small though, from the autumn of 1879 to 1881, Wilde 'energetically' socialised in journalistic circles and in London society. Moreover, Wilde's social and journalistic connections would have been widened through his brother Willie, and their mother Lady Wilde, who both also took to reviewing in London.⁴⁵⁸

Wilde's attended Stuart Cumberland's 'Muscle-Reading' demonstration in May 1884. Cumberland's demonstration was held at the Northumberland Street offices of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. This proves that Wilde had personally met the editors and staff five months prior to the letter he wrote to the paper about dress.⁴⁵⁹ The demonstration was also reported in the issue dated 24 May 1884, and is the only record of a meeting between Allen and Wilde. Other notaries such as Edwin Ray Lankester, Edmund Gosse, Andrew Carnegie and members of the editorial staff were also invited to witness the evening's demonstrations. The physicist John Tyndall, it was reported, could not make the event due to other appointments. Cumberland claimed to 'read' an individual's thoughts through the muscular contractions of their body. He argued, 'If a person will concentrate his or her mind entirely and earnestly on a given object, I claim that the thought is conveyed to any person of sufficient quickness of perception by the action of

⁴⁵⁷ Anya Clayworth, *Oscar Wilde: Selected Journalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p.xi.

⁴⁵⁸ Guy & Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession*, p.27.

⁴⁵⁹ Anon., 'Muscle-Reading by Mr Stuart Cumberland,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 39, No. 5994, 24 May 1884, p.2.

the physical system, which, I maintain, is the only channel through which thought can possibly be conveyed.⁴⁶⁰ Cumberland claimed to follow the deductive method.

To start the evening's demonstration, Cumberland, aware of Wilde's celebrity status, invited him first out of all the audience members to be 'operated upon'.⁴⁶¹ Wilde sensibly shook his head and declared that he would not be a good subject. Instead, he watched audience members such as Lankester join in the experiment, and also witnessed the spectacle of Allen being dragged through the streets by Cumberland, in order to find the object which Allen had volunteered to hide outside the precincts of the offices. Half way through his presentation, Cumberland needed to take a break. The interval was filled by Wilde who discoursed 'in his free-and-easy way on art, poetry and culture'. A 'lecture on art from one so distinguished and eccentric as Mr. Oscar Wilde', remarked the reporter in an account of the event published the day after, 'is worth hearing'.⁴⁶²

The anonymous reporter confessed that 'modest decorations' were 'put up to hide the inkpots, the paste and the scissors' in the office. Wilde 'was disappointed' with these and the 'arrangement of a few simple flowers of the field and a striking harmony in curtains which were brought in for the occasion'. Wilde found the decorations of the office 'absurd' and 'unworthy of the dark ages' because 'there is no system obeyed'. 'One thought, like harmony in music, should pervade the whole.' 'No', continued Wilde in disgust of the curtains, 'they show no soul.' 'Can you exist without a soul? No soul, no harmony, and no -"sunflowers"' suggested someone. 'No. A flower is but an incident', retorted Wilde.⁴⁶³ Allen had therefore heard Wilde lecture on aesthetics and would have

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

likely exchanged views. Furthermore, many of Wilde's notions of 'harmony' and 'system' would have struck a familiar cord with Allen who encouraged a systematic approach to everyday aesthetics like house decoration.

While there is a record of Allen and Wilde's meeting there is none regarding Sully and Wilde's social or working relationship. The closest we have to any reference to Wilde by Sully can be found in Sully's article for *Mind* entitled 'George Eliot's Art' (1881), which he praises for its portrayal of character psychology. In the essay, Sully expressed his attitude towards aestheticism. He argued that 'Art for art's sake' wrongly constructed art as a metaphysical absolute. Art, he stated, could not be comprehended as 'a thing-in-itself', or treated as an entity disengaged from life.⁴⁶⁴ Sully maintained art should be examined as it was 'constituted by its relations to human susceptibilities', and not be conceived as an abstraction. For Sully, this meant that art should be considered in connection with thought, feeling and social interaction. He stated that in deducing the meaning of an art-object the aesthetic theorist should ask 'Whose feelings in particular are we to set up as determining art?' To this question Sully replied that it was the 'feelings of the many sided catholic man', and the feelings of the 'most highly developed man' that needed to be considered.⁴⁶⁵ On the other hand, Wilde calmly maintained that the 'art for art's sake' 'shibboleth', as Sully termed it, 'is not meant to express the final cause of art but is merely a formula of creation'.⁴⁶⁶ This notion of 'art for art's sake' being a 'formula' will be examined in connection to Wildean ethics in chapter five.

⁴⁶⁴ Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', p.392.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ [Oscar Wilde], 'The Letters of a Great Woman', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 43, No. 6515, 6 Mar., 1886, pp. 4-5.

In an interview for the *New York Herald* the reporter asked Wilde 'Do you [...] call aestheticism a philosophy?' Wilde responded, 'Most certainly it is a philosophy. It is the study of what may be found in art. It is the pursuit of the secret of life. Whatever there is in all art that represents the eternal truth is an expression of the great underlying truth. So far aestheticism may be held to be the study of truth in art'. The reporter pressed Wilde for further clarification. 'Aestheticism,' stated the reporter, 'has been understood in America to be a blind groping after something which is entirely intangible. Can you, as the exponent of aestheticism, give an interpretation which shall serve to give a more respectable standing to the word?' Wilde replied:

I do not know that I can give a much better definition than I have already given. But whatever has been in poetry since the time of Keats; whatever there has been in art that has served to develop the underlying principles of truth; whatever there has been in science that has served to show the individual the meaning of truth as expressed to humanity - that has been an exponent of aestheticism.⁴⁶⁷

In this interview Wilde expressed the notion that there were underlying laws of nature upholding his aesthetic philosophy. As will be demonstrated below, these were precisely those 'laws' that Sully, who criticised aestheticism for its 'metaphysical' construction of art, also theorised about.

Given Wilde and Sully's contributions to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and other periodicals like the *Fortnightly Review*, as well as their shared literary circles and

⁴⁶⁷ Anon., 'An American Interviewer and Mr. Oscar Wilde', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 35, No. 5270, 17 Jan., 1882, p.11.

connections like Allen, it is not improbable that they had met, or debated on aesthetic issues. It is unclear when Sully retired from reviewing for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In his biography he suggests that he was still reviewing for the paper when Stephen decided to relinquish his editorship of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1882.⁴⁶⁸ Nevertheless, as Sully and Wilde were employed at the offices of the *Pall Mall Gazette* at the same time they might have known one another given they were both reviewers. As a reader of newspapers and periodicals Wilde must have come across Sully's articles. Sully's *Outlines of Psychology* (1884) was anonymously reviewed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and was described as a 'valuable' and 'lucid' handbook 'to the consideration of the noble army of budding psychologists'.⁴⁶⁹ It is also reasonable to believe that Sully, who was well read in the literature of his day, had read Wilde's critical and creative works if not his reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Furthermore, Sully contributed to the *Saturday Review* from 1871 for which Wilde reviewed in the 1880s. In reflecting on his reviews for the *Saturday Review*, Sully spoke of the 'intrinsic value' of the seemingly 'trivial' articles. These articles, 'forced' upon him 'the lesson of simplicity and terseness of expression and of touching subjects lightly'.⁴⁷⁰ John Wyse Jackson says that Wilde's reviews were light in tone, and pointed out the felicities in novels and poems, 'in order to make the reader laugh and not to make the reader cry'.⁴⁷¹ Like Sully, Wilde would often comment on the bad literature he was expected to review. His disdain was evident in his direct manner of expression and

⁴⁶⁸ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.192.

⁴⁶⁹ Anon., 'Mr Sully's Psychology', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 39, No. 5960, 15 Apr., 1884, p.5.

⁴⁷⁰ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.137.

⁴⁷¹ *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea: The Rare Oscar Wilde*, John Wyse Jackson, ed., (London: Fourth Estate, 1991) p xi. 7

sardonic tone.⁴⁷² Nevertheless, like Sully, Wilde would have learned important lessons about style, affect, and reader response.

It is important to mention that from the very inception of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the editors understood that the materiality of the paper, no less than the stylistic finesse of its writers, could control and facilitate reader response.⁴⁷³ Having the reader engage with the content was a priority for Morley's successor W. T. Stead, who invented methods of educing response such as the use of illustrations in reports and the 'interview' technique.⁴⁷⁴ Under the editorship of Morley, the *Pall Mall Gazette* was criticised for being 'too incessantly strenuous- earnest, etc', making readers ask for more 'relief'.⁴⁷⁵ Under Stead, the paper became renowned for hard-hitting headlines and sensational stories.

It is highly significant that three aesthetic theorists all reviewed for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the 1880s. Wilde, Sully, and Allen were erudite and inquisitive about aesthetic response. In the 'preface' to *Physiological Aesthetics*, Allen had thanked Bain and Spencer for their influence on his researches. Bain's *The Emotions and the Will* (1859) was a seminal textbook and one of the first to thoroughly treat the realm of the 'Ideal' in relation to psychology or physiology.⁴⁷⁶ Wilde came across Bain's text at Oxford. *The Emotions and the Will* was recommended in his exam preparation guide by A. M.

⁴⁷² One example is the review 'A Cheap Edition of a Great Man'. Wilde states 'Considering the small size of the volume, and the consequently limited number of extracts, the amount of misquotation is almost incredible, and puts all recent achievements in this sphere of literature into the shade.' Wilde continues, 'there is not one single poem that does not display some careless error or some stupid misprint'. *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 6890, 18 Apr., 1887, p.5.

⁴⁷³ Anon., 'Character Sketch: February: The Pall Mall Gazette,' *Review of Reviews*, Vol. 7, Feb., 1893, pp. 143, 146.

⁴⁷⁴ John Stokes, *In the Nineties*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheafsteaf, 1989) p.21.

⁴⁷⁵ Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T Stead*, (London: J. Cape, 1925) p.85.

⁴⁷⁶ Rick Rylance, "'The Disturbing Anarchy of Investigation': Psychological Debate and the Victorian Periodical', p.242.

Stedman.⁴⁷⁷ Furthermore, Sully was personally acquainted with Bain who had asked him to contribute to *Mind*.⁴⁷⁸ In *The Emotions and the Will*, Bain stated that the 'connexion of Mind and Body needs various laws for its exhaustive statement.'⁴⁷⁹ Bain argued that numerous psycho-physiological laws had a direct bearing on art. These 'Laws' included the 'Law of Ideal Pleasure', the 'Law of Vitality' and the 'Law of alternate and proportionate Stimulation'. Other general psychological laws included 'The Law of Relativity', 'The Law of Diffusion', 'The law of Harmony' and 'The Law of Proportion' among an endless list of others.⁴⁸⁰ These kinds of 'laws' were not only internalised in Wilde's reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but he continued to appropriate them throughout his writing.

The 'Principle of Relief', or 'Law of Alternate and Proportionate Stimulation' as expressed by Bain, seemed to govern the positioning of the reviews by Allen, Sully and Wilde in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We know that Allen penned 'turnovers'. Moreover, if Sully's work for the *Saturday Review* is anything to go by he may have also written 'middles' for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. 'Middles' usually followed the political leaders and preceded the book reviews. Wilde's book reviews frequently appeared on page three, or five and would have followed on from Allen's 'turnover' and 'Sully's 'middles'.⁴⁸¹ A typical *Pall Mall Gazette* issue from the sample examined between 1884 and 1886 would include a political headline like 'Hanging Up the Home Rule', followed by 'Occasional Notes', and then by lighter material such as 'The Trade in Cut Flowers' or 'About Green

⁴⁷⁷ Smith, 'Wilde in the Bodleian,' p.287.

⁴⁷⁸ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.163.

⁴⁷⁹ Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and The Will*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875) p.3.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p.228.

⁴⁸¹ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.137.

Tea'. Next would appear a humorously critical book review by Wilde such as 'Mr Conway's Reminders'.⁴⁸²

The headline for the issue dated 27 March 1885 is a good illustration of the paper's format. The sensational headline reads 'Provoking War'. The article starts:

The calling out of the reserves looks bad, but they will probably be needed, even if the Afghan Frontier were amicably settled tomorrow. If we really have to fight Russia to any purpose at any time, we shall have to resort to much more effective measures than the mere mastery of 70,000 reservists [...].⁴⁸³

Such doom and gloom is followed with a colonial piece entitled: 'Reminiscences of the Umballa Durbar'. Given the serious content of the former piece this second article is written purely to provide the reader with the much needed light relief that must follow the disturbing headline.

Written in an Asiatic style to mirror its descriptions, 'Miss C. G. Gordon Cumming' reminisces about the ceremonial occasion held sixteen years ago between Lord Mayo and Shere Ali Khan, the reigning Ameer in Rawal Pindi. The article abounds in baroque style descriptions:

Some of the state horses were partly dyed pink, other stained russet with henna, a few were adorned with anklets of gold and gems. Even the huge anklets of the state elephants were circled with bangles of silver

⁴⁸² *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 43, No. 6515, 1 Feb., 1886.

⁴⁸³ [Anon], 'Provoking War,' *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 41, No. 6253, 27 Mar., 1885, p.1.

encrusted with precious stones! [...] And at every movement of head or body the sunlight flashes from dazzling gems –large emeralds, rubies, diamonds, pearls – [...]. One fine old gentleman attracted a special admiration. He was robed in green velvet, and his show of diamonds though moderate in quantity was beyond price. Some of the others were like locomotive diamond mines. One whose head-dress blazed with gems was dressed in dark green and brown velvets richly embroidered, and even his attendants were draped in costly Indian shawl fabric.⁴⁸⁴

The bejewelled descriptions relate to events from sixteen years ago and can therefore hardly be called ‘hot off the press’ news like the headline. Nonetheless, this example gives a good indication of how important light relief was to the editor and his audience. When news became ‘too incessantly strenuous’, Stead needed to make sure that he could provide his readers with the light relief that would encourage the reader to ‘turnover’. John Stokes observes that Wilde’s unsigned reviews were inevitably angled towards representing the editorial or proprietorial opinion. Moreover, Stokes insists that even Wilde’s style of writing is underwritten by the strictures imposed by the editorial policy of the paper. It is for this reason, states Stokes, that Wilde and his co-reviewers George Bernard Shaw and William Archer were accused of writing each other’s pieces.⁴⁸⁵

The materiality of the paper and the structure of its contents provide an understanding of

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Stokes, *In the Nineties*, p.150.

Wilde's reviews in relation to the whole paper, and the significance of his reviews to the 'principle of relief'. As chapter four will demonstrate, Wilde appropriated the 'principle of relief' in his creative writings.

Who wants to be consistent?⁴⁸⁶

The above section has attempted to show the interrelations that may have existed between Wilde, Allen and Sully. I have also suggested that the stylistic techniques and methods Wilde used in his reviews were part of a conscious journalistic attempt by Wilde's editors and co-workers to utilise theories in psychology about audience and affect. The following section will examine Wilde, Allen and Sully's approach to literary criticism and aesthetics in order to demonstrate the interconnections between literary criticism and psychological aesthetics. Furthermore, the discussion below will highlight the disagreements between Wilde, Allen and Sully, and the important influence of Lewes on their outlook.

In 'Carving a Cocoa-nut', Allen focused on differentiating the 'two very different departments of literature' which he saw as being 'jumbled up' at present. The one was art-criticism 'whose function is purely regulative or directive'. The second was 'the philosophy of beauty or aesthetics whose function is purely speculative or theoretical'.⁴⁸⁷ The 'infantile' state of the admixture of the two, argued Allen, reflected how practice had never been separated from theory.⁴⁸⁸ According to Allen, the 'business of art criticism' should be to say 'this is pretty,' 'this is ugly,' but the 'business of aesthetics' should be to say, 'this is why people think one thing pretty', 'that is why people call another ugly'. The

⁴⁸⁶ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.36.

⁴⁸⁷ Grant Allen, 'Carving a Coca-nut', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 35, Oct., 1877, p.461 (pp.461-472).

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.461.

‘aesthetic philosopher’ was ‘to account for the positive facts which he finds in the data before him’. The ‘aesthetic writer’, on the other hand, was ‘merely to explain practise’.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, Allen asserted that the ‘[...] critic and the psychologist have each his own proper sphere, and only harm can come from the intrusion of the one upon the domain of the other’.⁴⁹⁰ Wilde and Sully disagreed with Allen’s rigid classifications and rejected the separation of aesthetics from art criticism.

In a review of a biography of the impressionist painter James McNeill Whistler, for the middle-class magazine the *Court and Society Review*, Wilde discussed the inherently psychological nature of literature. In the review, Wilde described the advantage of literature over painting in its handling of ‘psychology’. He argued that literature included ‘Life in its full entirety; not only the world that men look at, but the world that men listen to also; not merely the momentary grace of form, or the transient gladness of colour, but the whole sphere of feeling, the perfect cycle of thought, the growth and progress of passion, the spiritual development of the soul’.⁴⁹¹ Perhaps Wilde intentionally derided the art of painting because of personal grievances between him and Whistler which will be detailed further below. Even if this was the case Wilde still explicates the full psychological or perceptual experience of the reader. Moreover, his remarks are noticeably similar to Sully’s observations in ‘George Eliot’s Art’.

In discussing the psychological elements in ‘George Eliot’s Art’ Sully described ‘psychological analysis in fiction’ as ‘the unfolding of the inner germs of action, the spreading out before the eye of those complicated activities of imagination and desire,

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p.462.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p.467.

⁴⁹¹ [Wilde], ‘The Butterfly’s Boswell,’ p.378.

impulse and counter impulse which are conduct in process of becoming'.⁴⁹² Sully was writing in 1881 and Wilde in 1887. Their quotes refer to the same subject of study and are therefore to be read as contributions to the same literature. Both Wilde and Sully were keen to stress the notion of 'growth' or, the 'process of becoming' through the reading experience. Clifford's discussion of character development in his lecture 'On Some Conditions of Mental Development' (1868) may help elucidate both Sully and Wilde's remarks. Clifford stated:

Is it not regarded as the greatest stroke of art in a novelist that he should be able not merely to draw a character at any given time, but also merely to sketch the growth of it through the changing circumstances of life? ⁴⁹³

Perhaps Wilde and Sully's reference to 'growth and progress of passion', and 'conduct in process of becoming' refer to the evolving psychology of character portrayals, and also to the psychological evolution experienced by the reader. In his lecture, Clifford explained how 'every circumstance, however trivial, that in any way affects the mind, leaves its mark [...] And the sum of all these marks is precisely what we call character, which is thus itself a history of the entire previous life of the individual; which is therefore continually being added to, continually growing, continually in a state of change'.⁴⁹⁴ Both Wilde and Sully suggest that literature can plot out the development of thought, or the growth of an individual's emotional capacity. In the fiction of George Eliot, Sully argues that a character's development can be examined and measured and psychological truths

⁴⁹² Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', p.392.

⁴⁹³ W. K. Clifford, 'On Some Conditions of Mental Development', *Lectures and Essays*, Vol. 1, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879) p.77.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

uncovered. The art-object allowed for human thought to be examined in a way that was impossible to do when examining the trajectory of thought in an individual which was characterised by sudden, unpredictable shifts that required time to be comprehended as a series of cause and consequence.

‘Recent Experiments with the Senses’ (1872), published in the *Westminster Review*, was one of Sully’s earlier approaches to founding a scientific basis for understanding sense-perception. In the article, he argued that the simple ‘observation of our sensations [...] tells us very little about them’. According to him, data collected by measuring the variations in intensity, and duration of a sensation, could help towards establishing ‘an exact law’.⁴⁹⁵ By the time Sully published ‘Art and Psychology’ in 1876, he included the art critic into his discussion who had been excluded, if not criticised for his subjective stance in ‘Recent Experiments with the Senses’. Every ‘far-reaching critic’, argued Sully ‘is an unconscious, if not a conscious, psychologist’. Furthermore, a ‘critic who has principles which he understands is one who aims more or less distinctly at connecting the rightness of art with certain fixed conditions of human emotion’.⁴⁹⁶ Furthermore, when researching about the relationship between dreaming and the imagination Sully gathered material from Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Hardy and William Dean Howells.⁴⁹⁷ Perhaps Sully’s exchanges with Lewes and Eliot at their Sunday gatherings changed his approach towards establishing an empirical aesthetics. After all, Lewes believed that aesthetics was the ‘physiology of art’.⁴⁹⁸ For him, criticism was the ‘technical knowledge’. It was ‘criticism’ that was ‘purely *empirical*’ (not aesthetics) with

⁴⁹⁵ James Sully, ‘Recent Experiments with the Senses’, *Westminster Review*, Vol. 98, Jul., 1872, pp.166-167.

⁴⁹⁶ Sully, ‘Art and Psychology’, p.471.

⁴⁹⁷ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, p.195.

⁴⁹⁸ G. H Lewes, ‘The Philosophy of Art’, *The British and Foreign Review*, Vol. 13, Mar., 1842, p.5, (pp.1-49).

its 'peculiar facts or laws, derived from observation of works'. Both Sully and Wilde's approach to psychological aesthetics is similar to that of Lewes. Allen took longer, however, to acknowledge the 'art critic' as 'psychological aesthetician'.

Lewes was a leading practitioner of aesthetics in the first half of the nineteenth century. From his early days as a journalist he theorised about the necessary laws that characterised successful literature. Like Bain, he theorised about 'The Law of Economy', 'The Law of Simplicity', 'The Law of Sequence', 'The Law of Climax' and 'The Law of Variety'. He applied these laws to his own work as an editor and journalist.⁴⁹⁹ Moreover, his view of art and art criticism did not exhibit any of the epistemological struggles of Allen and Sully's earlier pieces, or Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying' for that matter. What is more, Lewes opposed the assertion that England had no system of aesthetics. For him, a 'definite, tangible, perfectly practical one' existed in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), and in Augustus De Morgan's *On the Differential Calculus* (1842).⁵⁰⁰

Lewes suggested that some of the scientific ideas behind German aesthetics should be introduced. This was where Sully had tried to fill the niche in the second half of the century. Lewes had a deep understanding of Hegel and Kant as well as a physiological understanding of German aesthetics. Whereas Sully and Allen wanted to give aesthetics a wholly scientific basis, and began their search with a highly antagonistic view of the art critic, Lewes did not privilege the scientific method over the creative or the critical. For him, there was no rivalry. He further stated that 'harm' is done by always distinguishing

⁴⁹⁹ As will be explored in the next chapter Lewes wrote *The Principles of Success in Literature* which was guided by psychological and philosophical observations. Lewes stated: 'It is something in the nature of the Method of Literature that I propose to expound. Success is not an accident. All literature is founded upon psychological laws, and involves principles which are true for all peoples and for all times'. *The Principles of Success in Literature*, T. Sharper Knowlson, ed., p.5, (London: Walter Scott, Ltd, 1865).

⁵⁰⁰ Lewes, 'The Philosophy of Art', p.1.

between the empirical and philosophical natures of the two as Allen had done by arguing that there existed 'two very different departments of literature' which he described as being 'jumbled up' at present.⁵⁰¹

As discussed above, Sully sampled his methodology of examining 'psychology in fiction' in 'George Eliot's Art'. According to Sully, Eliot possessed the 'faculty of scientific precision' which rendered her 'even to the trained psychologist a teacher of new truths', 'truths' that the psychologist, admitted Sully, could never have inferred deductively.⁵⁰² Furthermore, he argued that the 'didactic element' in Eliot's writing gives the 'colour' and 'determines the quality of the after-impression'. Her work achieved 'far-reaching harmonies' of the 'wonderful', 'beautiful', 'sublime' and 'mirth-provoking'. Moreover, Eliot's fiction, argued Sully, was of 'high value' in the 'eyes of the psychologist' because of its 'large scientific insight into character and life'.⁵⁰³ Unlike Allen, Sully had the privilege of befriending Lewes and Eliot. Their views on creativity and aesthetics seem to have softened Sully's approach to establishing a scientifically based aesthetics.

In their approach to 'psychology in fiction', Sully and Wilde agreed on certain aspects of how the art-object should be treated. For example, Sully criticised Balzac for 'exhaustively' describing his 'personages, their external conditions and belongings'. Human psychology was inexhaustible, but Balzac mistakenly attempted to explain all of life's details. In 'The Decay of Lying', Paul Bourget, 'the master of the *roman psychologique*', a French novelist and critic whom Wilde had known personally, is accused of committing the error of 'imagining that men and women of modern life are capable of

⁵⁰¹ Allen, 'Carving a Coca-nut', p.461.

⁵⁰² Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', p.389.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p.378.

being infinitely analysed for an innumerable series of chapters'.⁵⁰⁴ Sully criticised Balzac for attempting to describe everything while Bourget was censured by Wilde for over analysing his personages. Both criticisms are different yet they originate from psycho-aesthetic principles of representation and proportion. Both Wilde and Sully approach Bourget and Balzac through the psychological value of character portrayal. Moreover, Wilde singled Balzac's psychological realism out for its originality. In a review for the *Pall Mall Gazette* Wilde noted that Balzac's aim 'was to do for humanity what Buffon had done for the animal creation. As the naturalist studied lions and tigers, so the novelist studied men and women'.⁵⁰⁵ The psychological aestheticians would commonly single out certain authors and comment on some psychological perspective or 'law'. Comparisons between the novelist and the naturalist or the psychologist were also frequent. Wilde's reviews and essays, as will now be demonstrated, do not differentiate between what Allen referred to as the 'psychological aesthetician' and the 'art-critic'.

If Poetry has passed him by, Philosophy will take note of him.⁵⁰⁶

By his first review for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in October 1884, Wilde had given hundreds of lectures on the practical application of aesthetics, across the United States and in Britain. It is therefore easy to see why Stead chose Wilde to review books on aesthetics. Wilde reviewed John Collier's *Manual of Oil Painting* in 1886, and *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* in 1887 by John Veitch, the Professor of Logic and Rhetoric at Glasgow University. Collier's book was designed to provide a scientific basis to the art of oil painting which may be of practical use to art students. Collier, Wilde observed

⁵⁰⁴ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.39.

⁵⁰⁵ [Oscar Wilde], 'Balzac in English', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 44, No.6706, Sept., 1886, p.5.

⁵⁰⁶ [Oscar Wilde], 'The Gospel According to Walt Whitman', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 49, No. 7444, 25 Jan., 1889, p.3.

‘censures with just severity the meaningless eloquence of writers on aesthetics’.⁵⁰⁷ Collier suggested that for the artist to be able to create a particular aesthetic affect, he should study the works of the leading physicists of the time like Tyndall, and hold sound views on the study of ether waves.⁵⁰⁸

Veitch’s book was also connected to aesthetics and aimed to give an historical account of the growth of what he termed ‘natural feeling’ inspired by the moorlands of Scotland. Veitch examined aesthetic feeling arising from the contemplation of nature, and maintained that ‘in order to get to the root of aesthetical feeling, we must go back to psychological principles’, upon which he deliberated in the second chapter of the book.⁵⁰⁹ He detailed the general laws of aesthetic beauty which were to be decoded through an analysis of ‘form’, ‘colour’, ‘brightness’ as well as the suggestion of ‘free motion and grace’.⁵¹⁰ It is unfortunate that these reviews, like the majority of Wilde’s reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, were unsigned. This is because the views that he publicly expressed on aesthetic matters were derided and ridiculed by the popular press, who treated him more as a personality or a celebrity, than a writer on aesthetics.

Wilde was frequently depicted in caricatures and sketches with long flowing hair, clasping sunflowers or lilies with an expression of dreamy emotion. The psychical researcher F. W. H Myers was possibly referring to Wilde when he reviled those ‘nincompoops’ and ‘charlatans’ who treated the aesthetic movement as the ‘fashion of the day’.⁵¹¹ Such ‘imitators’ who surrounded the ‘leaders’ and whose jargon ‘disgusts us

⁵⁰⁷ [Oscar Wilde], ‘Common Sense in Art’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 6806, 8 Jan., 1887, p.5.

⁵⁰⁸ John Collier, *Manual of Oil Painting* (London: Cassell & Company Limited) p.96.

⁵⁰⁹ John Veitch, *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, Vol.1, (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1887) p.40.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p.37.

⁵¹¹ F. W. H Myers, *Essays Modern*, (London: Macmillan & Co, 1885) p.315.

with the very mysteries of art, the very vocabulary of emotion, these men', argued Myers, were 'inevitable parasites.'⁵¹² Allen defended Wilde, arguing only 'fools' have ever mistaken Wilde for a 'mere charlatan'. '[W]ise men', praised Allen, know Wilde for a man of 'rare insight and strong common sense.'⁵¹³ This is an incredibly complimentary remark from someone who was known amongst his friends as a human encyclopaedia.⁵¹⁴ Like Collier and Veitch though, Wilde maintained that the 'hierarchy of the arts [...] must be founded on a psychological basis [...]'⁵¹⁵ He believed that art primarily appealed to the 'faculties and sentiments'.⁵¹⁶ In the lecture 'The English Renaissance of Art', first delivered on 9 January 1882, Wilde stated that 'Literature must rest always on a principle, and temporal considerations are no principle at all'.⁵¹⁷ Wilde's lectures, reviews, and later critical-creative works all exhibit the signature of the psychological aesthete. This 'signature' was the attempt to subject art and literature to psycho-aesthetic laws of colour, harmony, form and proportion. The remainder of this chapter will explore Wilde's interaction with these 'laws' in connection with the articles circulating in the periodical press by the likes of Sully and Allen.

[...] beautiful colours came from the dyer's hand, beautiful patterns from the artist's brain.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Allen, 'The Celt in English Art', *The Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 55, Feb., 1891, p.273, (pp.267-277).

⁵¹⁴ Morton states that if some questionable fact arose in conversation amongst Allen's friends and no reference book was present they would say, 'Let's look it up in Grant', "*The Busiest Man in England*", p.4.

⁵¹⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.140.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p.115.

⁵¹⁷ Oscar Wilde, 'The English Renaissance in Art', *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1909) p.130.

⁵¹⁸ Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 55, Feb., 1891, p.304, (pp.292 - 319).

Sully denounced art critics for failing to counteract the 'influence of metaphysics'.⁵¹⁹ In his 1876 essay 'Art and Psychology' for *Mind* he accused art critics of being overly engaged in establishing a 'transcendental formula for beauty and the creative process of art'.⁵²⁰ In proclaiming aestheticism to America, Wilde had to confront accusations that it was obscure and impractical. Interviewers often made reference to the caricatures in *Punch* which had made him notorious.⁵²¹ Qi Chen states that Wilde simplified his aesthetics for American audiences by focussing on art practice rather than art theory.⁵²² Nevertheless, like Sully, and Allen particularly, Wilde's lectures and essays applied psycho-aesthetic laws around 'harmony', 'colour', 'form', 'stimulation', 'rest', 'variety' and 'relativity' to everyday aesthetics.

According to Gagnier, unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors for whom aesthetics was a metaphysical issue of a wholly abstract nature, the Victorians were concerned with 'practical aesthetics'.⁵²³ This she defines as involving aspects of daily life and its vicissitudes.⁵²⁴ The cry of the Arts and Crafts Movement may have been 'art at home', but the psychological aestheticians who contributed to specialist journals such as *Mind* were deeply theoretical and wanted to advance from the descriptive laws established by the likes of Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century. Writing about the 'Relations of Reason to Beauty' in *Mind* (1878) Edmund Gurney, whom Sully had described as a 'scientific lover of music', argued that in treating 'aesthetic problems'

⁵¹⁹ Sully, 'Art and Psychology', p.467.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p.472.

⁵²¹ *Oscar Wilde: Interviews and Recollections, Volume 1*, p.36.

⁵²² Qi Chen, 'Aristocracy for the Common People: Chinese Commodities in Oscar Wilde's Aestheticism', *Victorian Network*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Summer 2009, p.41, (pp.39-54).

⁵²³ Regenia Gagnier, 'A Critique of Practical Aesthetics', George Levine, ed., *Aesthetics and Ideology*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994) p.266.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p.277. Gagnier says that 'practical aesthetics' is about the 'quality of daily life', and 'sensuous human experience'.

through the 'scientific method' it was 'natural' to come across 'Law', 'Order', and 'regularity' as categories with which to approach the analysis of the art-object.⁵²⁵

Wilde mediated between the 'old aesthetics' of Ruskin and William Morris, and the 'new aesthetics' which were guided by psycho-aesthetic laws, and evolutionary theory. In fact Wilde's inclusion of natural science and psychology are so subtle and jargon free that they have mostly been missed by critics. He wanted to avoid technical aesthetics such as 'the mathematical calculation of curves and distances of absolute precision of eye, of equilibrium of forces, and of perfect physical training'.⁵²⁶ He understood the obscurity surrounding such terms as 'aesthetic'. 'If', he hypothesised, 'you ask nine-tenths of the British public what is meant of the word "aesthetics", they will tell you it is the French for affectation or the German for a dado [...]'.⁵²⁷ The emphasis on practicality and comprehension on the American lecture tour was mainly to cleanse aestheticism from the metaphysical abstraction of which Sully accused its exponents, and which Wilde himself pejoratively labelled 'metaphysics in art'.⁵²⁸

On lecturing upon house decoration, handicraft, dress, and art, Wilde applied psycho-aesthetic laws in the manner of Allen in his articles 'Decorative Decorations' (1880), and 'The Philosophy of English Drawing Rooms' (1880). In 'Decorative Decorations', Allen examined the aesthetic affect of two ornaments placed in a living room. One was a piece of French Porcelain and the other a small red earthenware vase. Of the French Porcelain Allen stated 'It is pretty enough when you look closely into it; but at three yards distance it is nothing at all. The colours are all jumbled up together

⁵²⁵ Edmund Gurney, 'Relations of Reason to Beauty', *Mind*, Vol. 4, No. 16, Oct., 1879, p.482 (pp.482-500).

⁵²⁶ 'London Models', *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.223.

⁵²⁷ 'The English Renaissance of Art', *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.119.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

indistinguishably; [...] and the shape, obscured by its twist and twirls'. Ultimately, there was 'no outline, no recognisable figure, no real harmony of colour [...].'⁵²⁹ Of the earthenware vase, Allen observed, in 'colour it is uniform throughout [...], neither crude on the one hand nor dull on the other'. The vase has nothing but 'sympathetic curves, melting into one another without angularity or a break of continuous contour'.⁵³⁰ Moreover, the red earthenware vase harmonised with the neutral background of the olive-green and blue-tinted wallpaper.⁵³¹

The 'sympathetic curves', uniformity, and 'harmony' of colour that Allen stressed to the audiences of the *Cornhill Magazine*, were re-enforced by Wilde in his lecture series. In 'The English Renaissance of Art' Wilde reiterated the key psycho-aesthetic observation that the 'aesthetic faculty' is gratified by 'splendid curves'.⁵³² He asserted that art has only 'one high law': 'the law of form or harmony'.⁵³³ Unlike Allen who directly referred to psycho-aesthetic laws, Wilde creatively incorporated psychological aesthetics so as to efface all remnants of art theory. For example, he stated 'let there be no leaf in your Titian forests that does not lend its *form* to design, no *curving* spray of wild rose or brier that does not live forever in *carven arch* or window or marble, no bird in your air that is not giving the iridescent *wonder of its colour*, the exquisite *curves of its wings in flight*, to make more precious the preciousness of simple adornment' [*italics mine*].⁵³⁴ In this passage, nature's curves, colours, and forms are to be infused into art. The notion of borrowing from nature appears to contradict the 'gallant protest' in 'The Decay of Lying' against the imitation of nature. However, the forms and colours belonging

⁵²⁹ Grant Allen, 'Decorative Decorations', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol., 42, Nov., 1880, p.590, (pp.590-600).

⁵³⁰ Ibid, p.591.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² 'The English Renaissance of Art', *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.134.

⁵³³ Ibid., p.113.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

to the 'Titian forests' relate to compositional laws rather than the 'return to life', or imitation of a domestic or social setting like in the 'realist' novels of Eliot or Charles Dickens which Vivian disparages. In another example, Wilde even explained the aesthete's love for the sunflower and lily in relation to the 'law' of form and harmony. The lily and the sunflower, he explained, are loved so much by 'aesthetic young men' 'not for any vegetable fashion at all', but because 'these two lovely flowers are in England the two most perfect models of design'.⁵³⁵ In his essays, Allen attempted to lay down aesthetic laws by giving his aesthetic theory an overtly psychological basis. In his lectures, Wilde subtly weaved evolutionary and psychological theories without explicating their origin as 'psychological'.

In 'Decorative Decorations', Allen explained how to create a unity of affect in a room through the 'idea of arrangement'.⁵³⁶ Wilde observed the same in reference to a scene on stage which was to be 'settled as absolutely as for the decoration of a room, and the texture which it is proposed to use should be mixed in every possible combination, and what is discordant removed'.⁵³⁷ Both agreed that ornamentation must be subordinated to general effect. Furthermore, Allen explicitly referred to the 'Principle of Relief' which Bain called the 'Law of Alternate and Proportionate Stimulation'. This law stated that aesthetic pleasure consisted of an intermixture of stimulation and rest.⁵³⁸ For this reason, as will be explored further below, Wilde critiqued the 'excessive use of hot, violent reds' on stage.⁵³⁹ Allen went as far as to attribute the 'well known Academy headache' to the 'intense and unbroken stimulation of red, blue, and yellow pigments,

⁵³⁵ Ibid., p.154.

⁵³⁶ Allen, 'Decorative Decorations', p.592.

⁵³⁷ Wilde, 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', p.816.

⁵³⁸ Allen, 'Decorative Decorations', p.597.

⁵³⁹ Wilde, 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', p.816.

together with dazzling effect of continuous gilding [...].⁵⁴⁰ Why did the aesthete place such importance on these psychological observations? According to Sully, these principles could determine the 'uniformities of pleasurable and painful experience'.⁵⁴¹ For Wilde, the aesthetic experience could be enhanced by certain scientific methodologies as will be seen in the next section.

Parolles, whose dress, by the way, only an archaeologist can understand.⁵⁴²

In 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume' (1885), which was adapted from reviews such as 'Henry the Fourth at Oxford' (1885) for the *Dramatic Review*, Wilde discussed theatrical dress on stage, and concentrated on the contemporary staging of Shakespeare's plays. Wilde supported archaeological accuracy in performances. The 'archaeologist', argued Wilde, 'is to supply us with the facts, which the artist is to convert into effects'.⁵⁴³ Wilde stated that an inventory of the costume wardrobe of the Globe Theatre, which burned down due to the 'realism of Shakespeare's stage management', revealed the 'archaeological research' conducted by the stage manager to convey historical truth and stage affect. 'Spanish, Moorish, and Danish costumes, of helmets, lances, painted shields, imperial crowns, and papal tiaras' were all among the inventory.⁵⁴⁴ Wilde's pedantry for historical detail in the essay stemmed from a desire to create effect, and convey emotion, rather than to re-create a 'realistic' portrayal.

'Even small details of dress, such as colour of a major-domo's stockings, the pattern on a wife's handkerchief, the sleeve of a young soldier, and a fashionable

⁵⁴⁰ Allen, 'Decorative Decorations', p.592.

⁵⁴¹ Sully, 'Art and Psychology', p.469.

⁵⁴² Wilde, 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', p.802.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p.810.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p.806.

woman's bonnets', argued Wilde, 'become in Shakespeare's hands points of actual dramatic importance, and by some of them the action of the play in question is conditioned absolutely.'⁵⁴⁵ Irony, tragic effect, pity and pathos were all affects of costume and staging.⁵⁴⁶ Wilde maintained that Shakespeare knew 'costume could be made at once impressive of a certain effect on the audience and expressive of certain types of character [...]'.⁵⁴⁷ In the essay, Wilde directed the reader's attention to the importance of archaeology as a method for the artist, and not merely 'a science for the antiquarian'.⁵⁴⁸ Archaeology, believed Wilde, was 'only really delightful when transfused into some form of art'.⁵⁴⁹ As in most of Wilde's lectures, reviews, and essays, science provided principles or rational laws that could guarantee the desired effect in art consistently. Sully agreed, arguing that art 'has to seek its effect of perfect delight by recognising the great and comparatively permanent emotional instincts and habits of an age'.⁵⁵⁰ Wilde was aware that the 'psychological historian' could 'assign to a specific period a moral fact or mode of thought' through his reading of the historian William E. H. Lecky.⁵⁵¹

In 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume' Wilde stated 'archaeology, being a science, is neither good nor bad, but simply a fact. Its value depends entirely on how you use it'.⁵⁵² Stefano Evangelista draws a parallel between aestheticism and the archaeological method of the late Victorian decades. Archaeology 'privileged the visual and the material

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., p.802.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p.805.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p.807.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p.808.

⁵⁵⁰ Sully, 'Art and Psychology', p.475.

⁵⁵¹ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, pp.156, 203.

⁵⁵² Wilde, 'Shakespeare and Stage Costume', p.809.

object over the written text', this he notes 'could also be said of aestheticism'.⁵⁵³ Moreover, Evangelista states that Violet Paget, known under the pseudonym Vernon Lee, relied on archaeology in the essay 'The Child in the Vatican', where she analysed a collection of classical sculptures known as the Niobe Group. She may also have been drawing on German archaeology in her analysis. Nevertheless, while Lee read archaeological texts, like Wilde, she did not appreciate archaeology as a science. According to Evangelista, for Lee the archaeological method was a way of enlarging a 'sublime experience'.⁵⁵⁴ Lee was the only prominent female in this nexus of writers approaching aesthetics psychologically. She fostered relationships with Henry James, Robert Browning and Pater. Pater's influence on Wilde is well documented. Wilde even acknowledged that Pater's *Renaissance* 'had such a strange influence over my life'.⁵⁵⁵ Throughout his essays collected under the title *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) Pater gave examples of perfected forms, colours, and sounds in art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the 'Conclusion', he abstracted sense perception by describing forms, dyes, and odours as part of an ongoing stream of sense perception experienced by the individual.⁵⁵⁶ Unlike Wilde, for Pater, aesthetic laws meant 'a thousand rough and brutal classifications'. Cultivating a relative spirit though, could give

⁵⁵³ Stefano Evangelista, 'Vernon Lee in the Vatican: The Uneasy Alliance of Aestheticism and Archaeology', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Autumn 2009, p.33 (pp.31-41).

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p.38.

⁵⁵⁵ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.735.

⁵⁵⁶ Pater states: 'Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest [...] While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend', *The Renaissance*, p.152.

‘elasticity to inflexible principles’.⁵⁵⁷ Wilde adhered to the laws of aesthetic theory, but still embraced the relative spirit in the manner of the Paterian ideal.

Common Sense in Art.⁵⁵⁸

Like Wilde, Sully was conscious of the ‘endless discussions which are carried on among women as to what is correct in the way of colour arrangements in dress and in furniture’.⁵⁵⁹ Sully’s remark suggests that even dress had to be confiscated from women and ‘rationalised’, or brought under the control of empiricist methodology. When Wilde spoke about dress reform and the need to treat dress rationally he was ridiculed and seen to incarnate the typical ‘dandy’. However, in ‘The Natural History of Dress’ (1880) for the *Cornhill Magazine*, Sully stated that ‘People are accustomed to think of dress as something capricious and lawless’. He agreed with Wilde that there was an apparent ‘want of rationality in dress’.⁵⁶⁰ Sully examined dress through the eyes of the evolutionist while Wilde viewed it largely as an attribute of psychological affectation. He argued that ‘costume is a growth, an evolution, and a most important, perhaps the most important, sign of the manners, customs, and mode of life of each century’.⁵⁶¹ Like Wilde, Sully argued that the history of costume is an ‘index to the growth of a people’s manners, ideas and emotions’.⁵⁶² Sully believed that the development of dress answered to material wants. Dress also expressed the growth of humanity’s intellectual and emotional nature, such as the human ‘sensibility to the charm of light, colour, and form; [the]

⁵⁵⁷ Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1924) p.103.

⁵⁵⁸ [Wilde], ‘Common Sense in Art’, p.5.

⁵⁵⁹ James Sully, ‘Harmony of Colours’ *Mind*, Vol. 4, No. 14, Apr., 1879, p.174, (pp.172-191).

⁵⁶⁰ James Sully, ‘The Natural History of Dress’, *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol., 42, May 1880, p.560, (pp.560-573).

⁵⁶¹ Wilde, ‘Shakespeare and Stage Costume’, p.814.

⁵⁶² Sully, ‘The Natural History of Dress’, p.572.

perception of the harmonious and appropriate [...].⁵⁶³ Wilde highlighted the same aesthetic features. He stated that the artist had nothing to do with the 'facts of the object', but only with 'appearance' which he defined as 'a matter of light and shade, of masses, of position, of value'.⁵⁶⁴ Sully acknowledged the historical importance of dress, while Wilde explicated the use of the archaeological method in obtaining historical accuracy and stage affect. This discussion of dress, staging, archaeology and affect again shows that what has been bypassed by critics in Wilde's writings, or perceived as unimportant or secondary, relates to a hugely important topic within the context of psychological aesthetics.

In one lecture on woman's dress, Wilde spoke about dress during the reign of Charles I and II, and about the unsuitability of French fashions with their 'exaggerated styles'. Wilde argued that in considering what dress was appropriate for what occasion, it was necessary to consider the proportions of a room. In evening dress 'the horizontal or vertical line was the most common, but the best figure would be the oblique line', which would give 'grace and dignity'.⁵⁶⁵ In *The Emotions and the Will*, Bain gave a short account of the 'Law of Proportion'. He stated that 'At first, such proportions were guided solely by the effect; as melodies were composed to please the ear, without reference to musical ratios. At a later period, strict numerical laws were sought.' In a footnote Bain explained that 'The laws of proportion that reign in admired works of art, such as the remains of Grecian Sculpture and Architecture, are not obvious, and different modes of training them have been proposed'. One method of obtaining pleasing proportion, maintained Bain, was the 'golden section'. The 'golden section' rule was that the 'shorter part shall

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Lecture to Art Students', *Lectures and Essays by Oscar Wilde*, p.209.

⁵⁶⁵ Anon., 'Mr Oscar Wilde on dress', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 40, No. 6104, 2 Oct., 1884, p.7.

bear the same proportion as the longer to the whole; the same rule to hold, in farther subdivisions of the parts, as must happen in a great Architectural front'. A second law, maintained Bain, 'must regulate the proportions of breadth to height, as the arms of the cross compared with the height of the pillar, and the breadth of a front compared with the height of the pillar, and the breadth of a front compared with the divisions of the height.' Thirdly, Bain quoted 'Mr D. R. Hay', who 'maintains that the numerical proportionality of the perfect works of art is to be found, not in the lines, but in the angles subtended by the different linear divisions'.⁵⁶⁶

Bain's technical description demonstrates that there were mathematically calculated laws that could be adapted to all aspects of living, like dress, to which Wilde referred, albeit in a simpler, clearer sense. This again demonstrates how Wilde was part of a large nexus of writers who theorised, examined and applied psycho-aesthetic laws around form, harmony, colour, and emotional affect. In England and in America, Wilde is said to have 'revolutionized taste in furniture, decorations, colouring, the arrangements of flowers [and] women's dresses'.⁵⁶⁷ 'The aim of our school' argued Wilde, 'is to educate the people into the love of the beautiful and to apply it to practical use in the manufacture of the useful articles'.⁵⁶⁸ Wilde expressed the same attitude when discussing his observations on colour harmony and affect.

⁵⁶⁶ Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, p.238.

⁵⁶⁷ *Oscar Wilde: Interview and Recollections*, Vol.2, p.266.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.98.

**[The] true designer [...] designs in colour, creates in
colour, thinks in colour too.⁵⁶⁹**

Linda Dowling states that ‘an intense response to the visible world’ and an ‘acute delight in colour’ became the ‘universal passport of the nineteenth-century aesthete’.⁵⁷⁰ Dowling’s observation touches on a crucial point. The nature of colour, and the aesthetic pleasure derived from colour co-ordination, was a contested subject amongst psychological aestheticians. Lee stated that ‘Psycho-physiologists have not yet told us why colours, taken singly and apart from their juxtaposition should possess so extraordinary a power over what used to be called our animal spirits’.⁵⁷¹ Lee understood the ‘luminous stimulation’ derived from colour perception as a ‘chemical repercussion throughout the human organism’.⁵⁷² Wilde also thought that colour could induce a physiological affect. In a lecture delivered to art students of the Royal Academy at their Club in Golden Square, he stated that ‘The object of art is to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music stir in our souls; and colour is, indeed of itself a mystical presence on things, and tone a kind of sentinel’.⁵⁷³ Wilde’s portrayal of colour as ‘mystical’ or capable of spiritual affect was part of a larger more complicated discourse that not only psychologists of the ‘soul’, in Rylance’s sense, promulgated.

Colour perception was ethereal or ‘spiritual’ in nature. Lewes, sceptical of purely physical explanations of light, acutely summarised the dilemma. He argued, ‘What belongs to extra-mental existence in the phenomena of colour, and what to the “greeting of the spirit,” is utterly beyond human knowledge’. This is because the ethereal

⁵⁶⁹ ‘Art and the Handicraftsman’, *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.180.

⁵⁷⁰ *Oscar Wilde: the Soul of Man Under Socialism & Selected Critical Prose*, Linda Dowling, ed., (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 2001) p.xi.

⁵⁷¹ Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful*, (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1913) p.22.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ ‘Lecture to Art Students’, *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.211.

undulations which physicists ‘presuppose as the cosmic condition are themselves subjected to this same greeting of the spirit’. These so-called ‘undulations’, argued Lewes, were also ‘ideal forms of sensible experiences’.⁵⁷⁴ Wilde perceived that colour was no ‘mere delightful quality’ as Dowling states. Anyone who perceived in colour a ‘spirit’ was, Wilde acknowledged in his *Commonplace book*, a ‘metaphysician’.⁵⁷⁵ The metaphysician dwells in the ‘colourless abstractions of a physical world, in the vacuity of an infinite which has no contents.’⁵⁷⁶ Wilde seems to say that colour is abstract because it does not have any physical properties. For this reason, colour is ‘*metaphysical*’ in the sense that it transcends the physical realm [*italics mine*].⁵⁷⁷ The physical and spiritual nature of colour required physicists like John Tyndall to appeal to the ‘Use and Limit of the Imagination’ (1870) (as his paper was entitled), to explain the connection of light to physics and perception.

Wilde understood the numerous approaches to colour. If he did not know anything about the undulatory theory of light before he reviewed Collier’s *Manual of Oil Painting* in 1887, he certainly did afterwards. Collier explained that colour was a sensation produced by waves of varying lengths. These waves were comprised of tiny vibrating particles of matter filled with an all-pervading substance named ‘ether’, (a substance thought to be the ‘glue’ holding together the vibrating particles, which was later negated by Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity). Collier explained that the optic nerve, just like the sensorium of the skin which could detect touch, was endowed with the ability to differentiate between the rapidity and intensity of ether waves which it

⁵⁷⁴ G. H Lewes, ‘The Course of Modern Thought’, *Fortnightly Review*, Vol.27, Mar., 1887, p.324 (pp. 317-327).

⁵⁷⁵ *Oscar Wilde’s Oxford Notebooks*, p.141.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ *OED online*, [Accessed 18 Nov., 2010].

translated into different colours, or light waves. The length of the wave depended on the speed at which the particles vibrating in motion were propelled resulting in a different sensation or colour.⁵⁷⁸ Wilde praised Collier as the 'champion of common sense' in art 'at a critical moment in the artistic development of England'.⁵⁷⁹ The colour spectrum depended on the sensory organs of perception. According to the 'discourse of the soul', this interdependence between human organ and invisible wave particles 'substantiated' the notion of a 'creator', or the view that humanity was gifted with special 'faculties'. As with many of Wilde's writings, he handpicked aspects of conflicting theories and synthesised them without any recognition. Even with the knowledge that colour could mediate the spiritual and the physical, Wilde like the psychological aestheticians, appropriated natural and sexual selection theories in his references to colour in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'.

Allen was interested in the colour sense from an evolutionary perspective. He argued that it was because of the action of insects that 'colour-sense' developed. It was the 'taste' and 'selective action' of bees and butterflies who carry pollen from one flower to another that helped produce the multifarious colours in nature. Natural selection, argued Allen, favoured the cross-fertilised seeds which changed according to the taste of the insect. This in turn meant that the insect would revisit the flower and spread the pollen to ensure its own, and the flower's survival. For Allen, the 'colour-sense' was not a lately evolved quality belonging to human perception alone. In fact, Allen's article the 'Colour-Sense' (1877) published in the *Nineteenth Century* was a response to W. E Gladstone's refutation of Darwin's genealogy of colour.

⁵⁷⁸ Collier, *Manual of Oil Painting*, p.96.

⁵⁷⁹ [Wilde], 'Common Sense in Art', p.5.

In arguing against the 'shallow shibboleths of any sect or school', and encouraging the 'philosophic temper' which, Gilbert mentions, the 'author of the *Origin of Species*' possessed, the discussion in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' proceeds to that of the 'colour-sense'- a term which Wilde hyphenated in the manner of Sully and Allen as explored in the last chapter.⁵⁸⁰ Like Allen, Wilde placed the 'colour-sense' in an evolutionary context:

Even a colour-sense is more important in the development of the individual than a sense of right and wrong. Aesthetics, in fact, are to Ethics, in the sphere of human civilisation, what, in the sphere of the external world, Sexual is to Natural Selection. Ethics like Natural Selection, makes existence possible. Aesthetics, like Sexual Selection, make life lovely and wonderful, fills it with new forms, and give it progress, and variety, and change.⁵⁸¹

This is a critical passage that explicates the psycho-evolutionary theories which constitute Wilde's conception of art. As will be documented in chapter five, Wilde was accused by critics of elevating aesthetics over ethics. However, in the context of sexual and natural selection Wilde merely expressed a biological fact. If it was not for the taste and selective action of bees and butterflies the world would be, as Allen stated, 'green, and green, and

⁵⁸⁰ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.458.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

green, again.’⁵⁸² In ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’, Gilbert stated that what is termed ‘sin’, is ‘an essential element of progress’ without which the world would stagnate, grow old and become ‘colourless’ [*italics mine*].⁵⁸³

In an 1878 article entitled ‘Colour in Painting’ for the *Cornhill Magazine*, Allen remarked that he had ‘not a grain of sympathy with that modern French school who preach to us incessantly that morality has no place in art’.⁵⁸⁴ This school ‘inspires low, vulgar, cruel anti-social emotion’ despite the ‘handicraft being exquisite’.⁵⁸⁵ Allen had changed his perspective by the time he wrote ‘The New Hedonism’ (1894) as will be explored in chapter five. In similar phrasing to Wilde’s passage above, Allen stated it was to the ‘sexual instinct’ to which ‘we owe our love of bright colours, graceful form, melodious sound, rhythmical motion. To it we owe the evolution of painting, of sculpture, of decorative art, of dramatic entertainment.’ He maintained that it was to the ‘sexual instinct’ that ‘we owe the entire existence of our aesthetic sense, which is, in the last resort, a secondary sexual attribute’.⁵⁸⁶ We know that Wilde and Allen read each other’s work because Allen wrote to Wilde asking ‘[...] Will you allow me to thank you heartily for your noble and beautiful essay [‘The Soul of Man Under Socialism’] in this month’s *Fortnightly*. I would have written every line of it myself- if only I had known how.’⁵⁸⁷ Likewise, Wilde wrote to Allen expressing delight at how Allen asserted the Celtic spirit in

⁵⁸² Grant Allen, ‘Our Debt to Insects,’ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol., 256, May 1884, p.453, (pp.452-469).

⁵⁸³ Wilde, ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism,’ p.138.

⁵⁸⁴ Grant Allen, ‘Colour in Painting,’ *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol.38, Oct., 1878, pp.476-493, p.478.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p.384.

⁵⁸⁷ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp.469, 470.

his essay 'The Celt in English Art,' through scientific demonstration.⁵⁸⁸ Wilde also theorised about colour harmony in the manner of Sully.

In 'Harmony of Colours' (1879), Sully set out to investigate principles which might help establish a science of colour harmony. He was aware that understanding the physics of light was not enough to comprehend the aesthetic principles of colour harmony and contrast.⁵⁸⁹ He argued that the aesthetic principles behind harmony and contrast depended on the brightness and intensity of a colour, and its physiological affect on the retina. Like Sully, Wilde spoke about colour harmonies and discords. In 'Henry the Fourth at Oxford' for the *Dramatic Review* in 1885, Wilde dwelled on the importance of the 'delicate harmonies of colour' which add to the 'sensuous charm of art'.⁵⁹⁰ In another review of Shakespeare's play 'As You Like It' for the same periodical, Wilde observed as 'regards the costume the colour scheme was very perfect. Brown and green were the dominant notes, and yellow was most artistically used.' However, he disapproved of the 'two distinct discords' of 'glaring' and 'crude' colour. 'A contrast', stated Wilde, 'may be striking but should never be harsh'.⁵⁹¹

In a lecture 'On ladies dress', Wilde recommended that the colour-conscious should never mix more than three colours in dress. He also suggested that one colour or tone should never be 'worshipped' more than another given that fashion was seasonal and therefore relative to a particular moment.⁵⁹² Sully agreed, arguing that the 'presence of a third colour, including black and white, materially affected the apparent degree of

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Sully, 'Harmony of Colours', p.176.

⁵⁹⁰ Oscar Wilde, "'Henry the Fourth" at Oxford', *Dramatic Review*, Vol. 1, No.17, 23 May 1885, pp.264-5.

⁵⁹¹ Oscar Wilde, "'As You Like it" at Coombe House', *Dramatic Review*, Vol. 1 No. 19, 6 June 1885, pp. 296-7.

⁵⁹² Anon., 'Mr Oscar Wilde on Ladies' Dress', *The Ladies Treasury*, Friday 1 Jan., 1886, p. 52.

affinity of two colours'.⁵⁹³ Sully also agreed with Wilde about the necessity of privileging one colour over another. Just like Wilde stated in his lecture to the art students of the Royal Academy, the law of variety and contrast, argued Sully, was 'the very *soul* of the colour-arts' [*italics mine*].⁵⁹⁴ Furthermore, Wilde maintained that 'all beautiful colours are graduated colours, the colours that seem to be able to pass into one another's realm'.⁵⁹⁵ Sully concurred arguing that 'the peculiar charm of graduated tint may be in part due to this tendency to fuse small contiguous masses of colour'.⁵⁹⁶ Wilde applied psycho-aesthetic laws around colour harmony and discord in a practical manner. Sully also attempted to offer practical advice on colour harmony, but Wilde's practical applications of aesthetic theory in lectures proved more popular because he simplified Sully's theoretical observations, as well as directly engaging with audiences. The discourse on colour examined here demonstrates that Wilde's seemingly abstract references to colour in his essays and lectures were part of a wider intellectual context. So, too, Wilde's discussion of 'form' was another important category in debating the aesthetics of the art-object for the psychological aesthetician.

The humanist, the possessor of that complete culture, does not 'weep' over the failure of a 'theory of the quantification of the predicate,' nor 'shriek' over the fall of a philosophical formula.⁵⁹⁷

Writing on the 'Pleasure of Visual Form' (1880) in *Mind*, Sully argued that the pleasure of form originated from the 'perception of relations (unity in variety,

⁵⁹³ Sully, 'Harmony of Colours', *Mind*, Vol. 4, No.14, Apr., 1879, p.174, (pp.172-191).

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., p.187.

⁵⁹⁵ 'Art and the Handicraftsman', *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.178.

⁵⁹⁶ Sully, 'Harmony of Colours', p.179.

⁵⁹⁷ Pater, *Appreciations*, p.69.

proportion)'.⁵⁹⁸ He examined the visual perception of form in relation to the affect on the retina. Allen approached form by investigating the 'Origin of the Sense of Symmetry' (1879). He concluded that 'primitive man' shared with the animal kingdom an 'inherent tendency' towards symmetry or regularity. This is helped, he maintained, by the fact that human physiology acts in a correlative, or 'rhythmical' way which also forces an individual to strive for symmetry.⁵⁹⁹ 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' approaches the category of 'form' in the same way as Allen, Sully and Lee. For instance, in discussing the aesthetic response that may be derived from decorative art, Gilbert states:

Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unallied with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways. The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of pattern give us rest. The marvels of design stir the imagination. In the mere loveliness of the materials employed there are latent elements of culture.⁶⁰⁰

In her 1899 article 'Aesthetics of the Novel', Lee wrote that 'the parts of speech, verbs and nouns and adjectives, actives and passives, variously combined tenses, can be woven even like lines and colours, producing patterns of action and reaction in our mind, our nerve tracks [...] in our muscles and heartbeats and breathing [...] as effects of visible or audible form'. While both Wilde and Lee's passages are inspired by Allen's *Physiological*

⁵⁹⁸ James Sully, 'Pleasure of Visual Form', *Mind*, Vol. 5, No. 18, Apr., 1880, p.181, (pp.181-201).

⁵⁹⁹ Grant Allen, 'The Origin of the Sense of Symmetry', *Mind*, Vol. No. 15, Jul., 1879, pp.301, 305, (pp.301-316).

⁶⁰⁰ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.452.

Aesthetics they are expressed in strikingly similar tones. According to Margaret Stetz, Lee imitated Wilde's rhetorical flourishes in her story 'Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady' (1896).⁶⁰¹ Lee's story, states Stetz, like Wilde's 'The Young King' and 'The Birthday of the Infanta', contained lengthy descriptive passages which were crafted to make the audience feel the affect of the words and form.⁶⁰²

Lee first met Wilde in 1881. The 'creature is clever', she told her mother. She further described him as 'wonderful'. Wilde and Lee fell out because of her ridiculing him in *Miss Brown* (1884), but reconciled after Wilde's kindness to her invalid brother.⁶⁰³ Lee described the 'aesthetic person' as someone who, when looking at a hilltop in the city of Rome, or Edinburgh, would delight in 'the wonderfully harmonised scheme of light and colour, the pattern [...] of keenly thrusting, delicately yielding lines'.⁶⁰⁴ She defined herself as an 'aesthetician' whose role merged that of the literary historian and the musical critic.⁶⁰⁵ She approached aesthetics from a literary angle and overtly interwove the two in her articles. Some of Lee's essays on psychological aesthetics included 'Taine's Philosophy of Art' (1878) for the *British Quarterly Review*, 'Comparative Aesthetics' (1880) for the *Contemporary Review*, as well as 'Cherubino: A Psychological Art Fancy' (1881) for the *Cornhill Magazine*. Given her contributions to the periodical press it is reasonable to suggest that Lee moved in the same circles as Allen and Sully although she cultivated relationships across the continent.

⁶⁰¹ Margaret Stetz, 'The Snake Lady and the Bruised Bodley Head: Vernon Lee and Oscar Wilde in the *Yellow Book*', *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pullham, eds., (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p.116.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, p.542.

⁶⁰⁴ Lee, *The Beautiful*, p.15.

⁶⁰⁵ Phyllis F. Mannocchi, "Paget, Violet [Vernon Lee] (1856–1935)", *ODNB* [Accessed 14 Oct., 2010].

The above comparative analysis between the views of Allen, Sully, Wilde and Lee demonstrates that there existed within psychological aesthetics a set of principles, or 'laws' which formed a basis, no matter how undefined, unstable and reductive, which all psycho-physiological aestheticians drew upon to make statements about the nature of the aesthetic. These laws were to give an objective framework to comprehending pleasure in the realm of art. Even Wilde, who fought against definitions and formulae, underwrote his aesthetic observations with psycho-physiological laws. 'The Creeds', states Gilbert in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', 'are believed, not because they are rational, but because they are repeated'.⁶⁰⁶ The word 'creed' in the discussion of 'form' or the relations of lines, colours and harmony is the equivalent to the word 'law' or 'principle'. Rather than employ the precise language of the psychological aestheticians contributing to technical journals such as *Mind*, Wilde used simpler terms like 'rational' and 'creed'. In this way, he seemingly cultivates the relative spirit advocated by Pater without attempting to create fixed laws like Sully, or Allen.

[...] according to certain modern psychologists.⁶⁰⁷

The 'old psychology' associated with James Mill continued to feed into the 'new psychology' and therefore into the 'new aesthetics'. Wilde, Allen, Sully, and Lee creatively engaged with the theory of Associationism. Associationism dictated that the 'Frequency' and 'Repetition' of an idea could produce a cogent understanding of the environment.⁶⁰⁸ From its very inception the mind began learning 'fundamental structures' on which all

⁶⁰⁶ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.452.

⁶⁰⁷ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.108.

⁶⁰⁸ James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* Vol. 1, (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, And Dyer, 1878, [1829]).

new experience was compiled.⁶⁰⁹ Associationists believed that experiences were derived from sensory and perceptual stimulation. For Mill, the mind classified, reasoned and imagined by identifying the likeness and unlikeness of an experience. Rylance states that the theory was denounced by the likes of Wordsworth and Dickens as 'heartless, soulless, joyless', and mechanically reductive of human behaviour.⁶¹⁰ Association theory, observes Rylance, used the same categorisations of faculty psychology like 'memory', 'will', and 'reason'.⁶¹¹

While in Connemara 'reading hard for a Fourth in Greats' in the autumn of 1877, Wilde wrote to his Magdalen fellow William Ward, 'I never remembered your kindness in lending me £5 in Rome till I met Grissell the other day (Idea Association)'.⁶¹² Wilde had certainly been reading about the theory of associationism. He had actually read David Hume and David Hartley's associationist theories and took notes from Clifford's 'The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences' (1879). In this essay, Clifford discussed how certain forms of mental action accompany certain forms of nervous action. The repetition of these mental acts, argued Clifford, were absorbed into the bank of biological memory.⁶¹³ In his book reviews, Wilde came across numerous creative interpretations of associationism. For instance, Collier stated that it is by the 'association of certain visual images with certain definite sensations of touch that we are enabled to have an idea of what we call the form of a thing'. Without this 'association' the artist could only see a 'patchwork of forms and colours floating before [his] eyes'.⁶¹⁴ Vietch also discussed how

⁶⁰⁹ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.57.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., p.55.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.61.

⁶¹³ W. K Clifford, 'The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences, *Lectures and Essays*, Vol. 1, p.180.

⁶¹⁴ Collier, *Manual of Oil Painting*, p.97.

the artist could experiment with the senses by combining and blending different colours, harmonies of sound, and form, to synthesise different senses.⁶¹⁵

The psychological aestheticians converged on the structures which could evoke or reawaken an emotion or sensation. These 'structures' included the aesthetic composites of an art-object like curve, texture, tint, shade and pitch. In *Physiological Aesthetics*, Allen argued that 'colours', 'shapes' and 'musical sounds' were 'pleasurable stimulants to the senses'. While a word could not be 'painful' it was a symbol which could 'call up into consciousness a faint form of certain previously experienced sensations and emotions'.⁶¹⁶ Words could arouse connections, emotions and memories. Lee reiterated Allen's position in 'The Craft of Words' (1894). She agreed with Allen that words were 'merely symbols' which summoned various 'visual', 'audible', 'tactile', and 'emotional' responses. Furthermore, 'each successive use of the word' implied a 'state of mind' or a 'way of thinking or feeling' and 'leaves clinging to that word something of that state of mind'.⁶¹⁷ Lee defended art arguing that a feeling evoked by any art-object did not depend on the 'perceptible lines, masses, colours, note-sequences and note-consonance', but on the stored experience and activities of the individual'.⁶¹⁸ Lee maintained that literature was 'chaste'. Any 'immoral' thoughts or associations that may arise in the mind of the spectator belonged to that individual's mind and were not inherent in the art-object.⁶¹⁹

In 'Dissecting a Daisy' (1878) published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, Allen described a scene where he was lying on his back in the sunshine watching children pick clusters of flowers. He, too, extended his arm to pluck the nearest flower which by no coincidence

⁶¹⁵ Vietch, *Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, p.4.

⁶¹⁶ Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, p.247.

⁶¹⁷ Vernon Lee, 'The Craft of Words', *The New Review*, Vol. 11, No. 67, Dec., 1894, p.572, (pp.571-580).

⁶¹⁸ Lee, *The Handling of Words and Other Studies in Literary Psychology*, (Oxford: Bodley Head, 1927) p.74.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.101.

was a daisy. 'As a psychologist', stated Allen, 'I am bound to account for my pleasure in looking at it, and for the delight with which my five-year-old friends pull it to pieces.'⁶²⁰ We can juxtapose this scene of the psycho-physiologist examining the daisy with that of Lord Henry in *Dorian Gray*. Lord Henry plucks a pink-petalled daisy from the grass of Basil's garden, and begins to examine it in the manner of Allen. Whilst engaging with Basil on the topic of Lady Brandon's beauty, Lord Henry says, 'she is a peacock in everything but beauty'. He then pulls 'the daisy to bits with his long nervous fingers'.⁶²¹ Apparently, the daisy is too simple a flower to sustain Lord Henry's observation. The daisy has none of the colouring, sensuality and form of the elaborate feathers of the peacock. Allen, on the other hand, delighted in this 'humble, quiet' little flower affirming its undoubted simplicity in comparison to those 'flaunting madam[s], in robe[s] of crimson and ornaments of gold.'⁶²² For Allen, the daisy's composite beauty manifested in its yellow centre, symmetrical form and shade of delicate pink. Even though, he pondered, the daisy possesses no unique form, fragrance or, brilliancy of colour, it still remains one of the most cited flowers in literature and is very popular with poets such as Wordsworth, Burns and Tennyson. This is because the daisy, Allen observed, is a flower that appeals more to our 'associative sentiments.'⁶²³

The daisy, argued Allen, harboured 'Dim recollections of childhood, vague echoes of pleasure felt by generations long dead whose experience yet reverberates through our

⁶²⁰ Allen, 'Dissecting a Daisy,' *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 37, Jan., 1878, p.61, (pp61-75.).

⁶²¹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.6.

⁶²² Allen, 'Dissecting a Daisy,' p.64.

⁶²³ Ibid., p.71.

brains by the mystic transmission of heredity'.⁶²⁴ In *Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry echoes Allen's sentiments in a compelling account of associationism:

Life is a question of nerves and fibres, and slowly-built-up cells in which thought hides itself and passion has its dreams. You may fancy yourself safe, and think yourself strong. But a chance tone of colour in a room or a morning sky, a particular perfume that you had once loved and that brings strange memories with it, a line from a forgotten poem that you had come across again, a cadence from a piece of music that you had ceased to play, - I tell you Dorian, that it is on things like these that our lives depend. Browning writes about that somewhere, but our own senses will imagine them for us. There are moments when the odour of *lilas blanc* passes suddenly across me, and I have to live the strangest month of my life over again.⁶²⁵

Lord Henry's view renders mind a mechanical formation solely conditioned by its biological functions, and by implication, imprisoned by the external environment. Moreover, the associationist principles of resuscitation and reproduction are apparent in this passage where a memory resurfaces through an aesthetic experience. Lord Henry's view of associationism mimics Allen's view of flower associationism where one aspect of an object, such as the smell of 'lilas blanc', or a 'daisy' in Allen's case, may re-awaken a

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.178.

past experience or induce a certain psychical state. *Dorian Gray* is patterned with such flowers that are associated with particular emotive states or function to induce a particular response based on memory. Flowers have a deeper significance than their position in the dandy's buttonhole.

Take the following passage for example:

He saw that there was no mood of the mind that had not its counterpart in the sensuous life, and set himself to discover their true relations, wondering what there was in frankincense that made one mystical, and in ambergris that stirred one's passions, and in violets that woke the memory of dead romances, and in musk that troubled the brain, and in champak that stained the imagination; and seeking often to elaborate a real psychology of perfumes, and to estimate the several influences of sweet-smelling roots, and scented pollen-laden flowers, of aromatic balms, and of dark and fragrant woods, of spikenard that sickens, of hovenia that makes men mad, and of aloes that are said to be able to expel melancholy from the soul.⁶²⁶

In this passage 'psychology' is explicitly mentioned although the aesthetic descriptions relating to roots, balms and perfumes depicts a more organic, fluid and less motorised form of associationism. The continuous repetition of certain flowers of a particular type

⁶²⁶ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.109.

and colour throughout the novel functions in accordance with associationist principles. For instance, Wilde typically evokes roses and lilies whenever physical beauty, passion or romantic love is mentioned. Time is said to be jealous of Dorian's 'roses and lilies.'⁶²⁷ Dorian's youth is 'rose-red' and boyhood 'rose-white.' Moreover, Sibyl is a 'rose' personified with lips as 'red petals' and a 'flower-like face.'⁶²⁸ Dorian also experiences 'rose coloured' joy when kissing Sibyl.⁶²⁹ The murdered body of Gian Maria Visconti is covered with roses by a harlot who had loved him.⁶³⁰ Similarly, in Pater's 'Apollo in Picardy' (1893), he paints the youthful devoted companion of Apollyon *Hyacinthus* through flower aesthetics. Hyacinthus has 'masses of black hair [...] with blue in the depths of it'.⁶³¹ Even after death, Hyacinthus regenerates quite literally as a blue flower signifying 'hope' and a 'merciful omnipresent deity.'⁶³² So, too, the lilac is deployed for its fragrance in *Dorian Gray*. Basil's studio lingers with the 'heavy scent of the lilac' while it is the perfume of 'the great cool lilac blossoms' that Dorian inhales to 'cure the soul [through] the senses', as Lord Henry observes.⁶³³

In *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829), Mill tried to explain how perception was moulded through a consciousness of an object's various attributes. He differentiated between the 'synchronous order' which was the 'order of simultaneous existence', and the 'successive order' which was the 'order of antecedent and consequent'.⁶³⁴ He elaborated, explaining that at any one time our consciousness can

⁶²⁷ Ibid., p.18.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., pp.70, 41.

⁶²⁹ Ibid., p.62.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., p.119.

⁶³¹ Walter Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies*, (London and New York: Macmillan and Co, 1895) p.145.

⁶³² Ibid., p.170.

⁶³³ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, pp.1, 17.

⁶³⁴ Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, p.71.

focus on only one point, although we may 'see' a trumpet and hear it being blown, one sense is always prevalent and one subordinate.⁶³⁵ He explained further:

From a stone I have had, synchronically, the sensation of colour, the sensation of hardness, the sensations of shape, and size, the sensation of weight [...] I have smelt a rose, and looked at, and handled a rose, synchronically; accordingly the name rose suggests to me all those ideas synchronically; and this combination of those simple ideas is called my idea of the rose.⁶³⁶

Wilde appropriates associationism synchronically as explained by Mill above in the most famous chapter of *Dorian Gray*. Chapter eleven describes Dorian's adventures in sensory experience. The description of each experience accentuates the form, harmony, colour and sound of the object.

Take the description of Dorian's love of jewels:

He would often spend a whole day settling and resettling their cases the various stones that he had collected, such as the olive-green chrysoberyl that turns red by lamplight, the cymophane with its wire-like line of silver, the pistachio-coloured periodot, rose-pink and wine-yellow topazes, carbuncles of fierce scarlet with tremulous four-rayed stars, flame-red cinnamon-stones, orange and violet spinels, and amethysts with their alternate layers of ruby

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., p.79

and sapphire. He loved the red gold of the sunstone, and
the moonstone's pearly whiteness, and the broken
rainbow of the milky opal.⁶³⁷

In *Physiological Aesthetics* Allen stated that 'mere lists of beautiful objects often produce a genuine aesthetic thrill.' 'What can be more poetical,' he argued, 'than the catalogue of precious stones in the foundations of the New Jerusalem?- the jasper, the sapphire, the chrysolite, the beryl, the topaz; the chrysoprasus, the jacinth, the amethyst.'⁶³⁸ The 'New Jerusalem' is a biblical reference to the city that 'comes down out of heaven from God'. According to Randall Price, the foretold city is to be built out of 'sacred structures'. In the Old Testament it is said that the city will 'constitute a celestial Temple that is both physical (Revelation 21:12-21) and spiritual (Revelation 21:22)'.⁶³⁹ G. Wilson Knight correlates Wilde's descriptive use of stones and gems with Christianity. For Knight, the precious stones represent the 'transcendent housed in [the] material'.⁶⁴⁰ In Wilde's prose-poetry, simultaneous impressions are amassed together to create an overall feeling rather than to merely convey an intellectual idea or present a 'delicious modulation of colour' from just one aspect of the 'scene'.⁶⁴¹

There are too many examples from which to quote, but Wilde frequently amalgamated elements of form and colour. Take his description of the decoration of Dorian's table for a banquet. The table has 'subtle symphonic arrangements of exotic

⁶³⁷ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.111.

⁶³⁸ Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, p.262.

⁶³⁹ Randall Price, *Jerusalem in Prophecy*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1998) p.1.

⁶⁴⁰ G. Wilson Knight, 'Christ and Wilde', *Oscar Wilde: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Richard Ellmann, ed., (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1969) p.139.

⁶⁴¹ Sully, 'Harmony of Colours', p.561.

flowers, and embroidered cloths, and antique plate of gold and silver'.⁶⁴² The phrase 'symphonic arrangements' connotes a musical composition. The 'exotic flowers', 'embroidered cloths', and 'plates of gold and silver' take the 'form' of a symphonic harmony. Each object is a 'note' in the 'musical' arrangement. This description accentuates the importance of harmony in decoration. Or take another example. The association between the ornate like 'Sardus', 'pearls', 'diamonds', and great historical figures, like Dukes, Kings, and Priests, enhances the pomp and luxury adding grandeur to the experience. The introspective narrator remarks 'Even to read about the luxury of the dead was wonderful'.⁶⁴³ The phantasmagoria narrative of chapter eleven binds together Dorian's sumptuous experiences. The tumult of images combined with vibrant colour, rhythmic prose and luscious description, invite the reader to gorge upon Dorian's emotional life through the very constituents of the art-object, the form, colour, and their harmony. The aesthetics of sound is an under-researched area within Wildean aesthetics and is unfortunately too large a topic to be treated here. However, from these above examples' it can be seen that chapter eleven propounds Wilde's most overt account of physiological aesthetics.

'stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours'.⁶⁴⁴

This chapter has offered a glimpse of the intellectual context that nurtured Wildean aesthetics, and has tried to account for Wilde's emphasis throughout his work on seemingly abstract concepts like form, line, and colour. Wilde transformed the technical, mathematical and psychological laws and concepts, into creative and

⁶⁴² Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.105.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., p.112.

⁶⁴⁴ Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.152.

meaningful guidelines. David Maclagan states that by the end of the nineteenth-century aesthetics connoted 'elitism', 'precocity' and 'perversity'.⁶⁴⁵ Wilde, Allen, Lee and Sully's discourses on form, harmony and colour were deeply theoretical in nature. However, the dissemination of psychological aesthetics in papers such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Cornhill Magazine* shows a less elitist side to nineteenth century aesthetics.

Maclagan argues that the 'decadent and provocative, fin-de-siècle image of aestheticism, incarnated in figures such as Oscar Wilde or Huysman's *Des Esseintes*' is responsible for the 'suspicion or outright condemnation of a work's aesthetic appeal to be found in different forms, in both Freud and Jung'.⁶⁴⁶ Maclagan's reference to Wilde is purely mythical and does not discuss his real engagement with aesthetic theories and practice. It is interesting that Maclagan's twenty-first century definition of 'psychological aesthetics' is precisely what the psychological aestheticians acknowledged. He defines the term as 'the relation between the actual (aesthetic) qualities of painting, such as line, form, colour, handling, composition and so on and the inner (psychological) effects that these have on the spectator'.⁶⁴⁷ Maclagan criticises nineteenth-century aesthetics for dwelling on 'other-worldly' aesthetic qualities. However, for Wilde, Lee, Allen, and Sully, 'psychological aesthetics' was applicable to dress, stage affect, house decoration, ornament, and literature, and not just painting as suggested by Maclagan.

Finally, why did the discourse of psychological aesthetics place so great an importance on the lines, curves, colours and rhythms of life? Pater's 'Conclusion' suggests the elements that constituted existence like form, colour and sound had to be

⁶⁴⁵ David Maclagan, *Psychological Aesthetics*, (London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001) p.7.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p.25.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p.7.

appreciated singularly as a way of sustaining the fierce intensity, or 'ecstasy' of perception.⁶⁴⁸ While Allen and Sully began their careers in search of a science of aesthetics they quickly learned that their work had rich and meaningful implications for everyday life. Wilde's lectures and essays, Allen, Sully and Lee's periodical writings all empowered middle-class audiences. Implicitly and explicitly, the articles and discussions between Wilde, Allen, Lee and Sully demonstrate that a pleasant homely environment, pleasing dress, a harmonious synthesis of line and colour, page and word, could affect physiological and social life as the Victorians knew it. The psychological aestheticians fiercely entertained the idea that the 'laws of cerebral action and cerebral development' could condition the 'hopes and fears as to the future'.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁸ Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.153.

⁶⁴⁹ [Richard Anthony Proctor], 'On Some Strange Mental Feats', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol.32, Aug., 1875, p.157 (pp.157-175).

Chapter four: Performing Psychology

Now that the relevant context of the ‘psychological aestheticians’ has been established other facets of nineteenth-century psychology which shaped Wilde’s creativity and critical thinking can be explored. The first section of this chapter will examine how Wilde combined contemporary molecular theory and physics with emotionalist psychology. In the notebook he kept at Oxford he asked ‘what place has imagination and emotions in science’.⁶⁵⁰ As will be demonstrated below, emotionalist psychology is fundamental to Wilde’s theorising and creativity. The second part of this chapter will focus on the material aspects governing Wilde’s creative experiments with physiological and emotionalist psychology. In particular his portrayal of colour and sensory perception will be analysed. The final section will explore arguments about whether art could exact a physiological or emotional response in the way external objects or experiences could. Wilde’s short stories like ‘The Portrait of Mr W.H’ (1889) and critical essays will be examined alongside periodical contributions by Sully and the psychologist James Ward.

The aim of art is simply to create a mood.⁶⁵¹

The theory of atomism as well as the laws of thermodynamics frame Wilde’s conception of emotion and its expression. Atomism originates from the ancient Greek philosophy of Democritus and Leucippus. The theory has advanced through the ages but essentially states that all bodies are made up of immutable and indestructible particles. Each particle within the body has relations with its counterpart forming a kind of pattern. The particles are in constant motion bouncing off each other. The particle movement is

⁶⁵⁰ *Oscar Wilde’s Oxford Notebooks*, p.162.

⁶⁵¹ Wilde, ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’, p.444.

replicated throughout the body and dictates the 'motion' of the body.⁶⁵² The Greeks used atomistic theory to explain the constitution of the universe and applied its doctrines to demonstrate social dynamics, and to explain the nature of sensation and emotion. Wilde had read various accounts of atomism in works by Hume, Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, and Clifford. Wilde extended and applied their theories to art, literary criticism, and human psychology.

Wilde's understanding of the relation between emotion and molecular theory can be found in the *Commonplace book*. For example, he stated that 'modern science has shown us that both ethics and motion are results of molecular action: motion in one direction may be an eclipse, in the other a moral sentiment'.⁶⁵³ According to Helfand and Smith, the 'probable source' for this statement is Clifford's essay 'Right and Wrong: the Scientific Ground of their Distinction' where Clifford 'argues the point at length'.⁶⁵⁴ Wilde's example of the eclipse may also have been taken from Hume who stated that it is 'absurd to imagine that motion in a circle, for instance, should be nothing but merely motion in a circle; while motion in another direction, as in an eclipse, should also be a passion or moral reflection'.⁶⁵⁵ Wilde may have taken the quote directly from Hume. However, given that Wilde was reading Huxley it is likely that he had copied it from Huxley's *Hume* (1878), which discussed motion and matter and their relations to human physiology in a way that Wilde's notes replicate. As an example, according to Huxley, Hume grasped the fundamental truth that 'the comprehension of mental operations lies in the study of the molecular changes of the nervous apparatus by which they are

⁶⁵² Clifford, 'Right and Wrong', *Essays and Lectures*, Vol. 2, p.138.

⁶⁵³ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.131.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.188.

⁶⁵⁵ T. H Huxley, *Hume: With Helps to the Study of Berkley*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901) p.91.

originated'. Huxley stated that the 'collection of perceptions which constitutes the mind is really a system of effects, the causes of which are to be sought in changes of matter of the brain [...] which are to be sought in modes of motion of matter.'⁶⁵⁶ Wilde equally stressed that 'Motion is the essence of matter', and that 'All changes of matter [are] modes of motion [...]'.⁶⁵⁷ Still, this is not to question Clifford's influence on Wilde whom he undoubtedly mentions in his notes. Clifford's ideas can also be traced, sometimes almost word for word in Wilde's 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'.

Clifford was primarily a mathematician with a background in philosophy as well. He wrote various articles for the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Contemporary Review*, the *Fortnightly Review* and *Mind*. Wilde had extensively read Clifford's lectures and essays as established by Helfand and Smith's commentary in the *Oxford Notebooks*.⁶⁵⁸ It is unclear whether Wilde read Clifford's writings in their original periodical format. Whether Wilde had read Clifford's periodical articles is important because according to Gowan Dawson, Clifford's writings had been modified by his wife Lucy and their friends to be less controversial for book publication. Lucy wanted to ensure a respectable posthumous reputation for Clifford who was unapologetically controversial during his lifetime.⁶⁵⁹ Throughout his life, Clifford openly declared himself an atheist. He was proud of his willingness to discuss provocative topics such as sex, prostitution and birth control.⁶⁶⁰ George Levine remarks that Clifford was the 'Oscar Wilde of the naturalists'. If Wilde had read the original, more subversive articles by Clifford then Clifford's method of inverting language, and pronouncing outright subversive statements may have inspired Wilde's

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., p.92.

⁶⁵⁷ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, pp.165, 167.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p.30.

⁶⁵⁹ Dawson, *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, p.165.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

iconoclastic and paradoxical proclamations.⁶⁶¹ According to Helfand and Smith Wilde particularly quoted from 'On Theories of Physical Force' (1870), 'On the Aims and Instruments of Scientific Thought' (1872), 'The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences' (1873), 'Body and Mind' (1874), 'On the Scientific Basis of Morals' (1875), 'Right and Wrong: the Scientific Ground for their Distinction' (1875), and 'Virchow on the Teaching of Science' (1878). Two critical essays by Clifford which helped Wilde view emotion and the laws of physics mutually were Clifford's 'Conditions of Mental Development' (1868), which was originally a lecture, and 'Cosmic Emotion' (1877).⁶⁶²

'Cosmic Emotion' was published in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1877. According to Clifford, there were two types of 'cosmic emotion'. The first type related to the 'macrocosm or universe surrounding and containing us'. The second type referred to the 'microcosm or universe of our own souls'.⁶⁶³ In the essay, Clifford amalgamated psychology, physics, ethics and aesthetics to discuss the necessity of acquiring knowledge to progress on a microcosmic and macrocosmic level. He was particularly concerned with aligning molecular theory with human physiology which he related with societal mores, manners, and ethics. In 'Cosmic Emotion' Clifford attributed the analogy between the individual and the social organism to Spencer.⁶⁶⁴ Like Clifford, Wilde comprehended the analogy between the two. According to Wilde though, it was 'Plato', not Spencer, 'who

⁶⁶¹ Levine, 'Scientific Discourse as an Alternative to Faith', p.257.

⁶⁶² Dawson locates 'Cliffordian' terminology in Wilde's lectures and essays from his North American tour. On tour Wilde is said to have remarked on the 'great cosmic emotion ... of science which Shelley has given its first and Swinburne its latest glory of song'. *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, p.172.

⁶⁶³ W. K Clifford, 'Cosmic Emotion', *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 2, Oct., 1877, p. 411, (pp.411-429).

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.427.

saw the real analogy between the individual and the social organism'. Even so, Wilde had read Spencer's entire works.⁶⁶⁵

In his *Commonplace* book Wilde had summarised Spencer's position on the subject. 'Society' was composed of 'complex manifestations of that redistribution of matter and force'. Wilde's notes demonstrate that he understood that the 'redistribution of matter and force' referred to the nerve energy, or 'motion' that constituted human action.⁶⁶⁶ Spencer stated that the welfare of the nervous system was the ultimate object of all actions since it was the nervous system that directed the actions of the whole body.⁶⁶⁷ The actions of the many bodies that constituted society were therefore a 'redistribution' of individual nerve force in a collective form. With Wilde's understanding that 'All changes of matter [are] modes of motion' and that 'motion is the essence of matter', the relationship between the way the individual and society functioned was reinforced by Clifford.⁶⁶⁸ Clifford stated that Spencer's 'analogy' was more than an analogy because it represented both society and the individual's 'true identity of process', 'structure' and 'function'.⁶⁶⁹ The network of nerves which carry and distribute energy or 'matter' to produce 'motion' or action in the human body, is replicated in the social organism where each individual is like a nerve cell in the 'central nervous system' of society.⁶⁷⁰ In this way, Clifford perceived Spencer's analogy as a true representation of individual and social function.

⁶⁶⁵ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.109.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.109, 110.

⁶⁶⁷ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology*, Stanislav Andreski, ed., (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1969) p.20.

⁶⁶⁸ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.167.

⁶⁶⁹ Clifford, 'Cosmic Emotion', p.427.

⁶⁷⁰ Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, p.20.

In 'Cosmic Emotion' Clifford offered a detailed physiological explanation with regard to 'molar' and 'molecular' movement, by which he inferred 'society' and 'emotion'. Particles within 'molecular movement', he argued, were in a state of rapid agitation. An example of such 'motion' was 'heat and nerve-discharge', or the 'cosmic emotion' at the microscopic level. 'Molar motion' was the 'movement in one piece of masses large enough to be seen'.⁶⁷¹ The social organism was the 'molar' motion of which the individual was the 'molecular' component. In 'Cosmic Emotion', Clifford compressed this lengthy discussion into a Wilde-like axiom:

And although the end of all knowledge is action, and it is only for the sake of action that knowledge is sought by the human race, yet, in order that it may be gained in sufficient breadth and depth, it is necessary that the individual should seek knowledge *for its own sake*.⁶⁷²

'Knowledge *for its own sake*' echoes 'art for art's sake'. Clifford had read Swinburne and quoted passages from him in 'Cosmic Emotion'. Clifford's mimicking of 'art for art's sake' in this context appears deliberate. Dawson observes that in 'Cosmic Emotion' Clifford quoted extensively from Swinburne's *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871). Like Clifford, Swinburne was a highly controversial figure whose poetry was condemned as amoral and sensual. The two also shared mutual friends so Wilde, to whom Swinburne was a kind of hero, may have seen Clifford as an intellectual ally.⁶⁷³

⁶⁷¹ Clifford, 'Cosmic Emotion', p.425.

⁶⁷² Ibid., p.421.

⁶⁷³ Dawson, *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, p.169.

Clifford's passage quoted above reverberates through Wilde's 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' also published in the *Nineteenth Century*:

For emotion for the sake of emotion is the aim of
art,
and emotion for the sake of action is the aim of life,
and of that practical organisation we call society.

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This passage bears a striking resemblance to Clifford's above. Wilde even italicises the statement in the manner of Clifford. This comparison shows that Wilde's seemingly poetic verbalisms are actually incumbent upon theories of atomism and the principle laws of motion and matter. Like Clifford and Spencer, Wilde conceptualises society and the individual through molecular theory. However, unlike Clifford and Spencer who speak of 'motion' and 'nerve discharge', Wilde uses the term 'emotion'. Perhaps Wilde learned from Huxley as well as from Pater that 'sensation' and 'emotion' had as much claim to the title of 'knowledge' as any other relations of impressions. Huxley explained that it is 'not obvious why the impression we call a relation should have a better claim to the title of knowledge, than that which we call a sensation or an emotion'. The 'restriction', argued Huxley 'has this unfortunate result, that it excludes all the most intense states of consciousness from any claim to the title of knowledge.'⁶⁷⁵ The notion that relations between impressions are unified with the sole power of the intellect, maintained Huxley, is flawed. After all, knowledge was channelled through the senses. It was therefore

⁶⁷⁴ Wilde, 'The True Value and Function of Criticism', p.440.

⁶⁷⁵ Huxley, *Hume*, p.86.

reductive to exclude intense states of consciousness which transpired from the senses.⁶⁷⁶

Pater famously remarked in the 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance* that 'Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love'. Such 'passion' could 'yield' a 'quickened, multiplied consciousness', and provide no end of 'new opinions' and 'new impressions.'⁶⁷⁷ For Wilde, Pater and Huxley, emotions and sensations were the 'raw materials of knowledge'.⁶⁷⁸ For each writer, emotion was a core part of perception, judgement and intellect. This subtle but poignant observation was crucial to Wilde's educationalist aesthetic as will be explored below.

'Emotion' is not merely a metaphor in Wilde's writings. He creatively engaged with wider debates ongoing in the periodical press about the nature of emotion and how it could be approached through various specialist subjects like physics, chemistry, the ever evolving subject of psychology, and most importantly for Wilde, art. One of the key statements in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' and elsewhere in his writings is that 'emotion is the aim of art', and that there 'is no mood or passion that art cannot give us'.⁶⁷⁹ For Wilde '*action of every kind belongs to the sphere of ethics*'.⁶⁸⁰ The emotion evoked by art, unlike the nerve discharges that constitute social action or 'society', 'does not hurt us'.⁶⁸¹ Art's function was to awaken 'sterile emotions' and allow them 'play' in a safe environment.⁶⁸² In 'Cosmic Emotion' Clifford argued that a 'good action' was an action that made the organism 'more organic'.⁶⁸³ He sought for an ethical basis to life through science rather than religion. According to him, a constant change of motion and

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Pater, *The Renaissance*, pp.152, 153.

⁶⁷⁸ Huxley, *Hume*, p.78.

⁶⁷⁹ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', pp.438, 444.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., p.444.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid., p.440.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Clifford, 'Cosmic Emotion', p.425.

matter, a state of relativity or flux, must be caused by 'action from within'.⁶⁸⁴ This autonomous action, influenced by none other than the nerve discharge of the individual, was a healthy basis for an 'ethical' society. Society, states Gilbert in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', 'is the beginning and basis of morals' and 'exists for the concentration of energy'.⁶⁸⁵ Clifford's vision of an 'ethical' society with its basis in the molecular motions of the citizen could only be realised, according to the argument in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', through art.

Clifford was a key proponent of relativity theory and anticipated Einstein's theory of relativity. In his essay 'On the Space-Theory of Matter' (1876), Clifford presented the idea that matter and energy were different forms of curvature of space. He promulgated an attitude of receptivity and openness to receive ideas. He argued relentlessly that the human condition was incapable of absolute knowledge.⁶⁸⁶ Wilde transported the doctrine of relativity which Pater espoused in his preface to *The Renaissance*, into his discussions of emotion and moods as expressed in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism':

Art is a passion, and, in matters of art, Thought is inevitably coloured by emotion, and so is fluid rather than fixed, and, depending upon fine moods and exquisite emotions, cannot be narrowed into the rigidity of a scientific formula or religious dogma.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.440.

⁶⁸⁶ Christopher Herbert, *Victorian Relativity Radical Thought and Scientific Discovery* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) p.209.

⁶⁸⁷ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.449.

Christopher Herbert provides an invaluable account of relativistic literature. He sees the late nineteenth-century re-emergence of relativity theory as 'a distinct theme of avant-garde speculation'. Herbert explains that relativity theory was no longer applicable to bodies, forces or causality, but to 'symbolic processes' and forms of reality outside the mechanical model of science.⁶⁸⁸ Herbert states that relativistic writing 'forms the inverse image of all systems of autocracy and absolutism'. Relativity theory, he argues, has an 'almost obsessive love of paradox' and is characterised by 'a note of feeling not often allowed expression in other contemporary literary fora: a note of rage, disaffection, nausea'.⁶⁸⁹ Herbert also explains that relativistic thought was identified with 'irrationalism'.

The characteristics of relativistic literature outlined by Herbert were typically associated with Wilde by Victorian critics. Wilde was thought to overuse paradox in his writing which led him to be perceived as an insincere, frivolous writer.⁶⁹⁰ In *Dorian Gray*, even nausea or rage could constitute an aesthetic experience by Dorian's standards. The very emotions deemed to be 'morbid' or anti-social by critics were welcomed by Wilde into the realm of aesthetic experience.⁶⁹¹ Thirdly, Wilde was frequently portrayed as effeminate in the popular press which equated his aestheticism with 'emotionalism'. This emotionality was considered feminine and femininity was linked with irrationality.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸ Herbert, *Victorian Relativity Radical Thought and Scientific Discovery*, p.180.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.71, 72.

⁶⁹⁰ In a review of *Intentions* in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Wilde was criticised for his 'bent towards paradox', or 'quaint perversions of the obvious'. Anon., 'Mr Oscar Wilde's "*Intentions*"', p.3.

⁶⁹¹ Jill Larson argues that *Dorian Gray* 'ventures an experiment in aestheticizing morality' and thus embraces those emotions deemed 'immoral', or antisocial. *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel: 1880-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p.93.

⁶⁹² The New York correspondent of the *Daily News* reported that Wilde had been much ridiculed in America, some calling him "Ruskin and Water," others "Oscar the Ass-thete". One man said that he should call him 'she,' as he was a "Charlotte-Ann", Anon., 'Oscar Wilde Very Wilde', *Moonshine*, Saturday 18 Mar., 1882) p.129.

Lastly, according to Herbert, the expositions of relativistic thought consistently adopted the languages of ‘almost esoteric philosophical and scientific investigation’.⁶⁹³ As demonstrated in chapter two, Wilde adapted and poeticised the nomenclature of psychology and philosophy.

Art, argued Wilde, was about the ‘rejection of energy’, or action.⁶⁹⁴ In the ‘True Function and Value of Criticism’ as well as in his review ‘The Chinese Sage’ (1890), Wilde maintained that the most varied emotions could only be experienced through art. As established in the previous chapter, Wilde reviewed John Vietch’s book *The Nature of Feeling in Scottish Poetry* for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Vietch explored the nature of energy in relation to Aristotle’s law of pleasure and pain. Vietch summarised the ‘law’ explaining ‘that pleasurable feeling is the reflex or accompaniment of the full, free, and unimpeded exercise of a faculty or capacity of mind; whereas pain is the result of the repression of a power below its natural and legitimate degree of exercise, or of the straining of the power above its normal degree’.⁶⁹⁵ This law, argued Vietch, could be applied to mental, bodily and emotional phenomena. ‘Were we to cease to act, we should cease to feel, and in that case also we should cease to live – to be – for our life is realised only in action, and the highest life is but the highest action’.⁶⁹⁶ Vietch maintained that ‘Action or energy is really at the root of feeling; and feeling is relative as a rule to the perfect or the imperfect energy’.⁶⁹⁷ Vietch’s view was representative of the physiological school of psychologists who believed that external conditions stimulated and affected emotional processes rather than ‘action from within’ the organism as Clifford maintained. It was

⁶⁹³ Herbert, *Victorian Relativity Radical Thought and Scientific Discovery*, p.71.

⁶⁹⁴ Wilde, ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’, p.443.

⁶⁹⁵ Vietch, *The Nature of Feeling in Scottish Poetry*, p.42.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

action that dictated feelings and action that maintained equilibrium of energies within the individual and society.

In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' Wilde addressed Vietch's very point. Gilbert states, 'Action! What is action? It dies at the moment of its energy. It is a base concession to fact.'⁶⁹⁸ Further on in the essay he contends that the 'scientific principle of Heredity' reveals the 'absolute mechanism of action'. This shows that 'we are never less free than when we try to act'.⁶⁹⁹ Gilbert continues inverting the idea that action is the highest form of energy:

... the contemplative life, the life that has for its aim not *doing* but *being*, and not *being* merely, but *becoming* – that is what the critical spirit can give us. The gods live thus: either brooding over their own perfection, as Aristotle tells us, or, as Epicurus fancied, watching with the calm eyes of the spectator the tragic-comedy of the world that they have made. We, too, might live like them, and set ourselves to witness with appropriate emotions the varied scenes that man and nature afford. We might make ourselves spiritual by detaching ourselves from action, and become perfect by the rejection of energy.⁷⁰⁰

As will be explored in the next chapter, Gilbert's view is constructed to avoid the ethical consequences that action unavoidably entails. The term 'spiritual' above is worthy of

⁶⁹⁸ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.140.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p.442.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p.443.

attention as it is frequently used by Wilde throughout his oeuvre. It may be argued that 'spiritual' relates to the cerebral, which is often said of Wilde's writing by such critics as Linda Dowling and Thomas Wright.⁷⁰¹ Frank Turner states that the word 'spiritual' is one of the most difficult to comprehend and most important of the late nineteenth century.

According to Turner, 'spiritual' did not refer to Christian doctrine or religion. The term was employed to address the 'questions, issues and problems of human life previously addressed by that faith'.⁷⁰² Turner states that a 'mixed lot' of intellectuals like F. W. H Myers, James Ward, Henry Sidgwick and George Romanes, could not accept that 'all valid human experiences and ideals could be expressed through or subsumed under existing scientific categories and laws'.⁷⁰³ Wilde can also be grouped amongst these intellectuals. When he uses the term 'spiritual' it denotes sensory and aesthetic experience. By employing the term 'emotion', and not simply 'motion', as argued above, Wilde accepts the physical laws of matter and motion, but also embraces all states of consciousness. In the paragraph above, the term 'spiritual' is used to describe the rejection of physical activity and is associated with paganism as Wilde mentions 'gods', and the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus. Epicurus was an atomist for whom the avoidance of pain was the ultimate pursuit in life.⁷⁰⁴ For Turner, the intellectuals above were not defending Christianity in their use of the term 'spiritual', but they were looking to establish how to pursue and present human experience in its entirety. For Wilde, the most comprehensive methodology was that which accepted aesthetic and sensory experience.

⁷⁰¹ Thomas Wright, *Oscar's Books: A Journey Through the Library of Oscar Wilde* (London: Vintage Books, 2009) p.157. Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin De Siècle*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) p.171.

⁷⁰² Frank Turner, *Between Science and Religion*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974) p.3.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., p.2.

⁷⁰⁴ Dawson, *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, p.85.

Motion is the essence of matter.⁷⁰⁵

Johann Bernard Stallo observes that nineteenth-century physics treated light, heat, electricity and magnetism 'as different manifestations of the same fundamental energy'.⁷⁰⁶ In his article 'On the Correlation of Force in its Bearing on Mind' (1867) for *Macmillan's Magazine*, Alexander Bain argued that 'Nerve Force' was 'a genuine member' of 'powers' which he, and numerous psychologists, typically allied with the form of electricity. 'Nerve Force', he argued, could also be comprehended in relation to the laws of thermodynamics, which he defined as the 'Correlation, Persistence, Equivalence, Transmutability, [and] Indestructibility of Force'.⁷⁰⁷ Bain insisted that 'there is a definite equivalence between mental manifestations and physical forces, the same as between the physical forces themselves'.⁷⁰⁸ Wilde expressed the very same statement repetitively throughout his writings:

Emotional forces, like the *forces* of physical life, have their positive limitations [*Italics mine*].⁷⁰⁹

[...] emotional forces, like the forces of the physical sphere, are limited in *extent* and *energy*. One can feel so much and no more [*Italics mine*].⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁵ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.167.

⁷⁰⁶ Quoted in P. M Harman, *Energy, Force and Matter: The Conceptual Development of Nineteenth Century Physics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p.1.

⁷⁰⁷ Alexander Bain, 'On the Correlation of Force in its Bearing to Mind', *Macmillan's Magazine*, Vol. 16, Sept., 1867, p.372, (pp.372-383).

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p.377.

⁷⁰⁹ Oscar Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr W. H' *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. 146, Jul., 1889, pp.18-19, (pp.1-21).

⁷¹⁰ Wilde, 'The True Value and Function of Criticism', p.440.

Emotional forces, as I say somewhere in *Intentions*, are as limited in *extent* and *duration* as the *forces of physical energy*. The little cup that is made to hold so much can hold so much and no more [...] [*Italics mine*].⁷¹¹

The laws of thermodynamics are critical to this quote which Wilde repeats in 'The Portrait of Mr W. H', 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' as well as in *De Profundis* respectively. The law of equivalence, correlation and persistence is evident when Wilde talks about the physical limitations of force which in the case of emotion is only equivalent to the emotional capacity of the individual. In these passages Wilde is not drawing an analogy between emotion and the physical forces. He literally extends the conceptions of 'force', 'energy', 'extent and duration' to human psychology, and consequently creates a type of emotionalist 'law'. The principle of the transmutation of energy or 'transference of emotion' is creatively illustrated at length as is demonstrated in the analysis of 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' further below.

The first time that Wilde's self plagiarised statement appeared was in 'The Portrait of Mr W.H' published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. 'The Portrait of Mr W. H' is a tale within a tale. It begins with our unnamed narrator being told by his friend Erskine the story of Cyril Graham. Erskine's friend Cyril becomes obsessed with his theory about William Shakespeare's sonnets. According to Cyril, Shakespeare's sonnets were written to his boy-actor-lover Willie Hughes. Cyril even forges a portrait of Willie Hughes as 'proof' to validate his critical claims. With the portrait, Cyril tries to convince Erskine of his theory

⁷¹¹ Wilde, *Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis*, p.143.

although Erskine remains sceptical. In the end, Cyril dies from consumption, but leads Erskine to believe that he committed suicide to substantiate his belief in his theory about Willie Hughes. After learning about Cyril's devotion to his theory about Shakespeare's sonnets the unnamed narrator also becomes infatuated with the theory of Willie Hughes.

The anonymous narrator re-examines Cyril's argument and then feverishly writes a letter to Erskine to purge himself of the theory which he ardently believes at the time of writing the letter. However, after expelling his conviction in a torrent of words, a 'curious reaction' overcomes him:

It seemed to me that I had given away my *capacity* for belief in the Willie Hughes theory of the Sonnets, that *something had gone out of me*, as it were, and that I was perfectly indifferent to the whole subject. [...] Perhaps, by finding perfect expression for a passion, *I had exhausted the passion itself* [*italics mine*].⁷¹²

This passage is followed with the remark that 'Emotional forces like the forces of physical life, have their positive limitations'.⁷¹³ What has actually been expressed in the above quotation is the law of the conservation of energy. In 'The Constitution of the Universe' (1865), Tyndall had stated that the 'energy of the universe is as constant as matter'. Furthermore, this energy could be compelled to change its form. 'Where energy disappears', explained Tyndall, 'it changes its form merely, and that if we are intelligent enough to follow it we shall find it somewhere, unaltered in amount, though perhaps

⁷¹² Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr W.H', pp.18-19.

⁷¹³ Ibid.,

with an entirely new face.'⁷¹⁴ It is his emotional energy, or the 'capacity' to believe in Cyril's theory, that the narrator in 'The Portrait of Mr W. H' imparts to Erskine, through writing the letter, leaving himself 'exhausted' of the passion.

In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' Wilde coins the term 'transference of emotion'.⁷¹⁵ In this essay he enacts the 'transference of emotion', or the transmutation of energy upon the reader through physiological aesthetics. The thoughts and feelings suggested by the words are crafted by Wilde to impress their emotional significations on to the reader. To illustrate this point, in *Physiological Aesthetics* Allen maintained that the words 'lily of the valley', for instance, do not affect the optic nerve or the olfactory nerve as would the physical flower. Nevertheless, he maintained that the feelings evoked by the art-object corresponded with the movement and motion of the nerve plexuses when presented with a physical object.⁷¹⁶ The representation of the 'ideal' emotions and the 'actual' emotions by Allen is complicated and will be treated further below. Like Allen, and perhaps with more precision than Allen in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', Gilbert argues that words have 'plastic form no less sure and certain than that which reveals itself in marble or bronze.'⁷¹⁷ Like Allen, Gilbert voices the view that words can induce the same feelings that arise from a physical object, although Gilbert compares 'words' with other art forms like painting and not with actual life like Allen. Gilbert states that words have 'colour as rich and vivid as any that makes lovely [...] the canvas of the

⁷¹⁴ John Tyndall, 'The Constitution of the Universe', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 3, Dec., 1865, p.130, (pp.129-144).

⁷¹⁵ Wilde, 'True Function and Value of Criticism', p.439.

⁷¹⁶ Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, p.248.

⁷¹⁷ Wilde, 'True Function and Value of Criticism', p.134.

Venetian or the Spaniard.’⁷¹⁸ Like Allen, Wilde argued that words created a physiological affect.

In part two of the essay, Wilde turned his attention to the materiality and physiology of reading. One of the most vivid descriptions offered is that of Baudelaire’s ‘little volume’ which is covered with ‘Nile-green skin’, ‘powdered with gilded nenuphars and smoothed with hard ivory’. This very physical image of ‘Baudelaire’s masterpiece’ *Les Fleurs Du Mal* or ‘The Flowers of Evil’, flowers here being analogous to poetry, is followed with a description of some of the book’s contents, or the ‘subtle music’ that is to ‘steal into your brain and colour your thoughts’.⁷¹⁹ Wilde writes:

Pass on to the poem on the man who tortures himself, let
its subtle music steal into your brain and colour your
thoughts, and you will become for a moment what he was
who wrote it; nay not for a moment only, but for many
barren moonlit nights and sunless sterile days will a
despair that is not your own make its dwelling within you,
and the misery of another gnaw your heart away.⁷²⁰

As discussed in the previous chapter, psychological aestheticians accentuated the art-object’s form, colour, sound and harmony. Wilde crafted his descriptions of reading around what Pater referred to as the sensuous elements in art, ‘colour, form, [and] sound’. These elements, stated Pater, were to be dextrously recalled ‘together with a

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., p.439.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

profound, joyful sensuousness of motion'.⁷²¹ Wilde precisely merges 'motion', with the very 'matter' of art in the following example:

And then, when you are tired of these flowers of evil, turn
to the flowers that grow in the garden of Perdita, and in
their dew-drenched chalices *cool your* fevered brow, and
let their loveliness *heal and restore your* soul; or wake
from his forgotten tomb the sweet Syrian Meleager, and
bid the lover of Helidore make you music, for he too has
flowers in his song, red pomegranate-blossoms, and irises
that *smell of myrrh, ringed* daffodils and dark-blue
hyacinths, and marjoram and crinkled ox-eyes. Dear to
him was the *perfume* of the bean-field at evening, and
dear to him the *odorous* eared-spikenard that grew on the
Syrian hills, and the fresh green thyme, the wine-cup's
charm. The feet of his love as she walked in the garden
were like lilies set upon lilies. *Softer* than sleep-laden
poppy petals were her lips, softer than violets and as
scented [*Italics mine*].⁷²²

'Meleager' was a Syrian poet whose posterity rests on his compilation of an anthology of Greek poets entitled *Stephanos* or 'Garland'. In the anthology, Meleager compared each poet to a flower and described the poems through flower poetics.⁷²³ 'Perdita' is the

⁷²¹ Pater, *The Renaissance*, pp.134-135.

⁷²² Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.439.

⁷²³ Jerry Clack, *Meleager: The Poems*, (Illinois: Bolchazy - Carducci Publishers, 1992) p.2.

daughter of Leontes, the king of Sicilia and his wife Hermione in Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale*. According to Amy Tigner, in Perdita's flower garden, the physical properties of plants signify moral and religious meanings, but the flowers also symbolise Perdita's virginal body.⁷²⁴ After this luscious, engaging description which talks directly to 'you', Wilde writes 'It is a strange thing this transference of emotion'.⁷²⁵ Wilde is able to enact, or 'perform' this 'transference of emotion' on 'you' by crafting the descriptions of the book and its contents around the senses of smell, touch, sight and taste as expounded by Allen.

In 'Dissecting a Daisy' (1878), Allen examined how the perfume, softness, colour, form and symmetry of flowers stimulated the senses. Allen theorised how the aesthetical attributes of a flower could be manipulated to create a physiological affect. He practised his theory in descriptions in 'Dissecting a Daisy'. As an instance take his description, 'We get a pleasant shock of varied stimulation from a garden glowing with roses, peonies, fuchsias, chrysanthemums, asters, dahlias, and Canterbury bells. We look with delight upon the hanging masses of laburnum, the clustered wealth of apple-blossom, the crimson glory of Virginia Creeper, tinged by the autumnal frost'.⁷²⁶ Such gorgeous descriptions characterise many of Allen's essays as well as that of other theorists contributing to the *Cornhill Magazine*. Writing over a decade before Allen, also in the *Cornhill Magazine*, Lewes maintained that flowers are the incarnation of poetry, and believed that 'only the sensitive eye of the poet [...] could divine meaning from their

⁷²⁴ Amy L. Tigner, 'The Winter's Tale and the Marvels of Transformation', *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 36, issue 1, p.114, (pp.114-134).

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Allen, 'Dissecting a Daisy,' p.63.

seemingly useless display of colour, form and perfume'.⁷²⁷ Wilde imitates the aesthetics of flowers by accentuating their form, scent, colour and poetical association so as to evoke the same sensory response demanded by the physical flower.

The psychologist William James perceived the close relations between imagination and perception. He asked 'how comes it about that a man reading something aloud for the first time is able immediately to emphasise all his words linguistically'.⁷²⁸ He also asked 'what is that shadowy scheme of "form" of an opera, play or book which remains in our mind and on which we pass judgement when the actual thing is done?'.⁷²⁹ The question of form and point of view was treated creatively by James' younger brother Henry, who experimented with the concept of subjectivity in novels such as *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *What Maisie Knew* (1897). William theorised about psychology in literature. He argued that every word had its own emotion. He stated, there 'is not a conjunction, or a preposition and hardly an adverbial phrase, syntactic form or inflection of voice, in human speech, that does not express some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel to exist between the larger objects of our thought'.⁷³⁰ He further maintained that there is a feeling for 'and', a feeling of 'if', a feeling for 'but' and so on. Crucially, James understood what earlier psychologists ignored, that 'feeling is continuous', 'like time's stream'.⁷³¹ Wilde's 'performative' or expressive prose suggests that he consciously wove his words to transfer feeling and '(e)motion'.

⁷²⁷ G. H. Lewes, 'Flower Farming,' *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol.10, Oct., 1864, p.427. (pp.427-433)

⁷²⁸ William James, 'On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology', *Mind*, Vol.9, No. 33, Jan., 1884, p.15, (pp.1-26).

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

In a review entitled 'The Poet's Corner' (1888) which was a regular series by Wilde for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he argued that 'Scientific laws are at once too abstract and too clearly defined'. Wilde had originally made this remark in his American lecture 'The English Renaissance of Art' delivered for the first time in January 1882, at the Chickering Hall in New York. Even the 'visible arts', perceived Wilde, 'have not yet been able to translate into any symbols of beauty the discoveries of modern science. At the Arts and Crafts Exhibition we find the cosmogony of Moses, not the cosmogony of Darwin. To Mr. Burne-Jones Man is still a fallen angel, not a greater ape.'⁷³² Wilde contemplated how science could be poeticised throughout the 1880s. His engagement with art's essential ingredient, emotion, enabled him to translate the 'discoveries of science' into 'symbols of beauty'.

Nicholas Frankel asserts that 'not enough work has been done to establish the historical and material character of *Intentions* [...]'.⁷³³ He tries to understand Wilde's engaging descriptions through the 'pleasure theory' of the French philosopher Georges Bataille. Bataille, states Frankel, would see 'pleasure as the very basis of human activity, not just art and play'. Pleasure, according to Frankel's interpretation of Bataille, is significantly reduced to a secondary role in intellectual representations. Frankel states that the pleasure of Wilde's words, the pleasure of the material qualities of his books, have been ignored by scholars in exchange for intellectualised accounts of his writings. According to Frankel, Wilde's *Intentions* is less interested in thought than it is in pleasure. The above analysis of Wilde's 'transference of emotion' certainly corroborates Frankel's point. Frankel goes further, however, arguing that for Wilde, 'the pleasures of the text

⁷³² [Oscar Wilde], 'The Poet's Corner', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 Nov., 1888, Vol., 48, No.7385, p.5.

⁷³³ Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books*, p.86

are distinctly erotic acts'.⁷³⁴ Perhaps because of Wilde's same-sex relations critics like Frankel sexualise Wilde's texts, and try to understand him through theories of sexuality, and other twentieth and twenty-first century theoretical frameworks.

While formalistic readings like Frankel's encourage readers to think about the interrelations between Wilde's writings and contemporary criticism, they cannot offer an understanding of the intellectual context that influenced, shaped and helped Wilde conceive his creative methods. The account I have given above of Wilde's engagement with the laws of thermodynamics, molecular theory and emotionalist psychology reveals the intellectual forces that shaped Wilde's writings. While pleasure may have been the aim of the second person references in the above passage from 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', there is still much investigation that needs to be done to understand the ideas that frame those pleasurable moments. Victorianists need not go to poststructuralists for an explanation of Wilde's prose when the very poststructuralist theories are themselves evolutions of Victorian thought.

[...] producing a physical as well as a spiritual delight, [which] exults the senses no less than it exults the soul.⁷³⁵

In *The Physiology of the Novel* (2007) Nicholas Dames explores how numerous writers such as Lewes, Bain, and Lee fused literary criticism with physiology. Dames states that a plethora of Victorian texts, some 'literary', others physiological, constituted 'physiological novel theory'. This theory views the act of reading a novel as a 'performance' – a 'performance enacted in and by the nerves'.⁷³⁶ According to Dames the

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p.105.

⁷³⁵ [Oscar Wilde], 'Mr Morris's Odyssey,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 6897, 26 Apr., 1887, p. 5.

⁷³⁶ Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p.11.

form or text (which need not be a novel) is codified with meanings to evoke a physiological reaction from the reader. This chapter is entitled 'Performing Psychology' because it aims to demonstrate how Wilde enacted or played out a kind of 'physiological' aesthetics upon the reader. The aesthetic and material qualities evoked by Wilde's sensory descriptions are intertwined with the material aspects of reading and books. It is for this reason that Frankel states that a work's physical appearance and manner of publication are as important as 'the text itself'.⁷³⁷

Dames sees the Victorian reviewer, whom he exemplifies in the figure of Geraldine Jewsbury, as a kind of reader response theorist. Her approach to the physiology of reading, argues Dames, is very different from the 'abstract, scientized literary theories' of Lewes or Bain. Dames suggests that Jewsbury's observations as a reviewer were more practical than the 'abstract' theories of Bain or Lewes because Jewsbury had an object of analysis before her. Her observations were supported by literary evidence. Bain's *The Emotions and the Will* theorised about mental states as a contribution to the study of mind. It is therefore highly problematic to see Bain's text among some of Lewes's, as 'locations of novel theories'.⁷³⁸ Bain's observations on the ideal emotions were attempts at making objective statements about the relations between mental states and physiology whereas Jewsbury's criticism related to the specific text under review.

Lewes's texts such as *Principles of Success in Literature* (1865) are a hybrid of psychology and literary criticism because Lewes explicitly refers to psychological principles to uphold his views on successful literature. Lewes's versatility as a

⁷³⁷ Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books*, p.2.

⁷³⁸ Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel*, p.39.

philosopher, physiologist, dramatist and critic makes him difficult to classify into any one role. Dames' classifications of Bain and Lewes as reader response theorists is an attempt to make both figures 'fit' into twenty-first-century debates within 'book history'. 'Book history' is a multifaceted methodology that encourages social, cultural, material and psychological views of books and reading. Dames' categorisation of Bain and Lewes's texts as 'novel theory' is therefore retroactive. Dames reflects twenty-first century concerns about the cultural authority of literary criticism, and the waning dominance of the book format. This retrospective categorising of Victorian intellectuals outside their context thus warps the intellectual and cultural debates of Wilde's day. However, Dames' observations that Jewsbury explored readerly response in her reviews and examined the psychological processes involved in reading are helpful in understanding Wilde's psychological 'performances'.

According to Dames, Jewsbury, who read widely in metaphysics and science, focused on questions of readability within the domain of the physical and cognitive responses of readers.⁷³⁹ Lewes theorised about the psychological aspects of literature in *Principles of Success in Literature*. In his review 'A New Book on Dickens', Wilde wrote '[...] it is always open to everyone to accept George Henry Lewes's unfortunate maxim that any author who makes one cry possesses the gift of pathos and, indeed, there is something very flattering in being told that one's own emotions are the ultimate test of literature.'⁷⁴⁰ His reference to Lewes suggests that Wilde had read *Principles of Success in Literature* in which Lewes declared that 'the prosperity of a book lies in the minds of

⁷³⁹ Joanne Wilkes, 'Jewsbury, Geraldine Endors (1812–1880),' *ODNB*, [Accessed 25 Oct., 2010].

⁷⁴⁰ [Oscar Wilde], 'A New Book on Dickens,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 45, No. 6876, 31 Mar., 1887, p.5.

readers'.⁷⁴¹ In the text, Lewes also emphasised the increasing importance of the nervous system in the development of animal organisms.⁷⁴²

Principles of Success in Literature was originally printed as a series of articles in the *Fortnightly Review* from May 15 to November 1 1865. It was also issued in book form in 1865. Lewes believed that literature was a means of reproducing the emotions which have already been felt, and the symbols of which are to 'kindle the emotive sympathy of readers'.⁷⁴³ The basis for all success, argued Lewes, was that 'All literature is founded upon psychological laws, and involves principles which are true for all peoples and for all times'.⁷⁴⁴ Lewes had helped to launch the *Fortnightly Review* of which he was editor. He also contributed regularly to the *Cornhill Magazine* where he applied the 'Laws of Literature', 'intellectual', 'moral', and 'aesthetic', to his articles. David Amigoni states 'If the periodicals and magazines that became ascendant in the second half of the nineteenth century mixed literature and evolutionary science in new and striking ways, style and readerly pleasure were identified as key components of the blend'.⁷⁴⁵ Moreover, Amigoni says that Allen's 'playful' and 'literary' writing, as examined above, was influenced by Lewes's style in his articles for the *Cornhill Magazine*.⁷⁴⁶

Lewes's article 'Flower Farming' published in the *Cornhill Magazine* is a case in point. Lewes was adept at giving technical accounts as well as more fanciful descriptions. For instance he wrote, 'Broad acres of colour flash under the hot sun. The atmosphere is

⁷⁴¹ Lewes, *Principles of Success in Literature*, p.12.

⁷⁴² Ibid., p.1.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., p.23.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., p.5.

⁷⁴⁵ David Amigoni, 'Carving Coconuts, the Philosophy of Drawing Rooms, and the Politics of Dates: Grant Allen, Popular Scientific Journalism, Evolution, and Culture in the *Cornhill Magazine*,' *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, Geoffrey Cantor et al eds., pp.252, 257.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., 251.

heavy with perfumes when the snows are melting on the mountains, and the gurgling Var is rapidly growing into a roaring torrent.’ This rich imagery is then followed by a table displaying the contents of the soil in which the flowers bloom. We are told that the soil contains such chemicals as ‘carbonate of lime’ in the ratio of ‘006.80’, ‘Manganese and Iodine traces’ and ‘Phosphate of Lime and Magnesia’ in the ratio of 005.60. The table appears daunting. However, rather than risk intimidating the reader, Lewes proceeds with a light hearted anecdote:

This soil, so marvellously adapted to flowers, has the reputation of being singularly adapted to man and *mud-baths* are in great request here. The bather is taken to the shore, and, at a distance of some ten yards from the tideless brine, a grave is scooped, into which the bather descends; he is then covered up to the chin, and allowed to remain thus in the embrace of mother earth for fifteen minutes, after which the modern Antaeus takes a plunge in the sea.⁷⁴⁷

Amigoni states that Lewes’s ‘rhetoric’ was intended to induce pleasure. This technique fitted in with the agenda of the *Cornhill Magazine* which aimed to stimulate ‘readerly curiosity and pleasure’.⁷⁴⁸

Wilde was conscious of journalistic strategies which could be employed to engage readers. After all, he himself stated that the ‘Asiatic style’ or, ‘to pile the page’ with ‘gorgeous epithet and resplendent phrase’, ‘pile[s] of adjectives upon Ossas of

⁷⁴⁷ G. H. Lewes, ‘Flower Farming’, *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 10, Oct., 1864, p.428, (pp. 427-433).

⁷⁴⁸ Amigoni, ‘Carving Coconuts, the Philosophy of Drawing Rooms, and the Politics of Dates’, p.255.

descriptions', and the 'highly coloured diction and rich luxuriance of imagery', was useful for journalistic purposes.⁷⁴⁹ As shown in the previous chapter, the *Pall Mall Gazette* often employed this so-called Asiatic style. Another strategy by Wilde in his reviews, as seen in the above passage from 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', was to transport the reader into the narrative by describing the affect of the book on the reader. For instance, on Countess Martinego's *Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs* (1886), 'a volume of moderate dimensions, not too long to be tiresome nor too brief to be disappointing', Wilde imagines the reader 'lounging in his arm chair' amongst the 'melancholy pine-forests of the North to Sicily's orange-groves and the pomegranate gardens of Armenia'. Here the reader may listen to the 'singing of those to whom poetry is a passion, not a profession, and whose art, coming from inspiration and not from schools, if it has the limitations, at least has also the loveliness of its origin, and is one with blowing grasses and the flowers of the field'.⁷⁵⁰ The reference to flowers, as seen above, would bear greater weight in Wilde's critical-creative essays.

In his review of William Morris's translation of the *Odyssey* (1887), Wilde made an overtly physiological observation. He stated 'there is yet a vigour of life in every line like the sound of a trumpet, [...] producing a physical as well as a spiritual delight, [which] exults the senses no less than it exults the soul'.⁷⁵¹ Wilde adhered to Lewes's doctrine that great literature had the power to 'stir our deeper emotions by the contagion of great ideas'.⁷⁵² The reviewer Anne H. Wharton wrote of *Dorian Gray* in the September 1890 issue of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, that Wilde 'surrounds his utterly impossible story

⁷⁴⁹ [Oscar Wilde], 'Sir Edwin Arnold's Last Volume,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 48, No. 7406, 11 Dec., 1888, p.3.

⁷⁵⁰ [Oscar Wilde], 'The Poetry of the People,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 43, No. 6601, 13 May 1886, p.5.

⁷⁵¹ [Oscar Wilde], 'Mr Morris's Odyssey,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 45, No.6897, 26 Apr., 1887, p. 5.

⁷⁵² Lewes, *The Principles of Success in Literature*, p.27.

with a richness and depth of colouring and a grace and airiness of expression that make the perusal of its pages an artistic delight'.⁷⁵³ The magazine which published *Dorian Gray* tried to downplay the accusations of 'immorality', but equally understood the aesthetic affect at which Wilde aimed.

In his review of Hugh Stutfield's *El Magreb: Twelve Hundred Miles' Ride through Morocco*, Wilde tried to appeal to multiple (notably) male readerships:

As for the general reader who, we fear, is not as a rule interested in the question of 'multiple control,' if he is a sportsman, he will find in *El Magreb* a capital account of pig-sticking, if he is artistic, he will be delighted to know that the importation of magenta into Morocco is strictly prohibited; if criminal jurisprudence has any charms for him, he can examine a code that punishes slander by rubbing cayenne pepper into the lips of the offender; and if he is merely lazy, he can take a pleasant ride of twelve hundred miles in Mr. Stutfield's company without stirring out his armchair.⁷⁵⁴

Such descriptions of audience affect and cognition are, Dames suggests, a cornerstone of baroque aesthetics and compel the reader to engage.⁷⁵⁵ Both of the examples given above suggest that Wilde compels the reader to participate in the plot by describing the possible interpretations open to the reader of the narrative in question. Francesca Coppa discusses the 'performative' qualities of Wilde's dialogue in *The Importance of Being*

⁷⁵³ Anne H. Wharton, 'A Revulsion From Realism', *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 48, Sept., 1890, p.409, (pp.409-412).

⁷⁵⁴ [Oscar Wilde], 'A Ride Through Morocco,' *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 44, No. 6728, 8 Oct., 1886, p. 5.

⁷⁵⁵ Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel*, p.39.

Earnest which Wilde scholars agree is a kind of 'verbal opera'.⁷⁵⁶ She sees Wilde's persona and even his 'sexualised' body as a kind of performance. In the theatre, she argues, 'texts are literally embodied; scripts are put into production and become three-dimensional performances in which human behaviour is seen to be loaded with meaning and history'.⁷⁵⁷ Coppa maintains that the 'pleasures of Wilde's writing are tied up in (insider) knowledge and recognition of a variety of (theatrical, comedic, aristocratic, linguistic) behaviours [...]'.⁷⁵⁸ The physiological context detailed above reveals a new context to scholars interested in Wilde's prose 'performances'.

Wilde's reviews also show a calculated regard for the surface value or the materiality of books. His descriptions of books are aesthetically pleasing. Most importantly, the aesthetic appearance of the book is a medium for emotional expression too. Take for instance, Wilde's review of *Low Down: Wayside Thoughts in Ballad and Other Verse* (1886) by 'Two Tramps'. He observes:

The printing exhibits every fantastic variation of type, and the pages range in colour from blue to brown, from grey to sage green and from pink rose to chrome yellow. The philistines may sneer at this chromatic chaos, but we do not. As the painters are always pilfering from the poets, why should not the poet annex the domain of the painter and use colour for the expression of his moods and music: blue for sentiment, and red for passion, grey for cultured

⁷⁵⁶ Francesca Coppa, 'Performance theory and Performativity', *Oscar Wilde Studies*, Fredrick S. Roden, ed., (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) p.77.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid., p.72.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

melancholy, and green for descriptions? The book, then, is
a kind of miniature rainbow, and with its varied sheets is
as lovely as an advertisement hoarding. [...] On the whole,
the volume, if it is not quite worth reading, is at least
worth looking at.⁷⁵⁹

Here Wilde may be retaliating against Whistler when he accuses painters of ‘pilfering from the poets’.⁷⁶⁰ This is because Whistler had accused Wilde of plagiarising. In a letter to the Committee of the National Art Exhibition, Whistler said of Wilde, ‘he dines at our tables, and picks from our platters the plums for the pudding he peddles in the provinces.’⁷⁶¹ The two exchanged verbal blows in various periodicals and never resumed their initial friendship. In the above passage, it is not that the volume under review has been consciously printed with colour-coded pages to mirror the emotions envisaged by the poet, but that Wilde interprets each page as an expression for a particular mood. This idea that the materiality of the book is imbued with emotional expression is revisited by Wilde in his creative-critical writings.

[...] the primary colours of the rainbow, combined and recombined with wondrous alchemy.⁷⁶²

H. R. Haweis, a prolific writer on music, remarked that the painter ‘can combine and recombine; can distribute his hues in concord and discord of colour; can associate

⁷⁵⁹ [Oscar Wilde], ‘The Poet’s Corner,’ *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 44, No. 6718, 27 Sept., 1886, p.5.

⁷⁶⁰ Whistler and Wilde’s verbal combat was fought out in the pages of the periodical press and appears fully in Whistler’s *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, (London: Heinemann, 1904) pp.135-165.

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.164.

⁷⁶² H. R. Haweis, ‘Music and Emotion’, *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. 15, Oct., 1870, p.363, (pp.363-382).

them with definite images', or make them the 'vehicles of poetic emotion'.⁷⁶³ Haweis's book *Music and Morals* (1871) went through an incredible ten editions in twelve years. He wrote on poetry, theology, world affairs and supernaturalism. He came to be renowned however, for his work on music and emotionalist psychology.⁷⁶⁴ Haweis believed that 'ideas are always strengthened by emotion'. Without emotion, an idea would remain a 'pale and powerless shadow'.⁷⁶⁵ As a divine, or a 'psychologist of the soul' who discussed theology, philosophy and psychology together, Haweis maintained that 'Ideas are but wandering spirits that depend for their vitality upon the magnetic currents of feeling'.⁷⁶⁶ In order to capture the visual stimulus offered by painting, the poet must try to recreate "the physical atmosphere of words".⁷⁶⁷ In stark contrast to Sully and Allen, Haweis openly referred to Christianity and the Church in his suggestion of constructing a system to identify musical notes with their corresponding emotion, or 'colour-notes' with their analogous feeling. A 'Sound-Art' and 'Colour-Art' could offer developments which would endow the artist with limitless powers of eliciting emotional response from the spectator.

Wilde understood that colour could enhance a textual or stage 'performance'. On the staging of *Salome* (1896) for example, Charles Ricketts, who oversaw the staging of the 1906 London production, reported that Wilde had suggested the division of the actors into masses of colour; the Jews were to be dressed in yellow, the Romans in purple and John in white. The dress of Salome, Wilde is quoted as saying, was to be 'green like a

⁷⁶³ Ibid., p.378.

⁷⁶⁴ Edward Green, 'Music and the Victorian Mind: The Musical Aesthetics of the Rev. H.R Haweis', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 39, No. 2, Dec., 2008, p.242 (pp.239-256).

⁷⁶⁵ Haweis, 'Music and Emotion', p.369.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., p.370.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., p.371.

curious and poisonous lizard.’⁷⁶⁸ The designer Graham Robertson reported on a yet more elaborate design envisaged by Wilde where every costume was to be ‘from clearest lemon to deep orange, with here and there just a hint of black... all upon a great empty sky of deepest violet’. Wilde also wished ‘in place of an orchestra, braziers of perfume ...[with] scented clouds rising and partly veiling the stage from time to time – a new perfume for each emotion!’.⁷⁶⁹ Regardless of whether these accounts are true, they demonstrate precisely how Wilde creatively construed the performative or sense tingling qualities of the raw ingredients of various forms, colours, smells and sounds.

Wilde often utilised the method of ‘word-painting’ in his work. Agnes Atkinson described ‘word-painting’ as when ‘the artist with words seems to see with the eyes of the artist with the brush, and the literary camp splits into as many sections as the pictorial.’⁷⁷⁰ Take the following passage from *Dorian Gray* as an illustration:

The darkness lifted, and flushed with faint fires, the sky hallowed itself into a perfect pearl. Huge carts filled with nodding lilies rumbled slowly down the polished empty street. [...] The sky was pure opal now, and the roofs of the houses glistened like silver against it. From some chimney opposite a thin wreath of smoke was rising. It

⁷⁶⁸ Joel Kaplan, ‘Wilde on the Stage’, *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, Peter Raby, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.253.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid. p.255.

⁷⁷⁰ Agnes Atkinson describes word-painting as a ‘distinctly artistic faulty’ ‘influencing and being influenced by the arts plastic, pictorial, [and] dramatic’, ‘On Word-painting’, *Portfolio*, Vol. 23, 1870, pp. 206, 211, (pp.206-211).

curled, a violent riband, through the nacre-coloured air.

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This could be a scene from an Impressionist painting. Impressionists such as Claude Monet for instance, took account of the theories regarding wave movements of light and sound to depict the natural conditions in which they found their subjects. The Impressionists favoured the author of *À Rebours* (1884) Joris-Karl Huysmans, because his writings mirrored the mental processes and experiences induced by art. George A. Cevasco observes that what the Impressionists were doing in oil, pastel and pencil, they saw Huysmans doing in prose.⁷⁷² Given Wilde's French Renaissance in 1883 he was conscious of scientific influences on the continent.⁷⁷³ Wilde had met numerous French writers and poets. According to Ellmann, Wilde had an 'extraordinary and unprecedented' effect on French literature.⁷⁷⁴ Let us also remember, as examined in the previous chapter, that he had reviewed Collier's *Manual of Oil Painting* for the *Pall Mall Gazette* which gave instructions to art students on how to apply scientific theories of light to painting.

Like Huysmans Wilde did not simply 'cross-breed' painting and poetry through linguistic suggestion. He actually mirrored the psychological processes of colour perception in his writings. Take for instance the description of Dorian awaking from the darkness of slumber:

⁷⁷¹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.73.

⁷⁷² George A. Cevasco, 'J.K Huysmans and the Impressionists', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 17, No. 2. Dec., 1958, p.202, (pp.210-207).

⁷⁷³ Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, pp.201-210.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.341.

Veil after veil of thin dusky gauze is lifted, and by degrees
the forms and colours of things are restored to them, and
we watch the dawn remaking the world in its antique
pattern. [...] Out of the unreal shadows of the night comes
back the real life that we had known.⁷⁷⁵

This description of colour perception as a gradual lifting of 'veil after veil of thin dusky gauze' where 'by degrees colour is restored', represents colour as an entity quite separate from the 'things' of the world. Colour is depicted as an abstraction conditioned by its form. The description mimics the awakening consciousness whereby physical existence weaves itself by subduing the dream world.

Wilde feeds physiological theory into his conception of reading and the readerly imagination in *Dorian Gray* as he did with his reviews as demonstrated above. For instance, we see Dorian stretching on the sofa with Émile Gautier's *Emaux et Camees*, a 'Charpentier's Japanese paper-edition with the Jacquemart etching'. The binding is of 'citron-green leather', with a 'design of gilt trellis-work and dotted pomegranates'.⁷⁷⁶ Those 'lovely stanzas on Venice' that Dorian reads are transformed from lines on a page into a visual image which sparks associations through the mention of colour:

The mere lines looked to him like those straight lines of
turquoise-blue that follow one as one pushes out to the
Lido. The sudden flashes of colour reminded him of the
gleam of the opal-and iris-throated birds that flutter

⁷⁷⁵ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.107.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., p.134.

round the tall honey-combed Campanile [...]. The whole of
Venice was in those two lines.⁷⁷⁷

Like an impressionist painting, the above lines attempt to recapture fleeting moments and transitory effects of atmosphere. Wilde's technique of rendering the act of reading almost acts out the reader's perceived psychological response. The black blots on the page which we know as words are to Dorian 'sudden flashes of colour' which evoke an association along with a physical affect.

In visual art, colour is a primary source of sensory stimulation. According to Allen, though, words, and especially colour nouns such as the word 'orange', could also gratify the aesthetic sense and therefore arouse 'a faint form of the appropriate sensation'.⁷⁷⁸

Allen explained:

And if it be granted, as we saw to be probable, that the
physical seat of ideal feelings is the same as that of the
corresponding actuality, it will follow that the faint
emotional waves generated by language exercise in a
minor degree the same nerve plexes which would be
exercised more fully by the original vivid waves of which
they are copies.⁷⁷⁹

Colour here plays a key part in conveying mental operation and evokes a string of associations. According to Atkinson, colour 'comes very slowly to play the part in literary description'. He states that colour has passed from 'the sacred chord, blue, purple,

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.134-135.

⁷⁷⁸ Allen, *Physiological Aesthetics*, p.247.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., p.248.

scarlet, white, and gold of early days, through mediaeval splendours and later artificial glitter, into a subtle perception of relative tones and delicate gradations that assimilate the imitative qualities of the modern painter and the modern writer'.⁷⁸⁰ Other aesthetic theoreticians from backgrounds in the fine arts like Haweis also looked forward to the day when a colour system, just like a musical system of notes would be established which would enable the invention of 'new colours and tints!'⁷⁸¹

Haweis exclaims, '[...] what delicate melodies composed of single floating lights, changing and melting from one slow intensity to another through the dark, until some dawn of opal from below might perchance receive the last fluttering pulse of ruby light and prepare the eye for some new passage of exquisite colour!'⁷⁸² Likewise, Wilde envisaged a new tint or tone of colour expression in *Dorian Gray*. The following quotation is the second part of the passage quoted above beginning 'veil after veil of thin dusky gauze is lifted':

We have to resume it where we had left off, and there steals over us a terrible sense of the necessity for the continuance of energy in the same wearisome round of stereo-typed habits of wild longing, it may be that our eyelids might open some morning upon a world that has been refashioned anew in the darkness for our pleasure, a world in which things would have fresh shapes and colours, and be changed, or have other secrets, at any

⁷⁸⁰ Atkinson, 'On Word-painting', p.207.

⁷⁸¹ Haweis, 'Music and Emotion', p.380.

⁷⁸² Ibid.

rate, in no conscious form of obligation or regret, the remembrance even of joy having its bitterness, and the memories of pleasure their pain.⁷⁸³

This quote is an amalgamation of Pater's 'Conclusion', Clifford's version of Darwin's theory of descent by modification, and Mill's conception of mind as an experience-generating machine locked by sensory repetition. It is through 'fresh shapes and colours' that mental associations may break the 'antique pattern' and consequently aid the formation of new sense-data. A new form for the eye has the potential to break the human condition free from the tyranny of habit and prevent experience from growing stale. The senses are depicted as prisoners of their environment and unless a new form appears, may it be a colour or a fresh shape, the mind will not be able to, as Pater maintained, refract, select, transform or recombine the images presented to it.⁷⁸⁴

Mind should act rather than assimilate.⁷⁸⁵

Helfand and Smith have examined how evolutionary and ethnological science helped Wilde to develop a coherent theory of social improvement, which they refer to as Wilde's 'education theory'.⁷⁸⁶ This entails that individuals pursue an autodidactic education, free from the constraints of authority, and the burden of property. However, although Wilde does critique and adapt numerous theories by Darwin and Spencer for his

⁷⁸³ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, pp.107-108.

⁷⁸⁴ Pater says 'The basis of all artistic genius lies in the power of conceiving humanity in a new and striking way, of putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days, generating, around itself an atmosphere with a novel power of refraction, selecting, transforming, recombining the images it transmits, according to the choice of the imaginative intellect,' *The Renaissance*, p.137.

⁷⁸⁵ Clifford, 'On Some of the Conditions of Mental Development', *Lectures and Essays*, Vol. 1, p.104.

⁷⁸⁶ Michael Helfand and Philip E. Smith, 'Anarchy and Culture: The Evolutionary Turn of Cultural Criticism in the Work of Oscar Wilde', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 20, No.2, Summer 1978, pp.205, 209, (pp. 119-215).

vision of a socialist state, his psychologically-crafted prose performances are also modes of training, emotional response and thought. Wilde's creative engagement with psychology shares many of the hopes and ambitions expressed by Clifford in his lecture 'On Some of the Conditions of Mental Development' delivered at the Royal Institution in 1868.

Clifford began the lecture stating 'If you will carefully consider what it is that you have done most often during this day, I think you can hardly avoid being drawn to this conclusion: that you have really done nothing else from morning to night but *change your mind*'.⁷⁸⁷ Clifford deliberated on the kind of change advantageous to the individual and how such changes could be affected. He argued, some people 'read definite books with a view of putting themselves into definite mental states or moods; and attempts are constantly made to produce even a further and more permanent effect, to effect an alteration in character'.⁷⁸⁸ In his lecture on 'Body and Mind' delivered at the Sunday Lecture Society in 1874 Clifford urged people to speak out if they should find anything in their consciousness 'of a different nature' to his explanation of sense perception. He argued, 'If you find anything in yours, it is extremely important that you should analyse it and find out all that you possibly can about it, and state it in the clearest form to other people'.⁷⁸⁹ Essentially, Clifford spoke about the mind's methods of accumulating, analysing, correlating and processing new sense-data.

Clifford observed that one of the conditions of mental development was that the mind should be 'creative rather than acquisitive'.⁷⁹⁰ The 'negative condition' of mind was

⁷⁸⁷ Clifford, 'On Some of the Conditions of Mental Development', p.75.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., p.80.

⁷⁸⁹ W.K Clifford, 'Body and Mind', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 22, Dec., 1874, p.724, (pp.714-736).

⁷⁹⁰ Clifford, 'On Some of the Conditions of Mental Development', p.105.

‘plasticity’, or the mind becoming crystallised.⁷⁹¹ As explored in the first section of this chapter, Clifford maintained that ‘advantageous permanent changes are always produced by the spontaneous action of the organism’, and ‘not by the direct action of the environment’.⁷⁹² Wilde’s descriptions of colour perception above are physiologically crafted to ‘effect’ a change in the reader, or create a ‘temperament capable of receiving, through an imaginative medium, and under imaginative conditions, new and beautiful impressions’.⁷⁹³ For Wilde literature was a means of enticing new impressions and new emotions. The art-object could evoke the spontaneous, organic kind of change imagined by Clifford without the struggle that comes with having to adapt to the conditions presented by a new environment. It was the act of reading, or the reader’s engagement with the text that would allow the mind to ‘act’. It was the alluring and provocative prose that could affect an alteration in mood, character, or personality.

As discussed in chapter two on the nomenclature of psychology and aesthetics Wilde was curious about the manifestations of emotion and creative response. In ‘The Butterfly’s Boswell’ for the *Court and Society Review*, Wilde argued it is only ‘through the mask of the body that [the painter] can show us the mystery of the soul; only through images that he can handle ideas; only through its physical equivalents that he can deal with psychology. And how inadequately does he do it [...]’.⁷⁹⁴ Wilde disdained the painter’s art as a representation of feeling because the painter asked us to ‘accept a bachelor with a frown for the noble rage of Othello, and an old gentleman in a storm for

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Ibid., p.101.

⁷⁹³ Wilde, ‘The Soul of Man Under Socialism’, p.304.

⁷⁹⁴ [Wilde], ‘The Butterfly’s Boswell’, p5.

the wild madness of Lear.’⁷⁹⁵ Wilde reiterated the same statement in ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’ through Gilbert who tries to persuade Ernest that it is only literature which can show ‘the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest.’⁷⁹⁶ The literary critic John Addington Symonds argued that neither painting nor literature could convey, or induce emotion in the way an experience could.

In February 1888 Symonds published an article on ‘Beauty, Composition, Expression, Characterization’ for the *Fortnightly Review*. He maintained that art was merely a mimetic process and was ‘so conspicuously a failure whether we take drama, lyric, work of fiction, statue or painting into account’.⁷⁹⁷ He discussed art in the traditional dichotomised sense of ‘romance versus realism’ which he admitted connoted an ‘obsolete scholastic flavour’.⁷⁹⁸ He argued that the ‘pretension [of art] to be realistic in the technical sense of that word must pass for a piece of impertinence and self-inflated ignorance’.⁷⁹⁹ Art, he contended, ‘can never rival nature in beauty’.⁸⁰⁰ This, claimed Symonds, was because the artist was trapped within his own consciousness and could never escape from the conditions under which he laboured.⁸⁰¹ Wilde was aware of the eminence of Symonds’s views. In an attempt to make himself known to him Wilde had sent Symonds a copy of his *Poems* to which Symonds responded kindly, stating Wilde’s poem ‘Humanited’ had the potential to be ‘trumpets to our time’.⁸⁰² Furthermore, Wilde reviewed Symonds’s *Renaissance in Italy: The Catholic Reaction* (in two parts) in an 1886

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ Wilde, ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’, p.141.

⁷⁹⁷ John Addington Symonds, ‘Beauty, Composition, Expression, Characterization’, *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 49, Feb., 1888, p.212, (pp.211-222).

⁷⁹⁸ John Addington Symonds, ‘Realism and Idealism’, *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 48, Sept., 1887, p.419, (pp.418-429).

⁷⁹⁹ Symonds, ‘Beauty, Composition, Expression, Characterization’, p.220.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., p.212.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., p.222.

⁸⁰² Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.139.

review. Wilde called him a 'picturesque chronicler' and congratulated him on relating the philosophy of Giordano Bruno, whom Pater also wrote about, to 'modern science'.⁸⁰³ However, Wilde disagreed with Symonds's views on art, emotional response, and the relationship between nature and the imagination.

In 'The True Function and Value of criticism', published a year after Symonds's piece, Wilde directly addressed Symonds's criticism about art's incapacity to express or convey an emotional response in the way nature could. Symonds argued that the 'whole hell of Dante is as nothing in sheer intensity when tested by the night hours of a tortured conscience; and even Sappho's odes seem calm beside a lover's actual palpitations'.⁸⁰⁴ Like Symonds, Wilde referred to Dante, specifically Dante's epic poem the *Divine Comedy*, to rebut Symonds's dismissal of literature's capacity for exacting life-like emotion. In 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' Gilbert argued, 'On a shelf of the bookcase behind you stands the *Divine Comedy*, and I know that if I open it at a certain place I shall be filled with a fierce hatred of someone who has never wronged me, or stirred by a great love for someone whom I shall never see'.⁸⁰⁵ In an 1889 review of *The Enchanted Island* (1888) by Wyke Bayliss, the President of the Royal Society of British Artists, Wilde opined, 'What is the use of telling artists that they should paint Nature as she really is?' What Nature really is is a question for metaphysics not for art'. 'Art', continued Wilde, 'deals with appearances, and the eye of the man who looks at Nature, the vision in fact of the artist, is far more important than what he looks at'.⁸⁰⁶ Wilde did not just 'perform'

⁸⁰³ [Oscar Wilde], 'Mr Symonds' History of the Renaissance', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 44, No.6756, 10 Nov., 1886, p.5.

⁸⁰⁴ Symonds, 'Beauty, Composition, Expression, Characterization', p.220.

⁸⁰⁵ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.438.

⁸⁰⁶ [Oscar Wilde], 'The New President', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 49, No. 7445, 20 Jan., 1889, p.3.

physiological aesthetics through his prose he also engaged with theoretical aspects of the debate over art and perception.

In *A Manual of Oil Painting*, Collier argued that ‘a great deal of nonsense has been talked about the impossibility of reproducing nature’. Collier maintained that ‘there is nothing really to prevent a picture giving to the eye exactly the same impression that an actual scene gives’.⁸⁰⁷ ‘The whole passage’, commented Wilde in his review of Collier’s book, ‘is extremely interesting’.⁸⁰⁸ From as early as his undergraduate days Wilde had adopted the view that ‘problems of idealism and realism [...] may seem [...] barren of result in the metaphysical sphere of abstract being’, but, when transferred to the domain of art, ‘you will find they are still vital and full of meaning’.⁸⁰⁹ Wilde’s reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette* between 1888 and 1889 and his publications afterwards show him contemplating the relationship, and interdependency, of art and nature, or the modes of perceiving art and ‘reality’. According to Small, Wilde was the most consistent critic of the relation between art and nature.⁸¹⁰ In fact, Wilde’s handling of perception around the late 1880s proves to be strongly linked to the ongoing debates around the psychology of perception in the writings of psychologists like Sully, Ward, and James.

Symonds knew Sully. The two had lunched together and spoke about ‘tones and colours’. They also took pleasant walks at Davos in Switzerland, and the Mountain Valley in Göttingen, Germany.⁸¹¹ Their conversations on the subject of art and perception, or ‘romance and realism’ would have been fascinating to hear given their views were

⁸⁰⁷ [Wilde], ‘Common Sense in Art’, p.5.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Wilde, ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’, p.132.

⁸¹⁰ Ian Small, ‘Semiotics and Oscar Wilde’s Accounts of Art’, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 25, No. 21, Winter 1985, p.50, (pp.50-56).

⁸¹¹ Sully, *My Life & Friends*, pp.146, 217, 218.

representative of two different schools of thought. Symonds understood that 'idealism' and 'realism' were intertwined because the mind was not a 'photographic camera'. Each individual, he explained, had a unique mind with 'specific aptitudes for observation, with specific predilections, with certain ways of thinking, seeing, feeling and selecting peculiar to himself'.⁸¹² Sully perceived imagination as a way of constructing reality. He explained that 'perception proper is an imaginative reconstruction of external experiences, such as muscular and tactual feelings'.⁸¹³ Sully focussed on the nature of illusion. In 'Illusions of Introspection' (1881) he observed that 'to have a feeling and to know that we have it are not precisely the same mental conditions'.⁸¹⁴

In 1889 Ward contemplated the nature of reality and belief in 'The Principles of Belief' printed in the July issue of *Mind*. Ward was a Cambridge scholar who specialised in philosophical and metaphysical aspects of psychology. Like Sully he was trained in experimental physiology in Göttingen under the revered German physiologist Rudolf Hermann Lotze.⁸¹⁵ Lotze amalgamated the philosophical with physiology and aesthetics. Ward's 'The Psychology of Belief' explored the subtleties of the relations between the 'imaginary' and 'reality'. He paralleled 'reality' with the state of 'belief'. Ward stated that 'everyone knows the difference between imagining a thing and believing in its existence'.⁸¹⁶ However, both 'reality' or 'belief' and 'imagination', Ward argued, were 'psychical states'. To distinguish one from the other we must ask, 'What does the state consist of?', 'What is its nature?', 'Of what sort of mind-stuff is it composed?', 'What

⁸¹² Symonds, 'Realism and Idealism', p.421.

⁸¹³ James Sully, 'Illusion of Introspection', *Mind*, Vol., 6, No., 21, Jan., 1881, p.5, (pp.1-18).

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., p.4.

⁸¹⁵ W. R. Sorley, 'Ward, James (1843–1925)', *ODNB online*, [Accessed 2 Jan., 2011].

⁸¹⁶ James Ward, 'The Principles of Belief', *Mind*, Vol. 14, No. 55, Jul., 1889, p.321, (pp.321-352).

were the conditions of production and its connection with other facts?'.⁸¹⁷ Both Ward's article and Sully's views about the way imagination moulds reality are reflected in Wilde's 'The Portrait of Mr W. H'.

Frankel argues that 'The Portrait of Mr W. H', which was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in the same year as Ward's 1889 essay, 'reflects repeatedly on the fluctuating nature of belief, the status of proof, and the relationship between belief and knowledge'.⁸¹⁸ According to Frankel, in Wilde's tale the imagination is in conflict with the 'evidence'. Frankel observes that 'the more internal evidence [the narrator of the tale] gathers in support of this theory, the more disillusioned with it he becomes.' This is because 'the more certain this evidence becomes or appears, the more the narrator finds his capacity for belief crushed by a cold certainty that has no grip whatsoever upon his imagination'.⁸¹⁹ Frankel states, 'so long as the facts of the case remain uncertain and his imagination stays involved, the narrator's historical sense remains active and his intellect quickened'.⁸²⁰ Frankel concludes with a quote by Wilde stating that 'the aesthetic value of Shakespeare's plays does not, in the slightest degree, depend on their facts, but the Truth, and Truth is independent of facts, always, inventing or selecting them at pleasure'.⁸²¹ As examined above, both Cyril who created the theory of Shakespeare's sonnets, and the anonymous narrator invent and select 'evidence' with the aim of convincing their friend Erskine. The tale within a tale allows for the imaginary world of theories and forgeries to collide with that of validity and empiricism for the sake of creativity, or 'belief'.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., p.321.

⁸¹⁸ Nicholas Frankel, *Masking the Text: Essays on Literature & Mediation in the 1890s*, (High Wycombe: The Rivendale Press, 2009) p.49.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., p.54.

⁸²⁰ Ibid., p.55.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

In reviewing Violet Fane's *Helen Davenant* (1889) in *Woman's World* Wilde stated that Fane's description of the crime committed under hypnotic influence was 'far more probable than the actual experiments recorded in scientific publications'.⁸²² 'This', argued Wilde, 'is the supreme advantage that fiction possesses over fact'. Fiction can 'make things artistically probable, can call for imaginative and realistic credence, by force of mere style, compel us to believe'.⁸²³ For Wilde literature can convey 'truth' in a more compelling style than the so-called 'factual' 'experiments recorded in scientific publications'.⁸²⁴ We can only guess to which 'scientific publications' Wilde referred. He may have had in mind the medical journal the *Lancet* since he criticised Stevenson's description of Jekyll's transformation for being handled 'like an experiment out of the *Lancet*'.⁸²⁵ Wilde seems to criticise Stevenson's inability to 'lie' rather than his mimicking of the scientific experiments that were recorded in the *Lancet*. As also seen in 'The Portrait of Mr W. H', Wilde suggests that 'belief' is closely linked to the emotions. This was a view shared by Ward.

Ward claimed that 'Reality', or 'Belief' 'is a sort of feeling more allied to the emotions than to anything else'.⁸²⁶ W. R Sorley states that Ward 'contrasted the real world of history with the sterile, detached, and abstract world of science'.⁸²⁷ Likewise, Wilde conveys the notion that the world of empirical fact is too detached from the requirements of 'belief'. In 'The Principles of Belief' Ward gathered support from Mill who argued that the 'distinction between thinking of a reality and representing to

⁸²² [Oscar Wilde], 'Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, Vol. 2, 1889, p.223.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

⁸²⁵ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.38.

⁸²⁶ Ward, 'The Principles of Belief', p.321.

⁸²⁷ Sorley, 'Ward, James', *ODNB*.

ourselves an imaginary picture' is 'ultimate and primordial'.⁸²⁸ For Ward, as for Wilde, 'Belief, the sense of reality feels like itself – that is about as much as we can say'.⁸²⁹ 'Belief' cannot therefore be explained or described. Belief must be a feeling which rests, according to Ward, on the subject, the predicate, their relation, and the psychic attitude in which our mind stands towards the proposition taken as a whole.⁸³⁰ The arguments presented by Ward meant that 'belief' was simply a rhetorical argument.

Ward contentiously remarked that the 'worlds of faith may be ranked with the world of the Iliad and of King Lear or the Pickwick Papers'.⁸³¹ 'Belief in the senses' creates 'your world'. For Ward, 'reality means simply relation to our emotional and active life'.⁸³² It is on this line of argument that Wilde conducts 'The Decay of Lying'. In 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde argues for the world of Romance to become the permanent mode of perception for the artist, and the art-object, a method of experiencing myriad emotions for the spectator. The discussion about 'life's imitative instinct' between Vivian and Cyril in 'The Decay of Lying' replicates the philosophical arguments of Ward. 'The nineteenth century,' states Vivian, is 'largely an invention of Balzac [...] Our Luciens de Rubempré, our Rastignacs, and De Marsays made their first appearances in the *Comédie Humaine*. We are merely carrying out, with footnotes and unnecessary additions, the whim or fancy of a great novelist'.⁸³³ Vivian exemplifies cases of 'life's imitative instinct' or the way

⁸²⁸ Ward, 'The Principles of Belief', p.322.

⁸²⁹ Ibid., p.324.

⁸³⁰ Ibid., p.325.

⁸³¹ Ibid., p.329.

⁸³² Ibid., p.333.

⁸³³ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.48.

literature influences the imagination and even action. Sometimes the imitation of literature is 'accidental' and other times it is 'self-conscious'.⁸³⁴

Take the case of the lady who began to imitate the actions of a heroine from a French magazine. The heroine of the French magazine 'ended up running away with a man inferior to her, not merely in social station, but in nature and intellect also.' The lady imitates the behaviour, offering no other explanation but that 'she had felt an absolutely irresistible impulse to follow the heroine step by step in her strange and fatal progress'.⁸³⁵ In another instance dictated by Vivian a governess reproduces the events from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). The governess, states Vivian, used the 'style' and 'methods' of the character Mrs Rawdon Crawley to make a 'great splash' in society. In a third anecdote, Vivian talks about his friend 'Mr Hyde' who hurried to a railway station but in his haste 'ran a child right between his legs'. 'Mr Hyde' finds himself surrounded by an angry mob at which point he recalls the events of Stevenson's story *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). As in Stevenson's tale, Vivian's friend 'Mr Hyde' also escapes the mob by heading into a surgery where coincidentally the name on the brass door-plate reads 'Jekyll'.⁸³⁶ 'Here the imitation', observes Vivian, 'was of course accidental'.⁸³⁷

Vivian implies that literature encourages associations through which we mediate our perception. However, none of the above examples demonstrate a mere cerebral performance as Dowling remarks of decadence.⁸³⁸ 'Mr Hyde' interpreted the events that unfolded before him through a book that he had read; Stevenson's tale. The governess desired to elevate herself in society using Thackeray's text as a kind of handbook to the

⁸³⁴ Ibid., p49.

⁸³⁵ Ibid., p.50.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., p.49.

⁸³⁷ Ibid.

⁸³⁸ Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin De Siècle*, p.171.

mannerisms and styles of a character she esteemed and wanted to resemble. The lady imitating the heroine from the French magazine perceives a resemblance between herself and the heroine, and feels the compulsion to duplicate the plot even though the text may have implied a moral - a moral missed completely by this 'fallen' lady- whom Vivian observes had 'no personality at all'.⁸³⁹ Experience, Vivian seems to say, is conceived through reading. After all, as Dorian suggests, 'one had ancestors in literature, as well as in one's own race, nearer perhaps in type and temperament, and certainly with an influence of which one was more absolutely conscious'.⁸⁴⁰ The powerful arguments presented in these lines suggest that literature is the very 'stuff' of our reality.

It is through the sensory experience excited by the art-object that the imagination interprets, mimics, and conceives actual experiences. If everyday experiences imprint themselves on our behaviours then words, or the suggestion of thoughts through the art-object, also have a very definite affect on perception, the reconstruction of experiences or memory, matters of judgement, and matters of every day importance. Even the manner, suggests Vivian, in which we interact with people according to the circumstances that arise daily, are perceived through the behaviours or sequences of events that we may have read in a novel or poem, seen in a play, perceived in a painting, or heard in the notes of a musical composition. Such is the power of literature that it dictates our lives on both conscious and unconscious levels, whether we wilfully synchronise our behaviours with the art-object, or whether we reject a plot, a moral, a brush stroke, the combination of certain colours, forms and sounds.

⁸³⁹ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.49.

⁸⁴⁰ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.118.

In 'The Decay of Lying' Vivian concludes, 'Personal experience is a most vicious and limited circle. All that I desire to point out is the general principle that Life imitates'.⁸⁴¹ Art, Vivian implies, enlarges our experiences because it enhances our ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions. Art gives expression to, or allows us to perceive events in our own life through that of fictional personages. In the many examples given by Wilde in 'The Decay of Lying' art stimulates the imagination, and provides a framework in which to understand particular social situations like in the case of 'Mr Hyde' who recalls Stevenson's story to aid him in his predicament. When faced with a new experience, art or literature can help make sense of a situation or give perspective to phenomena. In this way, art allows for the processing of emotions that might otherwise not be comprehended, or believed to exist. Art is the medium by which 'belief' exists.

For Ward the only way a conceived thing may be 'more real than a certain sensible thing' is if it is 'intimately related to other sensible things more vivid, permanent, or interesting than [sensation]'.⁸⁴² According to Ward, 'the world of living realities as contrasted with unrealities is thus anchored in the ego, considered as an active and emotional term'.⁸⁴³ For Ward, the 'whole history of witchcraft and early medicine is a commentary on the facility with which anything which chances to be conceived is believed the moment the belief chimes in with an emotional mood'.⁸⁴⁴ 'Witness', asserted Ward, 'the obduracy with which the popular world of colours, sounds and smells

⁸⁴¹ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.232.

⁸⁴² Ward, 'The Principles of Belief', p.336.

⁸⁴³ Ibid., p.333.

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 343.

holds its own against that of molecules, and vibrations'.⁸⁴⁵ It was precisely in this 'world of colours, sounds and smells' that the Wildean reader acted out theories of behaviour modification which were to dominate twentieth-century behavioural psychology.⁸⁴⁶ Wildean aesthetics presented to the 'personality' 'various forms through which [...] expression can be attained', expression which would 'hurt' the spectator if experienced in 'Life'.⁸⁴⁷ 'The only form of lying that is absolutely beyond reproach is lying for its own sake, and the highest development of this is, as we have already pointed out,' asserts Vivian, 'lying in Art.'⁸⁴⁸

Every unit of gain in the aesthetic sense [...] is to the good of humanity.⁸⁴⁹

This chapter demonstrates how Wilde was one of numerous psychological aestheticians who consciously practised or 'performed' psychological theories. The theories and creative performances of Lewes, Sully, Allen, Vietch, Haweis and Wilde constitute a kind of art therapy in the sense suggested by Roger Smith. Smith argues that as a periodical literature, 'psychology existed equally as an invitation to readers to reflect on their own mental world and conduct'.⁸⁵⁰ Wilde contributed to the debate the idea that the art-object was a 'safe' mode of experimenting with emotions and mental states. Even amongst the debate and disagreements, psychology was optimistic about where its advances could take humanity. As Spencer, Bain, and Clifford's theories show, psychology was driven by the idea of changing the individual on a molecular level which could

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid., p.336.

⁸⁴⁶ In his experiments on dogs for example, Pavlov used lights, sounds and colours to condition and manipulate their reflexes and perception. Robert Boakes, *From Darwinism to Behaviourism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.127.

⁸⁴⁷ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.50.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid., p.54.

⁸⁴⁹ Grant Allen, 'The New Hedonism', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 61, Mar., 1894, p.382, (pp.377-392).

⁸⁵⁰ Smith, 'The Physiology of the Will: Mind, Body, and Psychology in Periodical Literature: 1855-1875', p.100.

infiltrate perception, structure, function and organisation. It was hoped that the accumulative result of this psycho-physiological change would ripple through to societal structures and affect the interactions between individuals.

Wilde understood that theories like Clifford's on behavior modification could be made into a practical reality through the medium of art. Wilde integrated into his theories Clifford's attitude regarding the importance of discovery and nurturing a conscious sense-perception. Wilde therefore actively and creatively engaged with theories which he channeled through his prose performances and critical arguments. His discussions of psychology are not passive. He purveys, adapts, and attempts to resolve epistemological problems of psychology through the medium of literature which he sees as a manifestation of mind, ego, and consciousness. Like many psychologists of his time, Wilde discussed motion, matter, energy, and psychological processes such as perception, and associationism with the intent of cultivating an understanding of emotion, and opening up a new channel for human experience, or at least enlarging the possibilities of art. Rylance states that medical doctors such as John Gideon Milligen and Sir Henry Holland, who supported less systematic and theoretical schools of thought in relation to psychology and medicine, believed 'that one could learn more from poetical works than from metaphysical disquisitions'.⁸⁵¹ On the subject of emotional psychology, which was an obscure area for empiricists, Wilde certainly agreed.

Jarlath Killen argues that the novel gained 'respect' because 'science became the paradigm within which many Victorian novelists worked'.⁸⁵² Wilde's application of the laws of thermodynamics to aesthetics, however, should not be misconstrued as an early

⁸⁵¹ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.111.

⁸⁵² Jarlath Kileen, *The Faiths of Oscar Wilde*, (Hampshire: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005) p.80.

manifestation of the 'scientization' of literary criticism. The above investigation into the intellectual framework upholding Wilde's theories of art, emotionality, perception, and creativity, shows him not just as a writer interpreting and appropriating psychology. He certainly appropriates the laws of physics to his aesthetic theories of emotional response and expression. The fact that he is adapting these theories to the art-object is what makes them original. The likes of Sully and Bain, as well as other writers contributing to periodical literature like *Haweis*, also adapted the laws of physics to emotional psychology. The only difference is that Wilde treated the psychology of aesthetics through the creative and critical medium. Jerusha McCormack need not have remarked that Wilde cannot be viewed "as an exponent of the 'Two cultures' debate".⁸⁵³ The very phrase is an anachronism. The above analysis shows that Wilde extended and adapted to art and literary criticism the very first principles of physics and psychology as they were mediated through periodical literature.

For Wright, 'Wilde's reading experience is cerebral'.⁸⁵⁴ However, the complicated discussions ongoing between writers about emotionality demonstrate it is too simplistic to state this. After all, what reading experience is not 'cerebral'? Wilde cleverly applied the logic of the law of the transmutation of energy to his concept of the transference of emotion, which was essentially a physical explanation of the emotional exchange between the text and the reader. Wilde's contributions to psychological aesthetics are made clear when examined alongside the ideas of Ward. Both Ward and Wilde philosophised about the compositional elements that constituted the mental state of 'belief'. Both writers presented the idea that belief was the corollary of the emotional

⁸⁵³ John Wilson Foster, 'Against Nature? Science and Oscar Wilde', *Wilde the Irishman*, Jerusha McCormack, ed., (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) p.117.

⁸⁵⁴ Wright, *Oscar's Books: A Journey Around the Library of Oscar Wilde*, p.157.

reinforcement of an idea. A comparative examination of their ideas demonstrates that their discussions were both contributions to the psychological debates around perception and belief.

Wilde's attention to the materiality of his reviews and prose-poetry shows he was conscious of how to engage the reader through methods tried and tested by fellow contributors like Sully, Allen, and Lewes. The above examination of Wilde's 'performative' qualities demonstrates that he need not be seen to 'anticipat[e] and illustrat[e] [...] many of the suppositions of performance studies'.⁸⁵⁵ This is because Wilde engaged with physiological theories of his own time like Allen's that view sensory perception of the word as a physiological act. Hence, Wilde's representation of colour-perception is a genuine attempt at mimicking psychological and physical theories of colour. As will be explored in the next chapter, Wilde's aesthetic convictions regarding the aim of art filtered through to Allen. Inspired by Wilde, in his introduction to his novel *The British Barbarians* (1895), Allen wrote 'Not to prove anything, but to suggest ideas, to arouse emotions, is, I take it, the true function of fiction'.⁸⁵⁶ To Wilde, the supreme advantage of fiction over fact was that fiction evoked and encouraged the imagination which created boundless opportunities in everyday life.⁸⁵⁷ Moreover, literature possessed the means to cultivate human psychology in a way that did not deny emotional expression. Lastly, Wilde's methods of evoking pleasurable responses and his apparent sensationalising of hedonistic philosophy raised questions amongst various critics about the moral implications for the reader. The idea that art could be a training tool of the mind led

⁸⁵⁵ Coppa, 'Performance theory and Performativity', p.77.

⁸⁵⁶ Grant Allen, *The British Barbarians*, (London: John Lane, 1895) p.xiv.

⁸⁵⁷ [Oscar Wilde], 'Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, Vol. 1, 1888, p.223.

many critics, including Wilde, to contemplate the ethical boundaries of art. If art had the power to induce particular responses then it needed to come with a health warning.

Chapter five: Aesthetics for the Sake of Ethics

[...] culture and champagne, Platonic love and oriental odours.⁸⁵⁸

No historicist analysis of Wilde's aesthetic ideas can be complete without an examination of his treatment of ethics. A sentiment which remained with Wilde throughout his career was that knowledge and happiness came from a combination of sources. He maintained that the 'human spirit cannot live right if it lives by one point alone: it has a vital need for conduct & religion but also for beauty, social life, intellect [and] manners &c'.⁸⁵⁹ This last chapter will examine the views Wilde presents on the relation between ethics and aesthetics in his journalism. Wilde was regularly obliged to respond to accusations of immorality. He often invoked the doctrines of scientific naturalism in his defence of 'art for art's sake'.⁸⁶⁰ In doing so, Wilde retorted with complex and philosophical arguments centring on the concept of the ethical-will or free-will as will be explored below. Wilde's ironic representations of crime and culture in 'Pen, Pencil and Poison: A Study' (1889), and 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' (1887), along with his disparagement of the discourse of criminology will also be discussed. The last section will focus on the recurring concept of the 'ego' or 'personality' in Wilde's theorising and its significance in psychology, and in accounts of aesthetic evolution.

It is important to remember that Wilde was part of a lengthy tradition of writers who had been accused of a 'morbid deviation from healthy forms of life', with 'nothing

⁸⁵⁸ Anon., 'Death of a Decadent', *The Woman's Signal*, Vol., 71, 9 May 1895, p.289.

⁸⁵⁹ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.108.

⁸⁶⁰ Frank Turner states that 'scientific naturalism' was employed to denote the 'movement associated with contemporary scientific ideas'. 'Scientific naturalism' interpreted man, nature and society from the 'theories, methods, and categories of empirical science rather than from rational analysis'. These 'theories' and 'methods' included atomic theory, the law of the conservation of energy and evolution. *Between Science and Religion*, pp. 11, 12, 24.

virile, nothing tender, nothing completely sane' to say. Robert Buchanan, the author of 'The Fleshly School of Poetry' (1871), accused poets like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne, both hero worshipped by Wilde, of exhibiting in their verse 'a superfluity of extreme sensibility, of delight in beautiful forms, hues, and tints'.⁸⁶¹ Pater's reference to the 'stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours' in his 'Conclusion' was received with similar antipathy by critics.⁸⁶² Pater certainly felt part of the attack by Buchanan. After Pater published *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in February 1873, he was eager to disassociate himself from the accusations of his encouraging sensuality or materialism.⁸⁶³

Throughout his career and after his death Wilde was frequently accused by critics of promoting licentiousness. In an article headed 'Death of a Decadent' in the May 1895 issue of the *Woman's Signal* one critic wrote, 'To seek sensations rather than principles as the final good of life is the creed of [the] *fin de siècle* cult [...]'. The reviewer 'damned' Wilde's aesthetics alongside his 'character, reputation and career'.⁸⁶⁴ His writings were deemed inseparable from ethical conduct. The anonymous critic was keen to point out that the 'barbaric' school had a leader, namely Wilde:

"Art for art's sake" was the shibboleth of that school of
barbaric aesthetes who lauded as their leader the man
who declared that no harm was ever done by a bad book

⁸⁶¹ Robert Buchanan, 'The Fleshly School of Poetry', *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 18, Oct., 1871, pp. 334-350. Wilde actually sent a copy of *Dorian Gray* to Buchanan. Ian Small states this was a way to 'make a friend out of an enemy'. *Oscar Wilde Revalued: An Essay on New Materials and Methods of Research*, (Greensboro: University of North Carolina, 1993) p.81.

⁸⁶² Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.152.

⁸⁶³ Gowan Dawson, 'Walter Pater, Aestheticism and Victorian Science', Ph.D thesis, University of Sheffield, 1998, p.40.

⁸⁶⁴ Anon., 'Death of a Decadent', p.289.

or an impure picture; and pointed an epigram with the
postulate that ethics did very well for hum-drum people,
but aesthetes- and decadents at that- could alone charm
the disciple of culture and champagne, Platonic love and
oriental odours.⁸⁶⁵

The review connected the luxuriance and excess of the 'decadent' lifestyle with a 'bad book', an 'impure picture', and sensory indulgence. The philosophical and intellectual ideas that lay behind Wilde's emphasis on form, colour, and sensory perception explored in chapter three were nonexistent to Victorian critics. For many commentators, the aesthetic propensities were rooted in the individual's sense of ethical conduct. This meant that an individual's personal taste was interlinked with their belief system. Psychologists disagreed over what constituted the ethical behaviour of a person. Religion, heredity and environmental factors were all believed to have significant roles. There was no doubt, however, that literature was perceived as a method of directing conduct, and shaping social manners and mores.

Clifford was a self proclaimed atheist who argued that ethical behaviours, like the faculty of taste, could be modified by habit and education.⁸⁶⁶ Our conscience could be changed by associating with certain people or reading particular books, and by paying close attention to specific ideas and feelings.⁸⁶⁷ The questions relevant to the realm of aesthetics were vital to the subject of ethics. Clifford asked 'How shall we modify our conscience, if at all?', 'What kind of conscience shall we try to get?', 'What is the *best*

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Clifford, 'The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences', *Lectures and Essays*, Vol.1, p.288.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., p.330.

conscience?', 'What is the *best* taste?', 'What is taste *good* for?', 'What is the *purpose* or *function* of taste?'.⁸⁶⁸ Clifford philosophised about ethical conduct, or what he termed the 'feelings which condemn'. He also wrote about how feelings of moral approbation and reprobation connected to the feelings of 'beauty' and 'ugliness' or aesthetics. Clifford was careful to differentiate between religious and social codes of behaviour.⁸⁶⁹ On the other hand, in *Modern Painters* (1843), Ruskin claimed that 'Perfect taste is the faculty of receiving the greatest possible pleasure from those material sources which are attractive to our moral nature in its purity and perfection'.⁸⁷⁰ Ruskin conceived 'morality' as a set of values derived from Christianity. Clifford, however, strove to establish an ethical order primed from the observation of the uniformity of nature.⁸⁷¹ This uniformity of nature consisted of understanding the phenomena of life, mind and society through evolutionary theory, and in terms of the laws of matter, motion and force. Clifford tried to establish a naturalistic basis for Ruskin's 'moral' aesthetics. Wilde was well versed in the ideas of both Ruskin and Clifford. While Wilde anticipated attacks on his work from ethical grounds, his reading of Clifford had prepared Wilde's defence.

Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art.⁸⁷²

According to one anonymous critic of *Dorian Gray* 'It is the picturesque, not the ethical, aspects of virtue and vice that interest Mr. Wilde.' 'Purity has its artistic value', claimed the critic, 'if only as a contrast to its opposite; corruption is scintillant, iridescent, full of alluring effects'. The physiological effects theorised about by the psychological

⁸⁶⁸ Clifford, 'Right and Wrong', *Lectures and Essays*, Vol. 2, p.166.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid., p.144.

⁸⁷⁰ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol.1, (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1848) p.26.

⁸⁷¹ Clifford, 'Right and Wrong', p.175.

⁸⁷² Wilde, 'Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray', p.480.

aestheticians as seen in chapter three, and ‘performed’ by Wilde as demonstrated in chapter four, were considered to be ‘[...] perverted forms, intoxicating colours, and steamy aromas, [...] now luscious now acidulous’.⁸⁷³ The words ‘perverted’, ‘steamy’ and ‘luscious’ connote a pornographic excess or sexual ‘immorality’ that was corrosive to human conduct. It was not so much the descriptive appeal to the senses that enraged critics, but the idea that some sense of sexual arousal might be implicated by the sensual descriptions, and experienced by the audience.

The psychological aestheticians who theorised about psychological affect and systematisation were also critical of the French aesthetic tradition. As mentioned above, Allen remarked that he had ‘not a grain of sympathy with that modern French school who preach to us incessantly that morality has no place in art’.⁸⁷⁴ Allen argued that the French school inspired ‘low, vulgar, cruel anti-social emotion’ despite the ‘handicraft being exquisite’.⁸⁷⁵ However, as will be explored below, he changed his position by the time he published ‘The New Hedonism’ (1894), and his novel *The British Barbarians* (1895). As mentioned in chapter three, Sully disapproved of ‘Art for art’s sake’ because it ‘wrongly constructs art as a metaphysical absolute’. Art, maintained Sully, could not be comprehended as ‘a thing-in-itself’ or ‘disengaged from the minds that it impresses’.⁸⁷⁶ Art, he argued, ‘must not be conceived as an abstraction, but as constituted by its relations to human susceptibilities’.⁸⁷⁷ For Sully, art could not exist for the sake of itself. Art was created to be received, and analysed in connection with the human psyche and social relations. Art’s effects had to be examined in accordance with human evolution.

⁸⁷³ Anon., ‘Mr. Oscar Wilde’s “Dorian Gray”’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 50, No. 7884, 26 June 1890, p.3.

⁸⁷⁴ Allen, ‘Colour in Painting’, p.478.

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁶ Sully, ‘George Eliot’s Art’, p.392.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

However, it was contradictory for Sully to criticise 'art for art sake' when he acknowledged the philosophical principles of art's distance from ethics in Lessing's theories. In 'Lessing' (1878) for the *Cornhill Magazine* Sully explained how Lessing insisted on art's 'perfect freedom from ethical control'.⁸⁷⁸ Lessing believed that the 'purification which tragedy effects is not moral; it is simply the correction of an excess or deficiency of emotion'. Drama could bring 'about a healthy state of feeling' because drama was capable of 'moralising the spectator'. However, this effect, argued Lessing, must never be consciously aimed at by the poet, a sentiment shared by Wilde and Sully, but unrecognised by many of the critics who accused Wilde of being 'scintillant' and 'iridescent'.⁸⁷⁹

Wilde had an opportunity to address the attacks on 'art for art's sake' anonymously in an 1886 review of the life and letters of the French novelist, George Sand. Sand raised the same ethical concerns as the likes of Allen, and expressed the same critique of 'metaphysical' views as Sully. In 'The Letters of a Great Woman', Wilde wrote of Sand, 'she protests with passionate vehemence against the doctrine of "L'art pour l'art"'. In Sand's perspective, 'Art for the sake of art itself is an idle sentence'. She believed in 'art for the sake of truth, for the sake of what is beautiful and good [...]'.⁸⁸⁰ 'Perhaps', wrote Wilde, 'she valued good intentions in art a little too much, and she hardly understood that art for art's sake is not meant to express the final cause of art but is merely a formula of creation'.⁸⁸¹ By referring to the famous cry of aestheticism as a 'formula', Wilde relinquished any ethical responsibility by downplaying the importance of

⁸⁷⁸ James Sully, 'Lessing', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 38, Aug., 1878, p.201, (pp.189-206).

⁸⁷⁹ Anon., 'Mr. Oscar Wilde's "Dorian Gray"', p.3.

⁸⁸⁰ [Oscar Wilde], 'The Letters of a Great Woman', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 43, No. 6544, Mar., 1886, p.5 (pp.4-5).

⁸⁸¹ Ibid.

the possible ethical implications suggested by the subject matter. In this way, he reinforced the importance of the form or creative methodology implemented to mediate the content or story.

Perhaps his epigrammatic preface to *Dorian Gray* published in the *Fortnightly Review* prior to the revised 1891 edition can elucidate Wilde's responses to Sand. The preface states:

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all.⁸⁸²

The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium.⁸⁸³

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.⁸⁸⁴

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of art. Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art.⁸⁸⁵

These dictums were created to tease the virulent critics of the *Lippincott's* version of *Dorian Gray*. They were designed to convey the importance of style, language, method, the medium of expression, the form in which the content was expressed. The subject matter was secondary because without an innovative medium literature was prone to

⁸⁸² Wilde, 'Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray', pp. 480-481.

⁸⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

become repetitive, stale and unimaginative. What these epigrams above also reveal is how Wilde desired to distance creativity from ethical constraints. This objective attitude towards creativity was cultivated through Wilde's reading of various scientific theories.

The mystery is an illusion.⁸⁸⁶

Wilde deeply contemplated ethics and morality. The views that he learnt at Oxford matured with the publication and reception of his works. However, many of Wilde's most paradoxical and seemingly flippant arguments can be traced back to his Oxford notes. He contemplated ethics from the evolutionary, metaphysical, theological, and psycho-physical perspectives. In one note in the Commonplace book, Wilde stated that the 'Basis of moral feeling [is] found in self preservation'. In another paragraph he asserted that 'nothing speaks so well for the noble nature of man as his showy indifference to any system of rewards and punishments either heavenly or terrestrial'.⁸⁸⁷ The notes show Wilde tussling between the evolutionary explanation of the 'deeper depths from which we have sprung', and one's own sense-data which suggested that 'the impression of relation have [sic] a potential a prior[i] existence ...'.⁸⁸⁸ Wildean aesthetics, like Pater's theories, were imbued with this notion that the sense-organs were special because they were created to receive impressions through the apparatus of the eye, ear, sense of touch, smell and taste.

⁸⁸⁶ Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism', p. 480.

⁸⁸⁷ *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, pp.129, 115.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.125, 164.

The debates over man's place in nature led Wilde to ponder 'Is all human sorrow as meaningless as sea sickness? Is the voice of one crying in the wilderness merely the result of molecular action of locusts and wild honey?'⁸⁸⁹ 'That we have a choice of motive is evident from the existence of vaso-motor nerves,' wrote Wilde, 'whose function it is to get the arteries pinched'.⁸⁹⁰ These notes show Wilde debating about morality and ethics by contemplating the relation of human physiology to the waves and vibrations of the external environment. In the Oxford notes Wilde suggests that, in matters of judging art, the 'legitimate method of abstraction' must be employed and 'isolated' from the 'disturbing effects of morality'.⁸⁹¹ The 'free-will', or the 'choice of motive', as will be discussed below, is a defence mechanism Wilde used against critics who deplored his view of abstracting the subject matter from the 'disturbing effects of morality'.⁸⁹² For Wilde, qualities like 'composition, beauty and dignity of line, richness of colour and imaginative power' were to be judged rather than the moral or ethical concerns raised by the gatekeepers of 'wholesome' art.⁸⁹³ 'Art for art's sake' was a 'formula', a guide to creation for the artist. 'Art for art's sake' did not implicate a reading response; the spectator could choose to internalise the form, line and colour for the purposes of aesthetic response as well as to reflect on behaviour and conduct if that is what the spectator perceived, or wished. At least this is one of the many views Wilde presents to his audience.

In many of his famous texts like 'The Critic as Artist' or 'The Decay of Lying', the fictional personages taunt critics with statements such as the proclamation that 'Sin is the

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid., p.164.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid., p.144.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., p.158.

⁸⁹² Ibid.

⁸⁹³ Wilde, 'Pen, Pencil and Poison: A Study', p.45.

only real colour-element left in modern life'.⁸⁹⁴ The evolutionist view of 'sin' is forwarded by Gilbert in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'. Gilbert states that 'Sin is an essential element of progress' because it 'increases the experience of the race', and nurtures individualism while killing all that is commonplace. Gilbert argues for the rejection of the 'current notions about morality'.⁸⁹⁵ 'Sin' is 'at one with the higher ethics' because it prevents the world from crystallising. One critic argued that Wilde had 'every qualification for becoming a popular Pater', if only, uttered the critic, 'he would condescend to suppress some over-complacent allusions to the artistic value of sin – a favourite word of his – he might fairly be described as Pater-familias'.⁸⁹⁶

Critics recognised Pater's influence on Wilde, but did not refer to Pater's adaptations of scientific naturalism. Pater, like Clifford, had contended that the world was in constant motion and could therefore only be apprehended relatively. Avid moralisers saw Pater's 'Conclusion' being no different to the radical thoughts voiced by the likes of Clifford. According to Dawson, both aestheticism and scientific naturalism were condemned by critics on the same grounds.⁸⁹⁷ Like Clifford, Wilde and Pater penned articles in the same periodicals like the *Fortnightly Review*, and asserted their views through the doctrines of scientific naturalism. The view expressed by Gilbert about 'sin' increasing the experience of the race was also Clifford's, who emphasised the importance for a race to admit change in order to keep it 'young' and 'vigorous.' Clifford had expressed this idea in an 1868 lecture entitled 'On Some of the Conditions of Mental

⁸⁹⁴ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.24.

⁸⁹⁵ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.138.

⁸⁹⁶ [Anon], 'Mr Oscar Wilde's Intentions', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 52, No. 8156, 12 May 1891, p.3.

⁸⁹⁷ Dawson examines how aestheticism was seen as another manifestation of agnosticism or atheism in the writings of Pater and Symonds. Dawson states 'Like agnosticism's refusal to countenance universal truths that were independent of experience, aestheticism similarly repudiated fixed axioms of aesthetic authority and instead made the individual perceiver the arbiter of artistic merit', *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, p.194.

Development', which was delivered at the Royal Institution. According to Clifford, an inflexible race fixed and unable to adapt was surely to become extinct.⁸⁹⁸ The rejection of conventional ethics by Gilbert replicates Clifford's attempt at founding a naturalistic basis for ethics and aesthetics.⁸⁹⁹

In *Dorian Gray*, 'sin' is considered from the physiological and aesthetic point of view:

There are moments, psychologists tell us, when the passion for sin, or for what the world calls sin, so dominates a nature, that every fibre of the body, as every cell of the brain, seems to be instinct with fearful impulses. Men and women at such moments lose the freedom of their will. They move to their end as automations move. Choice is taken away from them, and the conscience is either killed, or if it lives at all, lives but to give rebellion its fascination and disobedience its charm.⁹⁰⁰

In this description, Wilde takes his cue from seventeenth-century mechanistic theories of motion and sensation. René Descartes and William Harvey expressed the view that the phenomena of the senses were manufactured in the body. Men and women were part machine and part 'soul', or spirit. Given Wilde's use of the word 'automations' he may have read Huxley's 1874 article entitled 'On the Hypothesis that animals are automata, and its history'. Huxley gave an account of how the theories of Descartes had been more

⁸⁹⁸ Clifford, 'On Some of the Conditions of Mental Development', *Lectures and Essays*, Vol. 1, p.81.

⁸⁹⁹ Helfand and Smith argue that Wilde emphasises aesthetics over ethics in 'conscious civilisation'. They cite Darwin and M. Renan as primary sources of Wilde's reading. Wilde's argument is also very similar to Allen's argument in his essay 'Our Debt to Insects' as has been discussed in chapter three. *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.77.

⁹⁰⁰ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.156.

clearly defined and demonstrated by modern physiological research. Huxley advanced the view that 'we are conscious automata, endowed with free-will- in the only intelligible sense of that much abused term [...]'.⁹⁰¹ In the above passage, the phraseology 'fibre of the body', 'cell of the brain', and 'fearful impulses' renders a deterministic view of life. The intermingling of the aesthetic value of 'fascination' and 'charm' with 'materialist' theories regarding the nature of body and consciousness was considered an extreme portrayal by those who believed in the creationist view of existence.

Rylance states that for many Victorians it was the exercise of the ethical-will that most clearly distinguished humans from other species.⁹⁰² The 'stakes were high' in discussions of the will because, explains Rylance, the 'autonomy of the ethical will' was among those 'treasures likely to be pillaged by invading scientific brutishness'.⁹⁰³ Many writers that Wilde had read considered the 'free-will' or 'ethical-will' a theological concept. Clifford for instance called 'free-will' a 'phantom'.⁹⁰⁴ The concern that Wilde's writings, like the above passage, pandered to the 'animal' passions was expressed in a review of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Weltanschauung Und Ine Gefassen*, in the *Philosophical Review* in 1894. The review blamed Wilde for the possible 'misinterpretation' by 'foolish young men' of Nietzsche's book. The commentator argued that these men 'at present have no prophet but Mr Oscar Wilde', and might be seduced by Nietzsche's commendations 'of unrestrained indulgence in every animal instinct, to make disastrous experiments, and to wreck their constitutions and careers'.⁹⁰⁵ The language such as 'unrestrained indulgence', 'animal instinct' and 'disastrous experiments' hints strongly

⁹⁰¹ T. H Huxley, 'On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 16, Nov., 1875, p.577, (pp. 555-580).

⁹⁰² Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, p.73.

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Clifford, 'Right and Wrong', *Lectures and Essays*, Vol.2, p.161.

⁹⁰⁵ F.C.S.S, 'Review: [Untitled]', *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 3 No. 2, Mar., 1894, p.248.

towards a sexual undertone that reinforces the perception of Wilde at the time as a sexual 'deviant'. Similarly, Wilde's 'approval of a state of mind in which a man effaces from his mind all moral distinctions in pursuit of [...] art for art's sake' was condemned in the *International Journal of Ethics*.⁹⁰⁶ These two examples show that Wilde's aesthetics were believed capable of corrupting and misleading, and were associated with a kind of sexual indulgence or aberrancy.

Critics did not entertain the idea that readers acknowledged Wildean wit or that audiences may have even understood or sympathised with Wilde's creative stance. By the mid 1890s Wilde's notoriety was widespread. No journal was too specialised to comment on some aspect of his aesthetic theories or fiction in which criminality was treated in a seemingly light-hearted manner. According to Alan Sinfield, Wilde transformed and validated 'the frivolous and knowing stance of the dandified, feminine woman' which was only linked with sexuality in the public eye during and after the trials.⁹⁰⁷ Sinfield states that the 'vaguely disconcerting nexus of effeminacy, leisure, idleness, immorality, luxury, insouciance, decadence and aestheticism' which Wilde was perceived as exemplifying was 'transformed into a brilliant precise image' after the trials.⁹⁰⁸ Wilde's sexuality or character traits as represented by the popular press led critics to read his psycho-aesthetically crafted prose as infectious and corrupting rather than as an engagement with psycho-physiology, or contemporary intellectual debates.

⁹⁰⁶ H. Rashdell, 'The Limits of Casuistry', *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 4 no. 4, Jul., 1894, p.473 (pp. 459-480).

⁹⁰⁷ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994) p.55.

⁹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

In the *Commonplace* book Wilde noted that 'not to conform to what is established is merely a synonym for progress'.⁹⁰⁹ He likened ethics to moods. Like Clifford, who argued that 'No maxim can be valid at all times and places for all rational beings', Wilde adopted the view that ethics changed according to the age, culture and psychology of the individual, or a people.⁹¹⁰ For example, he observed that 'Humanitarian sympathy [is] constantly changing & enlarging' and that the 'code of honour [is] different in each age'.⁹¹¹ Throughout his journalistic writings, Wilde inverted mainstream notions of 'ethics' and 'morality' and incorporated criminal themes into his work. For example, in his 1887 tale for the *Court and Society Review*, 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', Lord Savile murders the cheiromantist Mr Septimus R. Podgers who ironically foretold that Savile would commit a murder. In July 1889 'The Portrait of Mr W. H' presented Cyril, a devotee of Shakespeare's sonnets, seeming to commit suicide to validate his belief in his theory although we later find out he died of consumption. In the 1889 essay 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison: A Study' Wilde writes an ironic biography of the murderer and painter Thomas Griffiths Wainwright. 'The Decay of Lying' seemingly encourages deceit and 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' approves of the poor stealing. Contrary to the upper-class obsession with philanthropic endeavours, Wilde argued that 'Charity' created 'a multitude of sins'.⁹¹² This response resurfaced in plays such as *The Woman of No Importance* where Lord Illingworth criticises the House of Commons for sympathising with the sufferings of the poor. Such sympathy is considered a 'special vice of the age'.⁹¹³

⁹⁰⁹ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.108.

⁹¹⁰ Clifford, 'Cosmic Emotion', *Nineteenth Century*, p.421.

⁹¹¹ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.156.

⁹¹² Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.293.

⁹¹³ Oscar Wilde, 'Lady Windermere's Fan', *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Earnest and other Plays*, (London: Penguin Books) p.86.

‘Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime’ and ‘Pen, Pencil, and Poison: A Study’, will be further examined for their representation of crime and culture below.

[...] antique gems [,] cameos [and] very ugly ankles.⁹¹⁴

The relation between artistic creation and criminality is addressed in ‘Pen, Pencil and Poison’. William E. Buckler states that ‘that aesthetics and ethics have nothing to do with each other is an explicit declaration of “Pen, Pencil and Poison”’.⁹¹⁵ In the essay, Wilde argues that applying ‘moral judgements to history’ is a ‘foolish habit, and merely shows that the moral instinct can be brought to such a pitch of perfection that it will make its appearance wherever it is not required’.⁹¹⁶ Some critics have viewed the essay as a guilty confession written to defend Wilde’s own duplicity as a married man also engaging in same-sex acts.⁹¹⁷ According to Buckler, only someone with ‘anarchistic or nihilistic tendencies’ could be expected to accept the narrator’s view in ‘Pen, Pencil and Poison’ that the artist’s need for self-fulfilment puts him above society’s moral code.⁹¹⁸ In 1881, *Punch* scoffed at the ‘new cult’ it called ‘intensity’ in the poem ‘The Aesthete to the Rose’ which satirised aesthetes for luxuriating in emotion, and for claiming to possess a greater capacity to feel than the average person.⁹¹⁹ However, it is questionable as to whether Wilde is remarking that the artist’s creative methods should have no societal restrictions. He may be arguing that no matter what the character, or ‘vices’ of the artist,

⁹¹⁴ Wilde, ‘Pen, Pencil and Poison’, pp. 44, 53.

⁹¹⁵ William E. Buckler, ‘Antinomianism or Anarchy: A Note on Oscar Wilde’s Pen, Pencil and Poison’, *Victorian Newsletter*, Vol. 78, Fall 1990, p.1.

⁹¹⁶ Wilde, ‘Pen, Pencil and Poison: A Study’, pp.41-54.

⁹¹⁷ Bruce Bashford, ‘When Critics Disagree: Recent Approaches to Oscar Wilde’, *Victorian Literature*, Vol. 27, No.2, Sept., 2002, pp.613-625.

⁹¹⁸ Buckler, ‘Antinomianism or Anarchy’, p.2.

⁹¹⁹ [Anon]. ‘The Aesthete to the Rose’, *Punch*, Vol. 80, 1 Oct., 1881 p.154.

his work should be judged according to the psycho-aesthetic laws of art, and not according to 'domestic virtues'.⁹²⁰

Wilde's descriptions of Wainwright's murdering habits are mingled with his aesthetic tastes. As a result, the reader is obliged to be affected by both criminal and aesthetic descriptions. For instance, in one of the 'beautiful rings of which he was so proud, and which served to show off the fine modelling of his delicate ivory hands', Wainwright used to 'carry crystals of the Indian *nux vomica*, a poison'.⁹²¹ This image of Wainwright is romantic, dangerous and compelling. Wainwright is described as a 'dilettante of things delightful', an 'amateur of beautiful things'. He is a poet, a painter, an art-critic, and an antiquarian with an 'extremely artistic temperament'.⁹²² His taste and temperament are exemplified through his 'trays of Tassie's gems, his tiny Louis-Quatorze *bonbonnière* with a miniature by Petitot', 'brown-biscuit teapots, filigree worked', 'citron morocco letter-case', and 'casts and books and engravings'. Wainwright owns fine collections of art from different ages.⁹²³ However, all his delicate culture and dainty possessions cannot complete the portrayal without the line that he was a 'subtle and secret poisoner almost without rival in this or any age'.⁹²⁴ It is this combination of culture, beauty and criminality or danger that makes it impossible for the reader to remain unaffected by Wilde's portrait of Wainwright.

Nevertheless, Wilde is careful with his descriptions of Wainwright's murdering habits. The circumstances around the murder of Wainwright's sister-in-law Helen Abercrombie are not dwelt upon in the same detail as the descriptions of Wainwright as

⁹²⁰ Wilde, 'Pen Pencil, and Poison: A Study', p.54.

⁹²¹ Ibid., p.50

⁹²² Ibid., p.41.

⁹²³ Ibid., p.44.

⁹²⁴ Ibid., p.41.

connoisseur. Wilde states that Wainwright had sketched a 'very charming red-chalk drawing of her'.⁹²⁵ Wainwright's reason for murdering his sister-in-law is apparently aesthetic. He tells an agent of an insurance company visiting him in prison that murdering Helen was a 'dreadful thing to do', 'but she had very ugly ankles'.⁹²⁶ Wainwright's aesthetic tastes are juxtaposed with his criminal activities for the sake of effect. Wilde concluded the essay arguing 'There is no essential incongruity between crime and culture. We cannot re-write the whole of history for the purpose of gratifying our moral sense of what should be'.⁹²⁷ This statement repeats Wilde's earlier thoughts from his Oxford notebooks that morality is heightened to an unnecessary pitch that should not intervene in matters of artistic criticism. The example of Wainwright is an extreme but fitting way of demonstrating how prose, poem or a painting may remain untainted by the 'criminality' or personal conduct of the artist.

Simon Joyce says that Wilde does not endorse the notion of an 'aesthetics of crime', but does offer a critique of the tendency to isolate 'crime' from 'culture'. Perhaps Joyce should add 'high' culture.⁹²⁸ Joyce examines *Dorian Gray* and explains that 'Dorian ranges freely between aesthetic pursuits (like the study of perfumes, music, jewels, and embroidery) and criminal ones, beginning in the opium dens of the East End docklands and climaxing in murder'.⁹²⁹ Wilde, states Joyce, is not celebrating crime as one of the fine arts, but is critiquing 'aestheticism-with its ideological underpinnings of disinterestedness, and overinvestment in pleasure and beauty, and the denial of material

⁹²⁵ Ibid.

⁹²⁶ Ibid., p.53.

⁹²⁷ Ibid., p.54.

⁹²⁸ Simon Joyce, 'Sexual Politics and the Aesthetics of Crime: Oscar Wilde in the Nineties', *ELH*, Vol. 69, No. 2, Summer 2002, p.507, (pp. 501-523).

⁹²⁹ Ibid., p.505.

consequences for one's actions-as a basis for living'.⁹³⁰ John Sloan's argument that Wilde is 'transforming and enlarging what is thought to be moral and permissible' into an ethics that broadens the scope for beauty and non-conformity is more probable than Joyce's.⁹³¹ As will be explored below, the varying ethical stances Wilde presents become clearer in the context of his scientific reading.

In the context of Wilde's evolutionary and naturalistic readings his treatment of ethics and aesthetics is less complicated. This is because, according to evolutionist accounts, 'morality' is but 'the perfect adjustment of the human organism to the actual conditions of life [...]'.⁹³² As Bruce Haley has demonstrated, Wilde adopted Herbert Spencer's theory that organisms progress from the simple to the complex.⁹³³ 'Ethical' behaviours were attributes of a more complex organism. The evolutionary narrative had no space for 'right' and 'wrong' because it claimed to offer a story of uniformity not 'immorality'. Many of Wilde's views around emotional evolution and ethics can be attributed to Clifford. Clifford maintained that human nature was no longer a 'definite thing from age to age', 'persisting unaltered through the vicissitudes of cities and peoples'.⁹³⁴ As discussed in the last chapter, Wilde's maxim '*emotion for the sake of emotion*' echoed Clifford's sentiments on '*knowledge for its own sake*' which Clifford perhaps consciously adopted given he also quoted from Swinburne's poetry.⁹³⁵ Clifford believed that seeking knowledge for its own sake was of 'incalculable value to

⁹³⁰ Ibid., p.510.

⁹³¹ John Sloan, *Authors in Context: Oscar Wilde*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p.159.

⁹³² *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.156.

⁹³³ Haley, 'Wilde's "Decadence" and the Positivist Tradition', p.219.

⁹³⁴ Clifford, 'Cosmic Emotion', p.422.

⁹³⁵ Ibid., p.421.

humanity'.⁹³⁶ For him, it was important that social conduct should also be sought on a scientific basis where only experience dictated mores and manners.

Clifford maintained that 'The pretensions of those who would presume to clothe genius in a strait-waistcoat [...] would be fatally mischievous if they could be seriously considered by those whom they might affect'.⁹³⁷ To Clifford, there was no need to hinder the investigation of human conduct progressing on the lines of scientific analysis. This is because maxims from the fifth century such as 'duty to God and my neighbour', and the laws of health, of good and right conduct, are just the kind of wise words that an 'English gentleman might now-a-days give to his son'.⁹³⁸ Clifford's candid tone presents ethical conduct as a matter of commonsense. His bluff way of laying down behavioural codes diminishes the long and often complex discussions that evolved between commentators. For Clifford, as for Wilde, there were certain fundamental codes of behaviour that the epochs of history could not erase.

Wilde agreed with Clifford's rationale, arguing that 'right' and 'wrong' must be unconscious processes, and not variable states of mind incessantly debated upon. However, Wilde believed that for these states of mind to become instinctual there needed to be strict laws that were habitually and ritually prescribed to and practised by the human race.⁹³⁹ Before 'right' and 'wrong' could become unconscious processes, the individual had to exercise the ethical-will self-consciously. The problem with this 'self-conscious turned unconscious' process, which was supposed to represent the epitome of

⁹³⁶ Ibid.

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ Ibid., p.413.

⁹³⁹ Wilde maintained that 'In the development of man as well as in that of the individual organism those movements are most healthy, and permanent in their result which are unconsciously performed: True progress is the gradual adaptation of means to ends [,] not the conscious straining after a result'. *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, p.125.

human evolution, was that the organic or fluid nature of the ethical-will would surely have to become fixed if it would ever cease to question right and wrong action. As a result, the human race would crystallise and the relativity which defined advancing civilisation would disappear. It seemed that the need to address ethics, or 'right' and 'wrong' action, was a defining feature of the human condition.

The intellectual debates around ethics were subtly interwoven into the critical attacks on Wilde's writing. One critic had even suggested that *Dorian Gray* should be 'suppressed and coerced by a Tory Government'.⁹⁴⁰ The reference to a 'Tory Government' is significant because the Tories supported the union of the Anglican Church and state.⁹⁴¹ A 'Tory Government' might therefore intervene if a text was seen to undermine 'moral' conduct. Many of the critical attacks on *Dorian Gray* implied that the novel was a threat to the ethical-will. But for Wilde, the application of 'morality' to art suggested that the critic's outrage at the 'immorality' in *Dorian Gray* was based on the assumption that all that was noble in human nature would wear away if literature was not regulated. In his correspondence with the editor of the *St James Gazette* defending *Dorian Gray*, Wilde was obliged to explicate his view on the role of ethics in art. He wrote, 'It is proper that limitations should be placed on action. It is not proper that limitations should be placed on art'.⁹⁴² Wilde's novel was perceived as having corruptive powers. The fervid prose performances might just ignite the 'animal passions' of its readers. However, there was only one class of reader who was capable of the crimes committed by Dorian, or Wainwright.

⁹⁴⁰ Mason, *Oscar Wilde: Art & Morality*, p.43.

⁹⁴¹ Neil Tonge, *Victorian Government*, (London: Franklin Watts, 2009) pp.6-7.

⁹⁴² Mason, *Oscar Wilde: Art & Morality*, p.51.

Besides denouncing the 'rich people in England' with all their 'pomp and wealth and art' in his plays, upper-class criminality is a prominent theme throughout Wilde's periodical literature.⁹⁴³ Dorian, for instance, descends from landed gentry or 'Lord Kelso' and kills his painter friend Basil out of rage and wounded vanity. So too Savile in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' kills Podgers, and even attempts to murder his own aunt and uncle but inadvertently kills a housemaid instead. Dorian and Savile are 'criminals' in the sense ruminated upon by Wilde in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. In the essay Wilde argued 'For what are called criminals nowadays are not criminals at all. Starvation, and not sin, is the parent of modern crime.' According to Wilde, 'our criminals are, as a class, so absolutely uninteresting from any psychological point of view.' These 'criminals' are 'not marvellous Macbeths and terrible Vautrins. They are merely what ordinary, respectable, commonplace people would be if they had not enough to eat.'⁹⁴⁴ Read in the context of 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Dorian and Savile are 'real' criminals because they are motivated by pleasure, unlike the 'ordinary' and 'commonplace' people who turn to crime in order to relieve the pain of starvation. Wilde encouraged the 'poor' to be 'ungrateful, discontented, disobedient, and rebellious'.⁹⁴⁵ In doing so, he opposed the evolutionary discourse of criminology. Contrary to Wilde's dismissal of 'vulgar' subject matter like the poor, crime and class is a recurring issue in his writings.

[...] he had no right to marry until he had committed this murder.⁹⁴⁶

In *Dorian Gray* Lord Henry remarks that 'Crime belongs to the lower orders. I don't blame them in the smallest degree. I should fancy that crime was to them what art

⁹⁴³ Wilde, 'Lady Windermere's Fan', p.102.

⁹⁴⁴ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man under Socialism', p.268.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.259.

⁹⁴⁶ Oscar Wilde, 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy' [parts III and VI], *Court and Society Review*, Vol. 4, 18 May 1887, p.471, (pp. 471-473).

is to us, simply a method of procuring extraordinary sensations'.⁹⁴⁷ The 'psychologically interesting' crimes for Wilde were those of aristocratic men who have the money for every indulgence yet turn to crime, like Wainwright, or Dorian, or Lord Savile.⁹⁴⁸ Take the case of Dorian who after murdering Basil, sketches 'upon a piece of paper, drawing first flowers, and bits of architecture, and then human faces. Suddenly he remarked that every face that he drew seemed to have a fantastic likeness to Basil Hallward'.⁹⁴⁹ Isobel Murray observes that Wilde was 'fascinated' by the idea of the murderer's pictures reflecting his own crime. Wilde, she states, had investigated it in the memoir of Wainwright, and Basil (who is actually the victim) remains convinced that 'he has put too much of himself into his portrait of Dorian'. Basil had 'put too much of himself' into a portrait that was literally to become the death of Dorian.⁹⁵⁰

In the last scene of *Dorian Gray*, Dorian stabs his portrait with the same knife with which he stabbed Basil. 'As it has killed the painter', believes Dorian, 'so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant'.⁹⁵¹ The painting represents a kind of symbiosis between the painter, the painting and the subject. Murray also recounts Wilde's anecdote in *Intentions* of a young man in Zola's novel *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) who, having committed a murder, takes to art and paints 'greenish impressionist portraits of

⁹⁴⁷ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.175.

⁹⁴⁸ In his reviews Wilde often referred to character or plot development in reference to their 'psychological' interest or value. For instance, in one review entitled 'The Letters of a Great Woman' (1886), Wilde notes that Aurore Dupin's letters as a child and young woman present a 'psychological interest.' In a *Woman's World* review of Madame Ristori's *Etudes et Souvenirs* (1888) Wilde states that Mme. Ristori's presentation of Lady Macbeth is 'full of psychological interest'. In his review of *Canute the Great*, again for the *Woman's World*, the 'tragic element' for Wilde is that of the hero's 'psychological development' as opposed to the main plot of the story which, Wilde says, has borrowed from modern science the idea that 'in the evolutionary struggle for existence the tragedy may be that of the survivor'. Wilde also perceived that 'almost every character [in the novel]' suggests a 'new psychological problem.' 'The Letters of a Great Woman', *Pall Mall Gazette* 6 Mar., 1886, pp.4-5, 'Literary Notes', 1888, Vol. 1, p.132, (pp.132-136), 'Literary Notes', *Woman's World*, 1888, Vol. 1, p.180 (pp.180-184).

⁹⁴⁹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.134.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.193.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., p.183.

perfectly respectable people, all of which bear a curious resemblance to his victim'.⁹⁵² The relationship between art and criminality was explored by the Italian pathologist Cesare Lombroso whose work was referenced by Bram Stoker, Conrad, Tolstoy, and Wilde.⁹⁵³ Wilde cited Lombroso in a letter to the Home Secretary requesting early release from Reading Gaol to account for his 'criminal' sexual behaviour.⁹⁵⁴ Lombroso criticised the philosophical and theological doctrine of free-will. He argued that crime was a result of biological and social forces. Criminals had no free-will and acted according to their animal instincts.⁹⁵⁵ By quoting Lombroso in his request to be released from prison early, Wilde tried to relinquish responsibility for his 'deviant' sexual behaviour through Lombroso's deterministic theories. As will be explored below, Wilde's earlier periodical writings and exchanges demonstrate his scepticism of theories such as Lombroso's. This goes to show that Wilde strategically appropriated Lombroso in the hope of escaping his prison sentence.

Wilde's attendance at the muscle-reading presentation at the *Pall Mall Gazette* offices, as documented in chapter three, shows he was aware of the physiognomic theories at work in Victorian culture. Wilde had asked Edward Heron-Allen to write a horoscope decreeing the fate of his first born son Vivian.⁹⁵⁶ Heron-Allen wrote a piece on cheiromancy in the issue of the *Lippincott's Magazine* alongside *Dorian Gray* as explored in chapter one. Wilde even playfully asked Heron-Allen to write a short preface to the cheiromancy of 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'.⁹⁵⁷ An introduction to the tale by Heron-Allen, who was later made a fellow of the Royal Society for his research on Foraminifera, would

⁹⁵² Ibid., p.193.

⁹⁵³ Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.110.

⁹⁵⁴ Sloan, *Authors in Context: Oscar Wilde*, p.149.

⁹⁵⁵ Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p.112.

⁹⁵⁶ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p.245.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.324.

certainly have been ironic not to mention uncomplimentary considering the fate of Mr Podgers.⁹⁵⁸ In his book *A Manual of Cheirosophy* (1885), Heron-Allen stated that the events of the future will come to pass unless controlled through the reading of the formulations of the hands. 'Thus the cheiromantist can say', stated Heron-Allen, that 'you need not pry into the future; but assure yourselves it will be disastrous unless you attend to your duty, and are willing to act as becomes you'.⁹⁵⁹ Wilde responded to this idea of one's destiny being written in the palm of the hands through his tongue-in-cheek tale 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy'.

'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy' was later substituted for the subtitle 'A study of Duty' in 1891. The revised subtitle seems to make reference to Heron-Allen's assertion about the need for the individual to 'attend your duty'. In the tale, Lady Windermere introduces her guests to her personal cheiromantist Septimus Podgers. Podgers is 'not mysterious, or esoteric, or romantic-looking', but a 'little, stout man, with a funny, bald head, and great rimmed spectacles; something between a family doctor and a country attorney'.⁹⁶⁰ He entertains the guests by reading their palms but when he reads Savile's hand, a former 'Eton' pupil, who had 'lived a delicate and luxurious life of a young man of birth and fortune', Podgers shudders and convulses. He refuses to disclose his vision of Savile committing murder, but soon submits to his hundred pound offer for the disclosure of the vision.

Humorously, Savile resolves that before he can marry Sybil Merton to whom he is betrothed he must commit the murder rather than have the 'doom of murder hanging

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., p.245.

⁹⁵⁹ Edward Heron-Allen, *A Manual of Cheirosophy*, (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1885) p.82.

⁹⁶⁰ Wilde, 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy' [parts I and II], *Court and Society Review*, Vol. 4, 11 May 1887, p.448, (pp.447-450).

over his head'. Wilde satirises the upper-class lip service paid to 'duty'. He states that 'many men in his position would have preferred the primrose path of dalliance to the steep heights of duty', but 'Lord Arthur was too conscientious to set pleasure above principle'. 'His heart told him that it was not a sin, but a sacrifice; his reason reminded him that there was no other course open'. This mockery is directly aimed at the talk of 'duty' and 'acting as becomes you' which was ingrained in Victorian society and expressed by Heron-Allen in his book on cheiromancy. In *A Woman of No Importance*, duty is described as 'what one expects from others'.⁹⁶¹ Like many portrayals of upper class empty mindedness that audiences witness in the society plays, Wilde shows that 'Life to him [Lord Savile] meant action, rather than thought'.⁹⁶²

The view that mankind should contemplate and not act was at the heart of Chuang Tzu's philosophy whose translated works Wilde reviewed for the *Speaker* in 1890. According to Tzu, 'The perfect man ignores self; the divine man ignores action; the true sage ignores reputation'.⁹⁶³ Savile, however, chooses to act rather than probe the validity of cheiromancy. Like Wainwright, Savile chooses poison as his weapon of murder. When he learns that his aunt had died of natural causes Savile attempts to blow up his uncle, the Dean of Chichester. Having failed to kill both, Savile sees his Russian friend Count Rouvaloff who gives him a cake of dynamite embedded in a French clock. Even though Savile does not succeed in killing his uncle, he does kill a housemaid. However, Savile remains disheartened at the prospect of not murdering the people he wilfully chose to murder.

⁹⁶¹ Wilde, 'A Woman of No Importance', *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*, p.111.

⁹⁶² Wilde, 'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime: A Story of Cheiromancy' [parts III and IV], p.471.

⁹⁶³ [Oscar Wilde], 'A Chinese Sage', *Speaker*, Vol. 1, 8 Feb., 1890, p.144.

Eventually, and most ironically, Savile throws the fortune teller Podgers into the Thames and marries Sybil three weeks later. The irony and humour of the tale lies in the fact that Savile has to try very hard to fulfil his so-called 'destiny'. While the tale is an obvious critique of deterministic sciences, it also reiterates Wilde's point that 'we have a choice of motive'.⁹⁶⁴ 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' implies that the will is made active by thought and that conscious choices do exist but only through contemplation. Furthermore, Wilde suggests that the will is powerless, or useless, if it has to be forced into conforming to standards of morality because it prevents the reflection which precedes self-consciousness.

For what is morbidity but a mood of emotion or a mode of thought that one cannot express?⁹⁶⁵

Francis Power Cobbe deemed emotions the 'most largely effective springs of human conduct'.⁹⁶⁶ Emotion, she maintained, was dangerous because emotions like 'Courage or Terror, Admiration or Contempt, or even Good-will and Ill-will,' were 'caught from another mind possessed of the same feeling'.⁹⁶⁷ In 'The Education of the Emotions' (1888) in the *Fortnightly Review*, Cobbe, a journalist and campaigner for women's rights, deliberated on the 'disasters' that have resulted from the 'contagiousness of the emotions'. She stated that 'European and American theatres and churches afford sad evidence' of humanity's 'liability' to 'succumb' to waves of fear and panic.⁹⁶⁸ Cobbe voiced concerns over the 'idolatry of great talkers' which brought 'destruction' to the old

⁹⁶⁴ Oscar Wilde's *Oxford Notebooks*, p.144.

⁹⁶⁵ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.274.

⁹⁶⁶ Frances Power Cobbe, 'The Education of the Emotions', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 49, Feb., 1888, p.223, (pp.223-236).

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibid.

republics of Greece and Magna Græcia.⁹⁶⁹ According to Cobbe, while literature could kindle the 'noblest emotions', it could 'also light up baleful fires, of the basest and most sensual' kind. Cobbe believed that Zola and his compatriots across the Channel in France were examples of such literature.⁹⁷⁰ She warned that even the strongest wills 'are bent and warped by the winds of other men's passions'.⁹⁷¹ Her exploration of daily occurrences of emotional contagion led her to ponder the ways in which the 'better' emotions could be cultivated and the 'lower' ones discouraged.⁹⁷²

Cobbe observed that the more we try to rein in or command emotions the more they rebel. She remarked that 'We must *give* the feeling we desire'.⁹⁷³ In her article, Cobbe chose to focus on the dangers of emotion. In the 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' Wilde concentrated on the strengths of emotions and specifically addressed the issue of 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' or 'morbid' emotions. As shown above, Buchanan applied the term 'morbid' to works by Rossetti, Swinburne and Pater. Wilde inverted the traditional meaning of 'morbid' as a pathological attribute by maintaining that 'morbid' is 'but a mood of emotion or a mode of thought that one cannot express [...]'.⁹⁷⁴ Stokes explains that the word 'morbid' incorporated 'anything from the sluggish to the downright deathly'. The term insinuated an 'anti-progressive rhetoric'. According to Stokes, while 'official moralities' like the 'virtues of vitality, progress and activity' were endorsed by science and religion, 'morbid' was the 'enemy within'.⁹⁷⁵ When critics accused Wilde of 'morbid' they inevitably linked him to pathological tendencies. Many

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.224.

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.231.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid., p.225.

⁹⁷² Ibid., p.229.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., p.226.

⁹⁷⁴ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.274.

⁹⁷⁵ Stokes, *In the Nineties*, p.26.

of the defining characteristics of aestheticism like synaesthesia or 'Hyperaesthesia' were considered 'signs' of degeneration and abnormality.⁹⁷⁶

The accusations of pathological disturbance led Wilde to examine the term 'unhealthy'. According to him, 'healthy art is one whose style recognizes the beauty of the material it employs'. 'Healthy art' uses the beauty of a material 'in producing aesthetic effect'. 'An unhealthy work of art', argued Wilde, is a work 'whose style is obvious, old-fashioned, and common'.⁹⁷⁷ Wilde reversed the connotations of his work being contagious and corrupting. In these comments, Wilde insinuated that the works that critics like Buchanan revered belonged to a generation which produced dated art. By expressing the ethical codes of their time artists imprinted their work with the social controversies of their age. By inverting the accusations of 'morbidity', Wilde retracted the gaze of the pathologist from the artist to the public by reclaiming the critical terms that had been used to describe the 'Fleshly School'. Lombroso grouped artists or 'those individuals who represent the highest manifestation of the human spirit' along with 'idiots and criminals'.⁹⁷⁸ Wilde inverted this criticism as well.

'In fact the popular novel that the public call healthy', argued Wilde, 'is always a thoroughly unhealthy production; and what the public call an unhealthy novel is always a beautiful and healthy work of art'.⁹⁷⁹ Small observes that Wilde often interchanged nouns or adjectives for antonyms. This semantic inversion was a method of subverting mainstream opinion.⁹⁸⁰ Small explains that this subversion, along with Wilde's self plagiarism, was a way to redefine the relationship between authority and orthodoxy. By

⁹⁷⁶ Cesare Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, (London: Walter Scott, 1889) p.314-329.

⁹⁷⁷ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.275.

⁹⁷⁸ Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, p.v.

⁹⁷⁹ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.275.

⁹⁸⁰ Small, *Conditions for Criticism*, p.116.

pathologising the public and not the artist as critics such as Buchanan had done, Wilde rejected the popular waves of criticism that were considered as established institutions, authorities or canons. It was the public who liked to 'insult poets'. It was the public who feared novelty, or the extension of subject-matter. The 'vitality' and 'progress' of art depended on this extension of subject-matter which the public despised.⁹⁸¹ It was the artist who was the victim. It was the artist who would have 'to do violence to his temperament, would have to write not for the artistic joy of writing, but for the amusement of half-educated people, and so would have to suppress his individualism, forget his culture, annihilate his style, surrender everything that is valuable to him'.⁹⁸² Wilde turned upside down the arguments of critics who laid claims to artistic 'progress' and 'vitality'.

Moreover, it was the artist who was hurt and victimised by the brutish public. To reinforce this pathologising of the public, Wilde remarked that 'To call an artist morbid because he deals with morbidity as his subject-matter is as silly as if one called Shakespeare mad because he wrote *King Lear*'.⁹⁸³ 'Public Opinion' was 'monstrous and ignorant' and when it tried to control 'Thought' or 'Art' became 'infamous and of evil meaning'.⁹⁸⁴ In these lines, it is the public who are represented as the malformed, idiots and criminals of Lombroso's theorising, not the artist. It is the public who need to learn from the artist how to cure themselves by cultivating a 'temperament of receptivity'.⁹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Lombroso's methodology was questionable. He claimed to offer descriptions of 'degenerates' drawn deductively from observation. However, Lombroso

⁹⁸¹ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.272.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ Ibid., p.274.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.276.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.279.

like his protégé Max Nordau, a German Pathologist, actually re-enforced traditional stereotypes with very little deductive reasoning. For example, 'religiosity' was supposed to be a characteristic of 'criminals'. Furthermore, 'madmen' had a 'mania' for tattooing.⁹⁸⁶ Lombroso did not demonstrate how such characteristics might be attributed to 'criminal' groups.

In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' Wilde encapsulated in short, terse sentences complex debates around altruism. He probed into the nature of the instincts of self-preservation as well as the social instincts. The motivation behind empathetic acts, the nature of ethical conduct, and the underlying basis for social reciprocity were important subjects to Wilde. Sympathy 'with pain', argued Wilde, was 'apt to become morbid' because it contained 'a certain element of terror for our own safety'. Again, Wilde shifted the emphasis from 'sympathy with pain' to sympathising with 'the entirety of life, not with life's sores and maladies merely, but with life's joy and beauty and energy and health and freedom'.⁹⁸⁷ Contrary to his early views expressed in the *Cornhill Magazine* regarding the 'low, vulgar, cruel' and 'anti-social' emotion evoked by French art, Allen applauded Wilde's essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. As mentioned above, Allen wrote to Wilde in February 1891 asking '[...] Will you allow me to thank you heartily for your noble and beautiful essay in this month's *Fortnightly*. I would have written every line of it myself- if only I had known how.'⁹⁸⁸ Likewise, Wilde wrote to Allen expressing delight in how Allen asserted the Celtic spirit in his essay 'The Celt in English Art,' through

⁹⁸⁶ Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, Translated and with a new introduction by Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter, (Durham and London: Duke University, 2006) pp.252, 256.

⁹⁸⁷ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.285.

⁹⁸⁸ *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp.469, 470.

scientific demonstration.⁹⁸⁹ It may be the case that Allen did not necessarily agree with the view he presented in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1878 that French literature was 'low, vulgar' or 'cruel'. The *Cornhill Magazine* was a family friendly periodical so perhaps Allen had to adopt the view that French aesthetic literature as represented by Baudelaire or Gautier was 'anti-social'. This way, Allen would have abided by the magazine's philosophy to 'protect' middle class values of respectability through the dissemination of light-hearted literature.

According to Morton, by the end of the 1880s, Allen became more 'vehement' and 'incautious' about his self-proclaimed role as a social prophet and truth teller.⁹⁹⁰ While Allen had spoke of himself as a communist in his younger years, in 1891 he had joined the Fabians although he never attended their meetings.⁹⁹¹ By the mid 1890s however, Allen was satirising middle class taboos in *The Woman who Did* (1893) and *The British Barbarians* (1895). In his *Post-Prandial* essays he wrote against private ownership, nationalism, the established Church and sexual double standards. Allen was increasingly frustrated with readers and publishers regarding censorship. Novels that pushed the boundaries of Victorian ethics and values were not accepted by editors and publishers.⁹⁹² Allen condemned the 'Philistine' public much in the way as Wilde had expressed in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' inspired Allen to write 'The New Hedonism' for the *Fortnightly Review*. 'The New Hedonism' (1894) was named after Wilde's epithet from *Dorian Gray* and discredited the 'old asceticism' which

⁹⁸⁹ Helfand and Smith, 'Anarchy and Culture: The Evolutionary Turn of Cultural Criticism in the Work of Oscar Wilde,' p.204.

⁹⁹⁰ Morton, *The Busiest Man in England*, pp. 136-137.

⁹⁹¹ Ibid., p.130.

⁹⁹² Ibid., p.134.

pronounced 'Be virtuous, and you will be happy'.⁹⁹³ The 'new hedonism' preached by Lord Henry in *Dorian Gray*, and Allen in his article, claimed 'Be happy, and you will be virtuous'.⁹⁹⁴ Thus far the focus has been on how Wilde anticipated and responded to accusations of immorality. The next section will demonstrate how scientific naturalists like Allen incorporated Wilde's ethical stance.

It became a thing in itself.⁹⁹⁵

Nick Freeman is one of the few scholars to detail the strategic similarities between Wilde and Allen. Freeman argues that Allen employed certain Wildean comic techniques such as paradox. According to Freeman, Allen's novel *The British Barbarians* 'shows precisely the collision between the surface frivolities of Wildean humour and a more serious social message.'⁹⁹⁶ Freeman comments that Wilde's name may have been erased from sight on billboards and theatres in London, but his influence resounded in many quarters of Victorian life.⁹⁹⁷ Allen challenged many aspects of Victorian society in a similar manner to Wilde. There are numerous instances where Lord Henry's 'New Hedonism' and Wilde's arguments in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' filtered through to Allen's article on 'The New Hedonism'.

In *Dorian Gray* Lord Henry states that people are afraid of themselves and that the 'highest of all duties is the duty to one's self'. People 'feed the hungry and clothe the

⁹⁹³ 'Resituating Grant Allen: Writing, Radicalisation & Modernity', *Grant Allen: Literature and Culture Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, William Greenslade and Terence Rogers, eds., (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005) p.10, and *Dorian Gray*, p.18.

⁹⁹⁴ Grant Allen, 'The New Hedonism', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. 61, Mar., 1894, p.377, (pp.377-392).

⁹⁹⁵ Allen, 'Decorative Decorations', p.595.

⁹⁹⁶ Nick Freeman, 'Intentional Rudeness'? *The British Barbarians* and the Cultured Politics of 1895', *Grant Allen: Literature and Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, p.112.

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid.

beggar. But their souls starve'.⁹⁹⁸ In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' Wilde argued that 'the primary aim of life is self-development'.⁹⁹⁹ Allen parroted Wilde's sentiments arguing 'It is the duty of everyone among us to develop himself and herself to the highest possible point, freely, in every direction'.¹⁰⁰⁰ In the manner of Lord Henry, Allen stated:

To be sound in wind and limb; to be healthy of body and
mind; to be emancipated, to be free, to be beautiful –
these things are ends towards which all should strain, and
by attaining which all are happier in themselves, and more
useful to others.¹⁰⁰¹

Lord Henry's interests in the novel reflect those of the physiological psychologist. As shown above, he is interested in examining daisies for their aesthetic attributes, and theorises about the nature of the emotions and the evolutionary value of sin. His sentiments in the above passage were expressed four years before Allen. Lord Henry maintained that 'The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly – that is what each of us is here for'.¹⁰⁰² As will be shown below, some of Allen's statements in 'The New Hedonism' could easily be mistaken for Lord Henry's. So it would seem that Allen was deliberately mimicking Lord Henry's stance with a sincerity that Lord Henry's speeches lack. Darwin had maintained that prolonged pain and suffering of any kind lessened the power of action. But pleasurable sensations could be 'long continued' without any depressing effect. On the contrary, 'pleasurable sensations' stimulated the

⁹⁹⁸ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.14

⁹⁹⁹ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.284.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Allen, 'The New Hedonism', p.381.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.380.

¹⁰⁰² Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.14.

‘whole system into increased action’.¹⁰⁰³ The evolutionary nature of Wilde and Allen’s arguments is what makes them almost interchangeable.

Take another example when Lord Henry tells Dorian:

I believe that if one man were to live life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream – I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of medievalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal.¹⁰⁰⁴

Allen agreed wholly, claiming ‘Hellas knew better. The free Greek was not ashamed of sex, not ashamed of his own body and its component members’.¹⁰⁰⁵ Allen blamed ‘Christianity’, which he called a ‘religion of Oriental fanatics’ at a ‘lower grade of civilisation’, for the decay of Hedonism.¹⁰⁰⁶ Wilde angled his argument towards inverting Christian notions of altruism. In the ‘Soul of Man Under Socialism’, which is wholly sardonic in tone, he stated that ‘It is not selfish to think for oneself’. He merged the aesthetic with the ‘ethical’ by exemplifying his point with the argument ‘A red rose is not selfish because it wants to be a red rose’.¹⁰⁰⁷ Wilde made it clear that he was not siding with evolutionists, or the Spencerian notion of the free market which encouraged competitiveness rather than cooperation. Wilde maintained that ‘sympathy’ with ‘joy and beauty and energy’ was ‘naturally rare’ because of the ‘modern stress of competition and

¹⁰⁰³ Gavin de Beer, *Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley Autobiographies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974) pp. 51-2.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.15.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Allen, ‘The New Hedonism’, p.390.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Wilde, ‘The Soul of Man Under Socialism’, p.285.

struggle for place'.¹⁰⁰⁸ Spencer argued that during the 'struggle for existence' conditions have been such as to make 'imperative the readiness to inflict pain'. This 'struggle' involved the 'necessity that personal ends must be pursued with little regard to the evils entailed on unsuccessful competitors'. Moreover, it was necessary that 'there shall be not too keen a sympathy with that diffused suffering inevitably accompanying this industrial battle'.¹⁰⁰⁹ Wilde reversed Christian values and in Spenserian tones maintained that 'It is grossly selfish to require one's neighbour that he should think in the same way, and hold the same opinions.'¹⁰¹⁰ Allen agreed with Wilde that the 'love of scenery, love of the exquisite human form, love of fiction, of drama, of music, of pictures, of statuary, of decoration' were worthy and noble.¹⁰¹¹ Like Lord Henry who talks about giving reality to every dream, Allen exalted the imagination.¹⁰¹² To foster the imagination was an ethical as well as an aesthetic advantage. Allen's reading of Wilde's *Dorian Gray* and 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' inspired his view on progress and the fundamental need for a society of art.

In *Dorian Gray* Lord Henry speaks about how the 'terror of God' remains the underlying basis of social behaviour and cooperation:

The terror of society, which is the basis for morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion – these are the two things that govern us. But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself. The mutilation of the

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 2, (London: Williams and Norgate) p.611.

¹⁰¹⁰ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.285.

¹⁰¹¹ Allen, 'The New Hedonism', p.383.

¹⁰¹² Ibid.

savage has its tragic survival in the self-denial that mars
our lives. We are punished for our refusals.¹⁰¹³

Allen understood that the point being made here was about doing good for the sake of doing good. For Allen, the hedonist shows that 'it is better to stand erect like a man than to grovel like a dog before an angry master; to face the cosmos than to tremble at it; to love beauty and goodness and purity for their own sakes'.¹⁰¹⁴ Allen 'spelt' out Wilde's conception of 'art for art's sake' and applied it to ethical conduct:

Self-sacrifice is impossible as an aim in itself; self development is possible, reasonable, and consistent. [...]
But Christianity has so exalted this false ideal of self-sacrifice as in itself a good thing, that most people are genuinely shocked to hear it even called in question. Indeed, they are afraid to reason upon ethical subjects at all, lest their whole house of cards should come down and collapse eternally.¹⁰¹⁵

Allen spoke against Christian ideals more openly than Wilde in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. William Greenslade and Terence Rogers state that from the Christian standpoint Allen was pejoratively labelled a 'decadent' for appropriating both Pater and Wilde.¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹³ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.15.

¹⁰¹⁴ Allen, 'The New Hedonism', p.383.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid., p.380.

¹⁰¹⁶ Greenslade and Rogers, 'Resituating Grant Allen: Writing, Radicalisation & Modernity', p.10.

Allen responded sarcastically to Christian attacks by ventriloquising them in the way Wilde approaches the terms 'morbid' and 'unhealthy' in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' as examined above. Allen argued that 'to remove the supposed religious restraints on passion would be to inaugurate an era of unbridled licentiousness'.¹⁰¹⁷ Wilde and Allen were attacked side by side in 'A Study in Puppydom', a review of *Dorian Gray* in the *St James's Gazette*. The commentator asked why Wilde had told this 'very lame story'. The reviewer answered his own question by linking Wilde's notions of the aesthetic with theories of sexual selection disseminated by Allen:

Perhaps it was to shock his readers, in order that they may cry Fie! upon him and talk about him, much as Mr Grant Allen recently tried in *The Universal Review* to arouse, by a licentious theory of the sexual relations, an attention which is refused to his popular chatter about other men's science.¹⁰¹⁸

The critic demeans Allen by suggesting that his engagement with science is not serious because he adopts 'other men's science'. In his harsh biography of Allen, even Morton refers to Allen as an 'amateur' who was forced by economic pressures to settle for writing what Morton scathingly regards as 'popular science'.¹⁰¹⁹ According to Morton, Allen's 'popular science' was packed with 'empty verbalisms' which sort to seek out natural phenomena by 'spinning other men's observations into a mental cocoon'.¹⁰²⁰ More recently Bernard Lightman shows that there were different groups and types of popularisers. The term 'popular' or 'populariser' may be used by Morton in a

¹⁰¹⁷ Allen, 'The New Hedonism', p.383.

¹⁰¹⁸ Mason, *Oscar Wilde: Art and Morality*, p.32.

¹⁰¹⁹ Morton, "The Busiest Man in England", pp.3, 97.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid., p.102.

condescending manner, but 'popularisation' was a complex issue bound up in matters of authority, matters of publishing, Church reform, professionalisation, gender dynamics and social change.¹⁰²¹ The 'licentious theory' mentioned by the critic in the above passage was that of sexual selection which critics believed encouraged amorality which was the equivalent of 'immorality' to Christian believers. Allen elaborated on the 'sexual instinct' and its vital importance to the aesthetic faculties. As examined in chapter three, Allen and Wilde both discussed the importance of the aesthetic faculty in relation to sexual selection. It was through sexual selection that the most 'beautiful' forms, colours, sounds and shades evolved. According to Jane Munro, Darwin's response to nature was as much aesthetic as it was scientific. Darwin delighted in form and colour which, Munro argues, spurred on his research.¹⁰²²

Allen believed that it was the sexual instinct to which 'we owe our love of bright colours, graceful form, melodious sound, rhythmical motion'. To it, maintained Allen, 'we owe the evolution of painting, of sculpture, of decorative art, of dramatic entertainment.' It was to the sexual instinct that 'we owe', stated Allen, 'the entire existence of our aesthetic sense, which is, in the last resort, a secondary sexual attribute'.¹⁰²³ Allen emphasised the functionality that could be achieved by fine-tuning the 'aesthetic sense'. He believed that 'ethics, intellect and the sense of beauty [...] measure our distance above the beasts that perish'.¹⁰²⁴ For Allen, the mission of the new hedonism was to 'point out to humanity that literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, the beautifying of life

¹⁰²¹ Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers: designing nature for new audiences*, (Chicago Illinois: University of Chicago Press; Bristol: University Presses Marketing, 2007).

¹⁰²² Jane Munro, "'More Like a Work of Art than of Nature": Darwin, Beauty and Sexual Selection', *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts*, Diana Donald and Jane Munro, eds., (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge/ Yale Center for British Art, Newhaven in Association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009) p.253.

¹⁰²³ Allen, 'The New Hedonism', p.384.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.382.

by sound, and form, and word, and colour, are among the most important tasks of civilisation'.¹⁰²⁵ In bitter sentiments strikingly similar to Wilde's in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Allen argued 'To the British Dissenter poetry is wicked, the theatre is wicked; the nude in art is dangerous; painting and sculpture are stumbling blocks; music is worldly; nothing is sacred save the preaching in Little Bethel and the singing of hymns round the untuned piano on Sunday evening'.¹⁰²⁶ Wilde's sardonic ventriloquising is parroted by Allen in these sentences and evidently demonstrates how Wilde's manner of dealing with critics was appropriated by evolutionist theorists like Allen. The reaction of critics like the view presented above in the *St James's Gazette* shows that both Allen and Wilde were seen to belong on the same side of the spectrum as exponents of scientific 'materialism'.

[...] it is personalities, not principles that move the age.¹⁰²⁷

Unlike 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' which encouraged the spectator actively to seek new impressions, in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' Wilde disenfranchised the spectator from expression and activity. The artist was to medicate the audience and make them 'forget in its [art's] contemplation all the egotism that mars him – the egotism of his ignorance, or the egotism of his information'.¹⁰²⁸ In what was his last essay for the periodical press, Wilde disempowered the public in a humiliating and derogatory tone. After over a decade of scathing attacks, Wilde retorted with the belief that the spectator was merely a passive vessel or 'the violin on which the master is to

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁷ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.45.

¹⁰²⁸ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.280.

play'.¹⁰²⁹ In the essay Wilde focussed on the 'temperament' of 'receptivity'. 'The true perfection of man' argued Wilde, was to be found in 'what man is' 'not in what man has'.¹⁰³⁰ The possessions of the connoisseur like Dorian's beautiful gems, or Wainwright's fashionable pale lemon kid gloves, become the very source of an individual's degeneration. Possessions are depicted as forms of enslavement and not steps to a higher plane. In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Wilde was sure that growth could only be attained through 'self-development' or the nurturing of the 'ego' or 'personality'. Wilde often spoke about both concepts. He observed that 'Most personalities have been obliged to be rebels'.¹⁰³¹ He believed that by 'selecting its own mode of expression a personality might make itself perfect'.¹⁰³² As abstract as some of Wilde's observations appear, he continued to demonstrate in the essay how environment played the presiding role in the 'perfection' of the personality.

Sully went as far as to argue that the 'personality' could only be a 'concrete living whole' when associated with physical and social factors.¹⁰³³ Sully remarked that 'personality is an idea which in its nature is sufficiently obscure', and has been rendered 'still more obscure by the disputes of metaphysicians'.¹⁰³⁴ Wilde theorised about the 'personality' and frequently employed the term 'ego'. Both terms proved highly problematic for Victorian psychologists because they were immune to empirical testing and were therefore difficult to pin down. It was not until the psychology of Freud and Jung that the 'ego' underwent intense theoretical scrutiny. Wilde acknowledged that 'self

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid., p.279.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., p.262.

¹⁰³¹ Ibid., p.263.

¹⁰³² Ibid., p.266.

¹⁰³³ Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', p.382.

¹⁰³⁴ James Sully, 'Review [Untitled]', *Mind*, Vol.11, No. 41, Jan. 1886, p.106, (pp.106-109).

consciousness' was 'not yet adequate to explain the contents of the ego'.¹⁰³⁵ In a review of the novel *A Statesman's Lover* (1886), Wilde suggested that the representation of the 'ego' must be approached from many sides. He argued that the 'permanent ego' might be valuable in philosophy, but in literature the permanent ego is a 'bore'.¹⁰³⁶ His point here reinforced self development and the Paterian philosophy of opening oneself up to 'myriad emotions'.¹⁰³⁷ In the review, Wilde also acknowledged that in philosophy the 'permanent ego' may be a useful concept, but the 'permanence of personality [...] is a very subtle metaphysical problem'.¹⁰³⁸ One of the reasons why Wilde stated that the 'permanent ego' may be a useful concept in philosophy is because a fixed, permanent ego would be easier to theorise about and understand. The very fluidity and fluctuations, or 'myriad lives', that characterised the ego made it a complex and incomprehensible subject beyond the capability of what Dorian calls 'shallow psychology'.¹⁰³⁹

The notion of the self being in a state of flux was a prominent point of discussion amongst psychologists. It was this fluidity of 'personality' that allowed the Harvard psychologist William James to develop Lewes's concept of 'stream of consciousness'. According to James, art had the power to endow the self with compassion and altruism which were beneficial to society and the development of the individual. James believed that creating new ways of 'acting upon the world' maintained 'bodily equilibrium and psychic well-being'.¹⁰⁴⁰ Psychologists were keen to study the 'ego' and 'personality' because to be able systematically to penetrate these concepts meant that psychology

¹⁰³⁵ [Wilde], 'Literary Notes', p.389.

¹⁰³⁶ [Oscar Wilde], 'Two New Novels', *Pall Mall Gazette*, Vol. 44, No. 6709, 16 Sept., 1886, p.5.

¹⁰³⁷ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.140.

¹⁰³⁸ Wilde, 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison: A Study', p.53.

¹⁰³⁹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.17.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Martin Halliwell, *Romantic Science and the Experience of Self: Transatlantic Crosscurrents from William James to Oliver Sacks*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999) p.35.

had finally established an undisputed methodology, and could therefore be accepted institutionally as an empirical science like biology or physics. Not only this, but the 'ego' and 'personality' were the keys to perception and action. To comprehend these overwhelmingly complex and obscure elements that composed people was to understand and control their behaviours. With the knowledge that art was expressive of and communicated to the 'ego' and 'personality', critics feared the consequences of 'decadent' art which was seen to pander to unconscious atavistic behaviours.

Art and literature particularly were considered the depositaries of deviance and degeneration. Critics feared that neurological disease could be developed through reading 'bad' literature. The writer of 'Emotion Waste' (1865) warned that 'The danger of our time is not a waste of emotion, so much as a wrong expenditure of it [...]'. The anonymous reviewer claimed:

The evil art and bad taste of many a modern novel has been anticipated and condemned by writers from Longinus and Horace, to Burke and Kaimes. One of the causes why those books are read is that our emotions require to be constantly fed with something or other. It is curious to notice with what interest a man of business will occasionally plunge into a novel. We crave for experiences at second-hand, which we cannot find at our own.¹⁰⁴¹

The critic worried that the voracious sensation reader would moon away 'moral nerve and tissue.' Even more disconcerting was that 'he who cries over a book, is most likely to

¹⁰⁴¹ [Anon]. 'Emotion Waste', *London Review of Politics, Society, Literature, art, and Science*, Vol. 11, No. 285, Dec., 1865, p.638.

have no tears for the human distress which touches him afterwards.’ The Aristotelian view that literature was cathartic was itself potentially dangerous to social emotion because it might purge the individual of all feeling. To stimulate the palate with ‘hot-pressed novels’ might bring about unpleasant consequences. The reviewer worried that the reader was ‘walking through the world with half-shut eyes, seeing things only through the medium of the authors, expecting events which will never happen, and unprepared for those which do happen [...]’. This ‘victim’ finds himself ‘nervous, abstracted, silly, and incompetent for duties which demand foresight or exertion.’ The writer of ‘Emotion Waste’ accepted that emotion could be worse expended than on books that dazzled the senses and increased palpitations.¹⁰⁴² The work of pathologists like Nordau and Lombroso in the 1890s took up the attack on art in a more scientized form than the 1860s literature represented by ‘Emotion Waste’.

One of the traits that the ‘degenerative’ personality could develop was a deluded sense of reality. According to Nordau, ‘degenerative [...] male specimens [...] try to present something that they are not’.¹⁰⁴³ These ‘specimens’ ‘seek to model themselves after some artistic pattern which has no affinity with their own nature, or is even antithetical to it.’ Nordau continued, ‘Nor do they for the most part limit themselves to one pattern, but copy several at once, which jar with one another’.¹⁰⁴⁴ The unnamed lady described by Vivian in ‘The Decay of Lying’ who imitates the ‘fallen’ heroine from the French Magazine is said to have a ‘strange vagueness of character’ [...] and ‘no

¹⁰⁴² Ibid.

¹⁰⁴³ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, Translated from the second edition of the German work, (New York: D. Appleton and Company., 1895) p.9.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid.

personality at all, but simply the possibility of many types'.¹⁰⁴⁵ This 'Proteus', or protean kind of personality, would sometimes 'give herself up entirely to art, turn her drawing-room into a studio, and spend two or three days a week at picture-galleries or museums.' Then she would attend 'race-meetings, would wear the most horsey clothes, and talk about nothing but betting'.¹⁰⁴⁶ In the 1891 book version of the collected essays Wilde adds to her description, 'She abandoned religion for mesmerism, mesmerism for politics, and politics for the melodramatic excitements of philanthropy'.¹⁰⁴⁷ The description of philanthropy as a 'melodramatic' excitement conveys it as an act that is done to give an emotional thrill to the individual philanthropist rather than a genuine concern, or contribution to someone less fortunate. Likewise, Dorian's moods also flick from Catholicism to Darwinism to Mysticism and culminate in murder. Catholicism, Darwinism, and Mysticism are hardly 'artistic patterns' in Nordau's sense, but Dorian does try to replicate the 'artistic patterns' presented by Huysmans' representation of Des Essentes's colourful life in *À Rebours*.

Dorian is 'poisoned' by a 'yellow book' (which was a colour associated with 'immoral' French novels) given to him by Lord Henry. Dorian believes that the hero of the 'poisonous book' 'is a kind of prefiguring type of himself'.¹⁰⁴⁸ Both imitations described in 'The Decay of Lying' and *Dorian Gray*, suggests Wilde, are the 'wrong' way to cultivate 'personality'. According to the French psychologist Théodule-Armand Ribot, who founded the first French laboratory of experimental psychology, the most rudimentary type of

¹⁰⁴⁵ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.49.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Oscar Wilde: *The Major Works*, p.231.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.104.

self-consciousness was an 'intellectual product'.¹⁰⁴⁹ Self-consciousness, argued Ribot, developed in tangent with, and in close relation to, the representation of an external world.¹⁰⁵⁰ The art-object was part of the external world but could be internalised emotionally. For Wilde, art presented to the 'personality' 'various forms through which [...] expression can be attained', expression which would 'hurt' the spectator if experienced in 'Life'.¹⁰⁵¹ Literature was a means of developing the ethical-will without the mean consequences of life.

The reason for the tragic events that unfold for the French inspired heroine of Vivian's tale and Dorian is because they simply internalise the emotion and forget to step back and reflect. Nevertheless, by this reasoning the difference between a 'pathological' reader - who would follow the actions of a tragic hero or heroine- and a 'healthy' reader- who can understand the consequences of the actions that unravel before him or her - is that the latter somehow 'knows' how to process the emotion evoked by the text without self-harm. According to Vivian's argument in 'The Decay of Lying', the woman who consciously followed the plot of the French heroine had no stable self. It was this very insecurity of self that worried critics. Moreover, as discussed above, Wilde acknowledged that the 'permanent ego' was of 'value to philosophy' because it presented a stable, unified self with only one form, and was therefore amenable to deductive reasoning.¹⁰⁵²

Nordau chose to ignore the complex uses of 'ego' and 'egotism', and the role of 'personality' in Wilde's writings. Nordau criticised Wilde for being a 'cultivator of the Ego'

¹⁰⁴⁹ David J. Murray, 'Théodule Ribot (1839-1916) Founder of French Psychology, A Biographical Introduction', *History of Psychology*, Vol. 2, No. 4, Nov., 1999, p.277, (pp.277-301).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Sully, 'Review', p.108.

¹⁰⁵¹ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p.50.

¹⁰⁵² [Wilde], 'Two New Novels', p.5.

which was a pejorative and pathological designation.¹⁰⁵³ According to Nordau, an 'egoist' was not degenerative, but an 'ego-maniac' was 'an invalid who does not see things as they are, does not understand the world, and cannot take up a right attitude towards it.'¹⁰⁵⁴ Only the physician, argued Nordau, could recognise the neurasthenic tendencies of contemporary art and poetry.¹⁰⁵⁵ Nordau drew on Ribot's *Les Maladies de la Personnalité* (1885) which Sully had reviewed in *Mind*. For Nordau, the 'ego' was composed out of individual units of consciousness which were spread between the tributaries of cells and sensory nerves.¹⁰⁵⁶ Ribot elaborated, stating that 'conscious mental activity' was 'an incidental appendage to a sum of nervous processes, which constitute the real basis of mind and personality'. He examined 'mental disease' and offered descriptions of 'the curious psychological phenomena which present themselves in the case of the eunuch, the hermaphrodite,' and the 'double monster'.¹⁰⁵⁷ The term 'double monster' was used in medical journals to refer to conjoined twins.¹⁰⁵⁸ The 'personality' or 'ego' was inextricably linked to neurological 'deviance' and 'criminality'.

In his review of Ribot's book, Sully admitted that he could not understand how a 'mere sum of nervous processes, continuous in space and time, or an accompanying series of bodily feelings continuous in time, can transform itself even into the most elementary form of an *ego*.' For Ribot, 'personality' was simply a 'Unity of the bodily organism and the representation of the several functions of the organism by the nerve-

¹⁰⁵³ Nordau, *Degeneration*, p.319.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.243.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.251.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Sully, 'Review', p.106.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Alex Hill, 'Dissection of a Double Monster' in the *Journal of Anatomy*, Vol. 19, Jan., 1885, p.190, (pp.190-197). E. Allen also uses the term 'double monster' in the 'Case of Double Monster', *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, Sept., 1843, Vol. 6, pp.524-525.

centres'.¹⁰⁵⁹ The deepest ground of self-consciousness was a 'physiological fact'. For Sully, the idea of self was 'surely in every case the work of the comparing and constructing mind'.¹⁰⁶⁰ The 'failure of the disordered mind to unify its past and present in a single self', maintained Sully, 'may be referred quite as much to an intellectual as to an emotional cause'. This 'cause' was the 'inability to allow for a certain amount of change of experience'.¹⁰⁶¹ Sully concluded that Ribot was right in viewing the organic feelings as a 'main ingredient in the materials which the mind necessarily uses in building up the idea of self'. Nevertheless, these feelings alone, contended Sully, did not constitute the notion of 'personality'.¹⁰⁶²

Lewes's views on the 'personality' and self-consciousness are worthy points of consideration to end this analysis of how the cultivation of the 'personality' would lead, as Wilde maintained, to a utopian society, or 'progress'. Lewes argued that 'personality' originated from consciousness of 'Self'. Self-consciousness was a 'late product of civilisation' as was the intellect and reason.¹⁰⁶³ In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', the 'perfect' personality is the height of aesthetic evolution and is the result of self-consciousness. Wilde envisioned progress through 'personality'. Like Lewes, Wilde suggested that 'personality' is self-consciousness primed at its most 'perfect'. The growth of self-consciousness was the result of experiencing artistic sensations and aesthetic pleasures. Wilde's sense of 'personality' was partly the totality or the housing of the emotions and sensations of readerly experience. According to Lewes, self-consciousness developed through the evolution of the organism and its synthesis with experience. For

¹⁰⁵⁹ Sully, 'Review', p.107.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid., p.108.

¹⁰⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶² Ibid.

¹⁰⁶³ Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism', p.492.

Wilde, it was the synthesis of aesthetic experience and the physiological movements of nerves, cells and fibres that would nurture self-consciousness, and encourage the 'personality' to evolve. Like Ribot and Sully, Lewes believed that self-consciousness could only progress through 'reflective analysis'. If, therefore, the citizen of Wilde's utopia simply internalised the art-object, or imitated plots without reflection, the 'personality' was likely to stagnate. The reflective critic must ask, 'What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure?'¹⁰⁶⁴ It was this kind of self-consciousness that intertwined aesthetics with ethics or broader societal issues.

The transformation of everyday life.¹⁰⁶⁵

On examining Wilde's engagement with psychology it becomes clear that the curves, colours, sounds and tones that he delights in describing have as much of an ethical as an aesthetic aim. Enlarging the aesthetic capacity of people was a means of nurturing their ethical-emotional behaviour. Sully, for instance, concluded that the history of costume was an index to the growth of a people's manners, ideas and emotions.¹⁰⁶⁶ The psychological aestheticians understood that happiness and misery were propagated by habitual thoughts, impulses and desires.¹⁰⁶⁷ For Allen, Sully and Wilde, aesthetic gratification moulded ethical behaviours. The terms 'highly organised' or 'highly developed' which Wilde frequently employed in *Dorian Gray* were inevitably linked to aesthetic and ethical concepts of evolution. Vietch, Allen, and Wilde all

¹⁰⁶⁴ Pater, *The Renaissance*, 'preface'.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes 1870-1900*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p.21.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Sully, 'The Natural History of Dress', p.572.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', p.385.

theorised about an 'aesthetic evolution' that would change ethical codes and behaviours through the impressions created and the experience felt through art. In discussing 'Aesthetic Evolution in Man' (1880) Allen did not merely examine the development of art and aesthetic taste. He stressed the ethical and moral importance of investigating aesthetic taste which he saw as a feature of sexual selection. Allen defined 'aesthetic evolution' as a 'gradual decentralisation' which started with the 'simple' or 'narrow' feelings of the 'savage' or 'child', and climaxed in the 'full' and 'expansive' aesthetic diversity of the 'cultivated' adult.¹⁰⁶⁸

As has been explored by Jonathan Smith and examined in chapter two, Ruskin was horrified to hear that the beauty sense was associated with the sexual instinct. For him, beauty had existed 'since the world was made'.¹⁰⁶⁹ Ruskin presented art as a form of social improvement. For him, the creation of 'beautiful' and 'natural' surroundings had a profound and deep-rooted affect on social morality. He discussed the profound affect the 'sight of infinite nastiness' in city life might have on children who from the very 'cradle' were to become accustomed to manmade surroundings.¹⁰⁷⁰ Wilde had firsthand experience of Ruskin's passion for improving the countryside. Ruskin had asked Wilde and other Oxonians to help him pave a flower bordered country road in the spring of 1875.¹⁰⁷¹ Wilde was therefore fully aware of the objectives of the 'Arts and Crafts Movement'.

The 'Arts and Crafts Movement' endeavoured to bring beauty to everyday life and common people, and originated from the teachings of William Blake, Ruskin and Morris.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Allen, 'Aesthetic Evolution in Man', p.30.

¹⁰⁶⁹ John Ruskin, 'Fiction-Fair and Foul', *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 7, June 1880, p.941 (pp.941-962).

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.942.

¹⁰⁷¹ Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.48.

They remained opposed to mechanically produced goods and believed that the repetitive mechanical processes resulting from machine labour were tools of oppression akin to slavery. Machine labour was not 'beautiful', nor did it inspire creativity. Instead, Morris and Ruskin argued, it reduced mankind into a nonentity which was to become spiritually void and physically worn. The Arts and Crafts ethic promoted a creative, non-mechanised approach that would set the labourer or the handicraftsman above the machine. Design and manufacture were to be both physically and spiritually rewarding from beginning to end.¹⁰⁷² The Arts and Crafts 'Movement' (a term of convenience rather than one which refers to any given time frame) covered all aspects of living from dress to architecture to house decoration. Its origin is essentially attributed to Ruskin's teachings and Morris.¹⁰⁷³

Raymond Williams observes that even though 'art for art's sake' was simply a restatement of an attitude created by the first generation of the Romantics, Wilde's arguments were a 'real adjustment' and 'advance in feeling'. This is because, argues Williams, unlike previous artists, Wilde was the only one to advocate the use of machinery.¹⁰⁷⁴ However, in *News from Nowhere* (1890) Morris refers to 'force barges' which carry country produce, lime, brick and timber. These 'force barges' are propelled by some new found 'force'.¹⁰⁷⁵ Morris, like Wilde, also imagined that machinery or technology would become increasingly important in the future. In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' Wilde proposed that all manual labour 'should be done by a machine'.¹⁰⁷⁶ In fact, Wilde imagined that, in this future utopian society, 'Science and its methods' would allow for such conveniences as 'great storages of force for every city,

¹⁰⁷² Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts Movement: a study of its sources, ideals and influences on design theory*, (London: Studio Vista Publishers, 1971) pp. 7, 9.

¹⁰⁷³ Imogen Hart, *Arts and Crafts Objects*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010) p.5.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) pp.169, 174.

¹⁰⁷⁵ William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, (Boston, MA: Roberts Bros., 1890) p.217.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.269.

and for every house if required,' which 'man will convert into heat, light, or motion, according to his needs'.¹⁰⁷⁷ In these lines, Wilde offers a prevision of twentieth-century urban life with scientific advancement at the centre of progress, and aesthetic experience the outcome of scientific endeavours. Like the leaders of the 'Arts and Crafts Movement' Morris and Ruskin, Wilde expressed the hope that teaching the public about house decoration and handicraft would make 'people [...] understand and love art more', and allow 'decorative art' to become 'a part of their daily life'.¹⁰⁷⁸ Like Ruskin, Wilde reasoned that by surrounding young children with beautiful, dainty things, gentleness and delicacy would be unconsciously acquired.¹⁰⁷⁹ The cry of the 'Arts and Crafts Movement' was 'art at home'.¹⁰⁸⁰ As demonstrated in chapter three, psychological aestheticians like Wilde, Allen, and Sully were eager to convey their theories as less metaphysical disquisitions than practical guidelines for everyday use.

Wilde can hardly be said to have applied his aesthetic theories in the way of the missionary aesthetes of Diana Maltz's *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes* (2006). The missionary aesthetes she describes lobbied to extend museum and gallery opening times, and worked to provide free concerts, playgrounds, and public gardens in working-class neighbourhoods.¹⁰⁸¹ Gagnier says that, like Ruskin and Morris, Wilde also wrote for 'freedom, equality and toleration'.¹⁰⁸² As an example, she cites 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' where he envisages a future where art will cure the ills and sores of society. Like Allen and Vietch, Wilde gave an account of aesthetic evolution. As explored

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ibid., p.270.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Oscar Wilde: *Interviews and Recollections*, Vol.1, p.59.

¹⁰⁷⁹ 'House Decoration', *Essays and Lectures by Oscar Wilde*, p.170.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Allen, 'Carving a Cocoa-nut', p.461.

¹⁰⁸¹ Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes 1870-1900*, p.2.

¹⁰⁸² Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*, p.275.

above, Allen and Wilde knew each other and exchanged views and ideas. We also know that Wilde reviewed Vietch's book *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*. All three writers presented similar but slightly differing versions of how aesthetic evolution was to be achieved.

Allen's essay 'Aesthetic Evolution in Man' traced the development of the aesthetic faculty- the sense of beauty and appreciation of art- from its 'primitive' roots to its 'highest' development, which Allen believed was to be found in the European mind.¹⁰⁸³ Allen suggested that the aesthetic faculty had undergone three stages of evolution in human history, although 'man' and not woman is his constant point of reference. The first stage consisted of man's self-absorption and interest in self-beautification.¹⁰⁸⁴ The second phase was displayed in man's love of ornamentation and decoration of objects and utensils.¹⁰⁸⁵ Finally, the height of aesthetic evolution was to be achieved when humanity reached the 'disinterested' stage of its own existence. This 'disinterestedness' was to be represented in mankind's admiration for nature such as sunsets, clouds and rainbows; all of which, argued Allen, did not interest the 'primitive mind.'¹⁰⁸⁶ In Allen's account, 'primitive' selfishness as embodied in the love of self-adornment was to dissolve before true aesthetic evolution could be made uniform.

The predominating view across Wilde's journalism inverts Allen's argument. While Allen demeaned the raw pleasure that colour, curve and form gave to the 'child' or 'savage', Wilde perceived that in his socialist utopia the personality of 'man' would be

¹⁰⁸³ Allen, 'Aesthetic Evolution in Man,' p.445.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid., pp.451-452.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid., p.454.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ibid., p.459.

that of a child.¹⁰⁸⁷ Wilde conveys children as possessing a rare ability to respond to colours, forms and sounds much in the same way as Pater. The 'interval' that is life, argued Pater, is spent by 'the wisest, at least among "the children of this world", in art and song'.¹⁰⁸⁸ While this is a Biblical reference from Luke 16.8 which states 'the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light', Pater's 'Conclusion' asks the reader to perceive the world as a child who delights in the 'splendour of [...] experience' in a 'desperate effort to see and touch'.¹⁰⁸⁹ Dorian has a child-like appetite for sparkly gems, alluring colours, for a constant motion of sensory experience. Dorian delights in 'beautiful things that one can *touch* and *handle*. Old brocades, green bronzes, lacquer work, carved ivories, exquisite surroundings, luxury, [and] pomp' [*italics mine*].¹⁰⁹⁰ Across his writings, Wilde offered a kinaesthetic approach to the development of the 'beauty-sense'.¹⁰⁹¹ The Wildean ego was to be nurtured and nourished with gifts of beauty. On his American lecture tour Wilde reportedly said that the people of the west were 'stronger, fresher, saner' than the rest. The 'surroundings' had, according to Wilde, instilled in them a love of the beautiful which just needed 'development' and 'direction'.¹⁰⁹²

Vietch, whose *The Feeling of Nature in Scottish Poetry* Wilde reviewed, contemplated the points raised by Allen, Wilde and Sully. Vietch was the 'Professor of Logic and Rhetoric' at Glasgow University. Like Allen, he gave an historic account of the growth of aesthetic feeling. For Vietch, 'aesthetical emotion' was the combined exercise

¹⁰⁸⁷ Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', p.264.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Pater, *The Renaissance*, p.174.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.152.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, p.90.

¹⁰⁹¹ Wilde, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', p.450.

¹⁰⁹² *Oscar Wilde's Interviews and Recollections Vol. 1*, p.3.

of the senses and the imagination.¹⁰⁹³ To Wilde, Vietch was a 'modern Wordsworthian' because Vietch desired to make 'man one with Nature'.¹⁰⁹⁴ Vietch held a pantheistic view of utopian society. Like Allen he perceived three stages of the evolution of sentiment or aesthetic emotion. The first stage, or 'primitive' state, included an 'open-air feeling' with the chief sources of pleasure being sunshine, breezes, the 'green-fresh' aspect of the earth, and the sky. Vietch connected these pleasures with a 'consciousness of life and sensuous enjoyment'.¹⁰⁹⁵ Wilde criticised Vietch, and inadvertently Allen as well, by arguing that the earliest 'nature myths' told of the sublime terror nature inspired and not simply of delight and sensory pleasure.¹⁰⁹⁶ Both Allen and Wilde's accounts in 'The Aesthetic Evolution in Man' and 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' respectively argued that the 'consciousness of life and sensuous enjoyment' could only be achieved during the enlightenment or third stage of 'aesthetic evolution'.

The second stage of evolution in Vietch's narrative depicted humanity at war with nature. Mankind orders and arranges the elements but feels antipathy towards nature's mountains and the sea because neither can be subdued to utility. Vietch's final stage of aesthetic evolution corresponded to the dictums of aestheticism. He argued that a free 'delight in mere contemplation' where objects in nature are loved for themselves will mark a 'great advance in civilisation'. It is in this third aspect of aesthetical evolution that Wilde's utopian vision chimes with Vietch's, although Wildean aestheticism rejects the contemplation of nature. In 'The Decay of Lying', Vivian argued that 'the more we study

¹⁰⁹³ Vietch, *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, p.10.

¹⁰⁹⁴ [Wilde], 'A Scotchman on Scottish Poetry', p.3.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Vietch, *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, p.11.

¹⁰⁹⁶ [Wilde], 'A Scotchman on Scottish Poetry', p.3.

art, the less we care for nature.¹⁰⁹⁷ As shown before in chapter three, Wilde did not necessarily reject the forms and colours presented by nature, but he did disapprove of the 'return to life' that artists tried to mimic. When civilisation is at its peak, concluded Vietch, impressions will be 'loved, sought [and] gazed' on simply as such.¹⁰⁹⁸

In Vietch's third stage of 'aesthetic evolution', pleasure could be heightened by blending colours, harmonies of sounds and making a 'synthesis or unity' of different sensations by mixing colours with odours, forms and sounds.¹⁰⁹⁹ Art was to progress to such a degree that mankind would no longer be in conflict or struggling against the earth and its elements. Crucially Wilde agreed with Vietch's point that the 'impression for the sake of an impression' was to be achieved by the 'poet of the race'.¹¹⁰⁰ Wilde, Allen, and Vietch's account of aesthetic evolution admit that aesthetic progress is largely determined by the same factors which contribute to social evolution. The above analysis shows Wilde responding to Vietch and Allen's accounts of aesthetic evolution. Unlike Allen and Vietch though, Wilde does not see man prostrating himself before nature. The use of the free and conscious will, the art of cultivating nature, and the stimulation of the imagination were all means to broaden the aesthetic and social spectrum for Wilde.

[...] a dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight.¹¹⁰¹

The impressions created and the emotions stirred by the art-object were considered to have a direct bearing on behaviours and social progress. Throughout his journalism, Wilde discoursed on a variety of ethical issues. Arguments over reading and

¹⁰⁹⁷ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying,' p.35.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Vietch, *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry*, p.15.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁰¹ Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', p.459.

its effect on conduct and the fear of emotional contagion were only concerns because they related to a greater debate. At the heart of the debate lay the question of the exercise of free-will and the model of growth that should be adhered to in every public sphere. The struggle to assert each model of growth manifested in debates over what the French sociologist Émile Durkheim called the 'sacred' and 'profane', and through the language of pathology relating to the 'healthy' and 'unhealthy'.¹¹⁰² The question of the ethical-will was a recurring subject of discussion for Wilde and his critics.

The earlier taunts and mocking of Wilde by critics in the 1880s reveal their hidden anxiety. Reviewers often tried to downplay Wilde's importance by ridiculing him yet held him up as an example of all that were 'immoral' and 'deviant' in society. Haley argues that the 'decadents' and their art was considered antithetical to progress which was at the core of the positivist tradition. However, the positivist epistemology was based on sense-experience, and positive verification, just like aestheticism. Haley establishes that Wilde viewed his literary styles as 'models of growth' and not degeneracy.¹¹⁰³ He therefore sided with evolutionists when deliberating on the model for progress. Wilde's appropriations of Clifford or Spencer were unlikely to receive commendations from anyone besides scientific naturalists like Allen. Allen consciously used Wildean tropes of irony in his discussion of the 'New Hedonism', and reinforced the scientific based ethics promoted by Lord Henry and in Wilde's essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'. Having engaged with, and incorporated elements of scientific naturalism in his own writings, it is

¹¹⁰² Durkheim argued that the 'sacred [...] varies infinitely according to different religions'. Simultaneously, the 'sacred' and 'profane' are not bipolar opposites because 'sacred things are those which the interdictions protects and isolate; profane things, those to which the interdiction are applied which must remain at a distance from the first'. According to Durkheim, these two categories 'embrace all that exists, but which radically exclude each other'. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1976) pp.37-70.

¹¹⁰³ Haley, 'Wilde's "Decadence" and the Positivist Tradition', p.215.

not surprising that Pater recognised Wilde's 'wonderful applications of natural science.'¹¹⁰⁴ The critics who understood the intellectual framework upholding Wilde's creativity and criticism credited his contribution.

According to the vast majority of Victorian critics literature should not test the reader but offer unambiguous instruction. With alluring descriptions of fine taste and beauty interwoven with criminal acts and suggestions of 'immoral' behaviour, Wilde's engagement with ethics was ambiguous and contentious. The impressions one chose to perceive were inevitably going to shape character, the 'ego' and perhaps affect one's actions on a social scale- this was agreed by all. Wilde antagonised the reading public. He insisted they sit passively while the artist helped them nurture a temperament of receptivity. However, Wilde also encouraged self-consciousness and the assertion of one's free-will unrestricted by the ethical codes of society. If an individual chose to 'pathologically' interpret the art-object, then it was the fault of the forces at work in society. The lines and patterns on one's hands, or the size and shape of the cranium did not dictate 'deviance' or 'good' conduct. Wilde was more a social evolutionist than a dandy.

¹¹⁰⁴ Walter Pater, 'A Novel by Mr Oscar Wilde', *Oscar Wilde A Collection of Critical Essays*, Richard Ellmann, ed., (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1969) p.38.

Conclusion

History, as Wilde repeatedly presents it throughout his writings, is an act of perception, and no two accounts of any one event will ever be identical. Even though parallels can be made between Wilde's theories and those by the likes of Clifford, Sully, Lewes or Allen, Wilde's ideas are part of a conscious attempt to reject any one system of interpretation, or mode of viewing the subject/object. Nevertheless, this thesis has tried to offer an account of Wilde's aesthetic theories in relation to specific debates ongoing in the periodical press around mental states, perception, representation, and aesthetic composition throughout the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. By examining Wilde's periodical writings synchronically, this research has attempted to show how his creativity and criticism are part of the broader intellectual culture of Victorian psychology.

Wilde may have opportunistically appropriated the dandified image of Bunthorne projected by Gilbert and Sullivan in *Patience* for the sake of publicity and monetary gain.¹¹⁰⁵ However, Wilde's opportunism must not overshadow the intellectual culture that contributed to the development of his aesthetic theories. Aside from the significance of Wilde's sexuality, and the fact that his works deal with powerful everyday psychology like the psychology of perception and aesthetics, or the psychology of emotion, his appeal today to mass markets is the flamboyant, colourful image of the witty dandy who speaks volumes in short, sharp, often ironic statements. I believe that audiences would be eager to understand the powerful psychology that Wilde so subtly weaves into his texts.

¹¹⁰⁵ Carolyn Williams, *Gilbert & Sullivan, Gender, Genre, Parody*, (New York: Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp.167, 168, 169.

Existing Wilde scholarship is rich and diverse. However, even though there exists plenty of historical detail about Wilde's life and letters, there still remains the challenge of investigating the historical context of his writings. I argue that an understanding of Wilde's theories cannot be complete unless the cultural context which shaped his psychological aesthetics is acknowledged. It is accepted, as Gillespie states, that there is no one way to read Wilde.¹¹⁰⁶ However, this does not mean that the cultural and intellectual setting of Wilde's day cannot be investigated. It is worth celebrating that Wilde's aesthetic theories still have critics arguing. It is a positive fact that Wilde's texts can be read through the theories of Lacan or Foucault, and his work summoned to discuss contemporary dilemmas within literary criticism. However, without an understanding of the cultural forces that shaped Wildean aesthetics, audiences are left with biographical, formalistic, artistic, and twenty-first-century frameworks in which to interpret Wilde's aesthetics. Even using these methods collectively to approach Wilde's texts cannot compensate for the neglect of the context of psychological aesthetics.

This thesis has tried to show Wilde as part of an important network of psychological aestheticians and not just as a dandy, or protégé of Pater or Ruskin. The context of psychology or psychological aesthetics is vital to understanding Wilde's creativity and criticism. It is important to learn how working alongside fellow reviewers such as Sully, or Allen, influenced Wilde's style. There is no doubt that Wilde appropriated Allen's physiological aesthetics and disseminated them in his reviews as well as in *Dorian Gray* and his critical essays. Wilde's aesthetic theories are part of the

¹¹⁰⁶ Michael Patrick Gillespie, 'Picturing Dorian Gray: Resistant Readings in Wilde's Novel', *ELT Press 1880-1920*, Vol. 35, No.1, 1992, pp. 7-25.

history of psychology. In *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science* (1984), Sally Shuttleworth has examined the important contributions to psychology made by George Eliot.¹¹⁰⁷ Eliot was acknowledged by her contemporaries like Sully who argued that Eliot made important psychological observations that surpassed the abilities of trained psychologists.¹¹⁰⁸ Other scholars such as Dames also focus on Eliot or novelists like George Meredith for their engagement with physiological theory.¹¹⁰⁹ Wilde's aesthetic theories influenced Allen and Sully whose views became closer to Wilde's by the end of the century. However, Wilde is rarely mentioned as an exponent of psychological aesthetics.

Like Sully and Allen, Wilde was the intellectual successor of psychologists like Spencer, Lewes, Bain, and editors such as Stead and Stephen. These writers, with the exception of Stead and Bain, like Wilde, had read Hegel, Kant, Spinoza and Greek literature. Like Lee, Sully, Allen, Vietch and Collier, Wilde was engaged in disputes over what in retrospect are the subjects of aesthetics, psychology and literary criticism. By examining specific theories like associationism, or the way Wilde, Sully, or Lee appropriated the theories of sexual and natural selection, this research has tried to demonstrate that Wilde did not just appropriate theories for the sake of creating a unified art philosophy, or at least he did not do so any more than his fellow aestheticians tried to create a scientized aesthetics.

By examining Wilde's engagement with specific psychological disputes, observations about his significance to wider Victorian intellectual culture can be made

¹¹⁰⁷ Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹¹⁰⁸ Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', p.389.

¹¹⁰⁹ Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel*, pp.123, 166.

and a more rounded view of Wilde as a journalist in the 1880s can be uncovered. The attempt at paralleling Wilde's theories with that of fellow periodical contributors shifts the onus away from reading Wilde's adaptations of science as a method of Hegelian synthesis as Helfand and Smith contend. By examining Wilde in wider historical terms this thesis has tried to draw attention away from Wilde as a singular figure, or artist whose engagement with specific texts is explained in terms of his life or artistic circle of friends. The analysis of *Lippincotts's Dorian Gray* in relation to the neighbouring articles in the 1890 issue demonstrates that the editors, if not Wilde himself, carefully positioned the novel amongst psychological literature. By cross examining the theories of scientific naturalism interwoven in *Dorian Gray* with subsequent articles like Bloomfield-Moore's which overtly sided with theological accounts of the will, the complexity of Wilde's engagement with psychology, and the need to examine his writings in context proves to be paramount to comprehending the subjects that are explored in his texts.

This thesis does not try to 'prove' that Wilde had influenced Allen or Sully, or that Wilde had read this scientific naturalist or that psychologist as a way to align him with what in retrospect is perceived as a culturally dominant form of knowledge. The last decade has seen a proliferation in scholarship that highlights how science in the nineteenth century was mediated creatively and in various forms to a wide range of readerships through periodicals.¹¹¹⁰ What this thesis is arguing for is the acknowledgement of Wilde as a key disseminator of psychological aesthetics. When psychological aesthetics is discussed, not only Allen or Sully's names should appear amongst the late nineteenth-century's promulgators, but Wilde's too. Wilde's creativity is part of the story of psychological aesthetics, but not because as Maclagan states, Wilde's

¹¹¹⁰ *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media*, pp. xvii-xxv.

aesthetics connoted 'elitism, precocity, and [...] perversity'.¹¹¹¹ The reason why audiences may have an obscure idea about Wilde's aesthetics could be because they are frequently introduced to Wilde through incessant discussions of the 'gay' Wilde, or Wilde as the leader of the 'decadents'. Wilde's quips and quotes are isolated and mass marketed and so audiences never really have the opportunity to learn about the powerful subjects that shaped Wilde's ideas, or his contributions to psychological aesthetics. Today's audiences are taught too much about Wilde's posing, table talk and sexual escapades. If Wilde was a 'promulgator of the aesthetic message' then surely his engagement with psychological aesthetics is essential to understanding that message.¹¹¹²

Wilde's discussions of form and colour, or psycho-aesthetic laws of harmony and variety offer practical, easily adaptable laws for everyday life. These psycho-aesthetic laws were theorised by Bain, and debated by Wilde, Allen, Sully, Lee, Gurney and a host of other aesthetic theorists. Wilde appropriated associationism as a way to offer sensory enrichment to the reader, and as a method of educating the mind to act rather than simply assimilate. Wilde demonstrates how the art-object may cultivate the experiences, habits, memories and emotions, or mental states of the individual. Wilde powerfully argues and performs or practises the notion that every day perception, judgement, understanding, thought processes- all of which lead to action- can be controlled through the kinds of cerebral movement, and sensory or mental repetitions produced by the art-object. If Wilde is a gay icon, if the image Wilde projected as a dandy contributed to modern day celebrity culture, and if the plethora of inconsistencies in his writings has caused animosity between critics as to how Wilde should be approached, then surely his

¹¹¹¹ Maclagan, *Psychological Aesthetics*, p.22.

¹¹¹² Stephen Calloway, 'Wilde and the Dandyism of the Senses', *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, Peter Raby, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.40.

engagement with the budding area of behavioural psychology in twentieth-century terms must be given further attention. For what was Wilde's creative method of 'performing psychology' if not a theoretical manifestation of those behavioural models of Pavlov that tried to manipulate existing habits and reflexes in the hope to condition behaviours, albeit the behaviours of animals? What was the consistent repetition of the importance of gaining new impressions, and the absorption of aesthetic detail but an early manifestation of social psychology which examined neurological processes, structures and functions? Of course, twentieth-century psychology tried to gauge subjectivity through an objective experimental branch of natural science.¹¹¹³ Nevertheless, the root of these experiments lay in the intellectual culture of nineteenth-century psychology. It is Wilde's psychologically influenced style and literary techniques that have left audiences insatiable for him and his works.

By investigating a variety of periodical literature by psychologists from numerous schools of thought each chapter in this thesis has demonstrated how Wilde actively contributed to debates that decided the future of psychology, aesthetics, and literary criticism. The arguments between writers were highly sophisticated, and sometimes their differences of thought were subtle and often transitory. Wilde argued for a psychological basis to literary criticism. Moreover, his model of literary criticism did not exclude aesthetics. Some of Wilde's most influential theories about art are construed out of emotionalist psychology, atomism, and the laws of the transmutation of energy. Wilde's deliberations on the nature of reality, although conveyed playfully as in his discussion of the creative uses of fog, were discussed with the same philosophical insight as Ward or Sully. For Wilde, literature was by its very nature a psycho-physiological phenomenon. By

¹¹¹³ Boakes, *From Darwinism to Behaviourism*, pp.110, 133-135.

debating and incorporating psychology and physical theories into his view of the art-object, Wilde gave psychological aesthetics a theoretical and experimental basis. This 'experimental basis', Wilde demonstrates, was rooted in the aesthetic reactions and emotive states evoked by the art-object which had a material basis that involved the mobilisation of a spectrum of psychological effects. Perception, imagination, sensory experience, emotion and the medium of expression as well as the expression of sense-experience, were part of the literary model presented by Wilde.

Wilde's contribution to psychological aesthetics generated valuable debate which eventually pronounced the death of a scientized literary criticism, and a systematised aesthetics. Wilde's aesthetic theories grew out of psycho-physiological aesthetics, but he demonstrated that even a psycho-physiological aesthetic need not necessarily lead to an empirical or quantitative methodology, especially in the realm of human experience. Peter Lamarque suggests that the 'flight' from aesthetics in literary criticism is rooted in the belief that any reference to pleasure or emotional experience is 'marginal to the critical enterprise and by implication, the thought that the very vocabulary of aesthetics [...] is itself peripheral to substantial critical discourse'.¹¹¹⁴ Wilde fused the subject matter of aesthetics with the philosophy of language, metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, moral philosophy, into his literary criticism indiscriminately. According to Wilde, there was no distinct phenomenology associated with reading literature. Aesthetics was not exclusively confined to beauty. According to Maclagan, psycho-analysis has filled the void between literary criticism and aesthetics. However, the psychological aestheticians were already linking the unconscious with aesthetic theories. Moreover, Wilde's reviews for

¹¹¹⁴ Peter Lamarque, 'Aesthetics and Literature: a Problematic Relation?', *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 135, No.1, May 2007, p.28, (pp.27-40).

the *Pall Mall Gazette* show him discussing the obscure nature of the unconscious in relation to literary and poetic expression. Psychological aesthetics were not as 'disembodied' as Maclagan argues.¹¹¹⁵

Willean aesthetics do not begin and end with his posing with sunflowers and lilies, his fur coats, and knee-breeches. There is a deeper, cultural significance that directs the reader to the incessant references to forms, colours, sights, harmonies, or disharmonies. Like his fellow psychological aestheticians Wilde popularised and adapted Darwin's theory of sexual selection. The sexual instinct and its dependence on certain forms, colours, sounds, proportions and harmonies resonate through modern day aesthetics in a plethora of expressions. Freud is considered to have heavily sexualised modern life with theories that see the sexual instinct as the basis to all thought and behaviour. However, it was his Victorian intellectual predecessors who had presented the sexual instinct as the basis to consumerism and the manner through which ideas of the 'self' might be constructed. The onus on harmonious colours, pleasing forms, and the sensory 'pleasure' induced by them is a cornerstone of the aesthetic ideas that influence personal adornment to house decoration in twenty-first century culture. The nature of 'pleasure' was broadened by Willean aesthetics. Through his psychological aesthetics Wilde argued for all emotions to be permissible or acceptable without being labelled as 'morbid' or 'unhealthy'. As Wilde perceived the question of ethical-will, it was simply the right of every individual to exercise their will in matters of aesthetic preference, perception and judgement, at least in the mental realm.

¹¹¹⁵ Maclagan, *Psychological Aesthetics*, p.132.

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