

Arabella Buckley's Epic: Uniting Evolutionary Epic & Spiritualism to Account for the
Evolution of Morals from Mutualism

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In 1859, Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* outlining his theory of evolution through the mechanism of natural selection. With this text, he both employed and shaped the genre of evolutionary epic, one of the most significant narrative formats of the latter half of the 19th Century. Characterized by a progressive synthesis of scientific knowledge covering vast sweeps of time and aimed at diverse readers, the evolutionary epic became a useful genre for Victorian science writers and popularizers.¹ In his conclusion to *The Origin*, Darwin laid the foundation of the debate over the narrative of evolutionary epic. The final lines of his text read:

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.²

We encounter Darwin's epic narrative here: the drama of the "war of nature, from famine and death," full of competition, allows his mechanism, lawful development through natural selection, to result in the "exalted" higher animals, humans. While Darwin's view of evolution is markedly progressive, evident in this diction, less clear are his convictions of theism or materialism and of mutualism or competition in the epic of evolution.

¹ Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), Google Books ed., 220.

² Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London: John Murray, 24 November 1859), 490, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://darwin-online.org.uk>.

Though he added “breathed by the Creator” to his second edition of *The Origin* a few weeks following the first edition’s publication,³ whether the edit reflects a theistic understanding of natural selection or an attempt to appease theistic readers and friends remains unclear. Subsequent editions of *The Origin* retained the edit, and apologists on each side of the theist-materialist debate over the nature of evolutionary epic retained their positions.

All popularizers of evolution following Charles Darwin emphasized one or another version of the evolutionary epic. While most of his contemporaries interpreted his theory of natural selection as evidence of competition ruling nature, science writer and popularizer Arabella Buckley was the first to characterize Darwin’s theory of the evolution of morals as mutualistic rather than materialistic, and she did so through a unique consolidation of evolutionary epic and spiritualism. Scholar of Victorian women Barbara T. Gates has pointed out that a commitment to the maternal tradition and social responsibility drove Buckley’s contribution to the evolutionary narrative, her most profound conclusion being her emphasis on the mutuality of nature.⁴ Historian of science popularization Bernard Lightman adds that Buckley’s spiritualistic beliefs directed her popularization through the genre of evolutionary epic, noting that while Gates provides a detailed account of Buckley’s narrative techniques and goals, her exclusion of Buckley’s religion restricts her analysis.⁵ In light of the conversation between these scholars, I aim

³ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London: John Murray, 1860), 490, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>.

⁴ Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁵ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

to demonstrate that the significance of Buckley's distinctive, mutualistic addition to the debate on the evolution of morals lies in her theory of traducianism, neatly unifying evolutionary epic, mutualism, and spiritualism.

Locating Arabella Buckley's position in the debate over the nature of evolution first requires an examination of the discussion between English naturalists Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin concerning natural selection's pervasiveness. The co-discoverer of natural selection with Darwin, Wallace remained one of Darwin's, and natural selection's, biggest advocates until 1869. In a letter to Darwin dated March 24, Wallace reveals that he explores the limitations of natural selection for the first time in an upcoming *Quarterly* article.⁶ His message causes Darwin distress, for Darwin responds, "I hope you have not murdered too completely your own and my child."⁷

The anticipated *Quarterly* article was Wallace's review of Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. At the end of his review, Wallace discloses his new doubt that natural selection developed the moral and mental capabilities of humans. He writes, "while admitting to the full extent the agency of the same great laws of organic development in the origin of the human race as in the origin of all organized beings, there yet seems to be evidence of a Power which has guided the action of those laws in definite

⁶ Alfred Russel Wallace to Charles Darwin, 24 March 1869, Darwin Correspondence Database, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-6681>.

⁷ Charles Darwin to Alfred Russel Wallace, 27 March 1869, Darwin Correspondence Database, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-6684>.

directions and for special ends.”⁸ The human body may have evolved through natural selection, he allowed, but the mental and moral nature of humans is too perfect for the mindless mechanism, and must have been directed by a deity. Wallace presents his transition to a theistic view of evolution, unable to explain the origin of man without the existence of a creator.

Darwin, disappointed by Wallace’s suggestion of natural selection’s limitations, responded by adjusting his work on *The Descent of Man* to more prominently stress his naturalistic account of the evolution of morals. As evidenced by Darwin’s addition of “by the Creator” in his later editions of *The Origin* and his support of theistic popularizers of evolution like Asa Gray, Wallace’s belief in a creator was not the cause of Darwin’s disapproval. Rather, Darwin rejected Wallace’s human exceptionalism necessitating divine intervention to design morality. In *The Descent of Man*, published on February 24, 1871, Darwin dedicates a chapter to “Moral Sense.” He attributes the evolution of human morals to the social instincts, particularly the parental and filial affections, and provides a multitude of examples of social instincts in the lower animals. Even pelicans, he writes, demonstrate the noble moral of sympathy by feeding a blind companion.⁹ Responding to Wallace’s human exceptionalism concerning the evolution of the higher faculties, Darwin writes, “the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, is certainly one of degree and not of kind,” maintaining the

⁸ Alfred Russel Wallace, review of *Principles of Geology; or the Modern Changes of the Earth and its Inhabitants considered as illustrative of Geology*, by Sir Charles Lyell, *The Quarterly Review* 126, no. 252 (04, 1869): 393, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2512425?accountid=12964>.

⁹ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 24 February 1871), 77, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://darwin-online.org.uk/>.

lawfulness of natural selection throughout human development. Thus he concludes, unlike Wallace, that morals are no exception to the laws of natural selection and have descended through the animal kingdom, culminating in human morality.

Wallace's attribution of the evolution of morals to a creator and Darwin's theory rooted in natural history produced a gap between which Arabella Buckley took up a middle ground, a position she was able to advance due in large part to her connections to the British scientific scene. Born on October 24th, 1840 in Brighton, England, Arabella Burton Buckley was the daughter of John Wall Buckley, a vicar, and Elizabeth Burton Buckley, a devout spiritualist.¹⁰ Little is known about her childhood. In 1864, Buckley began a position as secretary for Sir Charles Lyell, a leading geologist of the period and author of *Principles of Geology*, the very subject of Wallace's significant review.¹¹ Her time with Lyell influenced her place in scientific society, her ideas, and the direction she would take her professional life. Serving as his secretary from 1864 to 1875, Buckley took Lyell's dictation, copied his texts, and managed his correspondence.¹² Lyell's work, particularly that supporting uniformitarianism, influenced Darwin as he wrote *The Origin*; Lyell contributed to the leading thoughts on the natural world during the Victorian Period and helped shape Arabella Buckley's conception of natural history.¹³ Buckley's introduction to the foremost men of science and exposure to their ideas were significant products of her association with Lyell, for during this time she became

¹⁰ Barbara T. Gates, "Buckley, Arabella Burton (1840-1929)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed December 1, 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54371>.

¹¹ Gates, "Buckley, Arabella Burton."

¹² Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 53.

¹³ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

acquainted with Charles Darwin, T. H. Huxley, and Alfred Russel Wallace. After Lyell's death, Buckley became a science lecturer, popularizer, and writer. The professional correspondences she maintained with these men and their approval of her subsequent works suggest Buckley's merit in the male-dominated world of Victorian science.

While Wallace and Darwin debated the capacity of natural selection, a review of *Descent of Man* titled "Darwinism and Religion" appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in May of 1871, just three months following the publication of *Descent*. The author, signing the essay with an anonymous A.B., was Arabella Buckley,¹⁴ who argues that the theory of moral sense laid out by Darwin does not compromise the existence of God, the nobility of consciousness, nor the hope for immortality.¹⁵ Buckley supports Darwin's theory of the evolution of morals through natural selection and asserts its dignity, denying that this origin leads to a materialistic worldview. Instead, addressing Wallace and others who doubt natural selection's ability to produce the higher faculties of intelligence and consciousness on one hand and materialists such as T. H. Huxley on the other, she reconciles lawful evolution with theology.

With this article, her first published work, Buckley positions herself between Darwin and Wallace to advocate a middle-ground narrative of evolution. Though Darwin was not a materialist, many of his contemporaries read him as one; Buckley saw the necessity in writing this essay to emphasize the compatibility of Darwin's evolution of morals with theology. She defies materialists, describing the fallacy of their "supposition

¹⁴ *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* accessed October 15, 2015, <http://wellesley.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/search/search.do>.

¹⁵ Buckley, Arabella B. "Darwinism and Religion," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1859-1907 24, no. 139 (May 1871): 46, accessed October 15, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/6152934?accountid=12964>.

that evolution by law, whether organic or inorganic, can dispense with the necessity of a present overruling Creator.”¹⁶ Natural selection offers a mechanism for evolution but does not offer a first cause, an origin of life. For Buckley, a creator is necessary as the first cause, and even the scientific advancements of the Victorian Era cannot disprove the possibility of a deity.

While rejecting materialists’ claims that evolution by natural law discredits a creator, she also rejects theists’ claims that a creator discredits evolution by natural law. Likely addressing Wallace and those of his opinion, Buckley recognized that “many who would concede without hesitation the evolutionary origin of their bodily frame, shrink with great pain from such a derivation of their mental and moral nature.”¹⁷ An evolution by natural selection for the body but creation by God for the mind and morals – Wallace’s argument in his review of Lyell – does not follow the laws of nature. Like Darwin, Buckley maintains that “the foundation of our consciousness is made to rest upon the purest of instincts: that of the parental and filial affection, while the powers through which it has been developed all arise out of a network of laws.”¹⁸ Unlike Darwin, however, she asserts that a theory of lawful natural selection does not disprove immortality. Just as God indirectly created the human body by gradual development through the animal kingdom, so too has he indirectly created the human soul, which developed and continues to develop consciousness, morals, and immortality along the

¹⁶ Buckley, “Darwinism and Religion,” 47.

¹⁷ Buckley, “Darwinism and Religion,” 46.

¹⁸ Buckley, “Darwinism and Religion,” 46.

way, she argues.¹⁹ For her, a spiritual first cause is necessary, but not for divine intervention in human development. Thus, natural selection holds as a consistent law of nature while remaining compatible with theism.

In the final section of “Darwinism and Religion,” Buckley applauds Darwin’s novel exploration of morals through the lens of natural history, emphasizing his unification of the rival intuitive and utilitarian moralists through his philosophy of the natural selection of morals. Natural selection follows a “principle of utility in the strictest sense, but of utility founded upon an instinct of unknown origin as pure and devoid of self-seeking as the intuitionist can desire.”²⁰ If the morals are developed from the parental and filial affections, as Darwin believed, mutualism is the rule of nature, not competition. She assures theists and others that they need not worry about evolution’s selfishness, the sense of survival of the fittest being popularized by others, for the good of the community is the origin and aim of our noblest moral nature. Publishing her essay just three months following *Descent of Man*, Buckley was the first to advocate a mutualistic reading of Darwin’s work.

Arabella Buckley first revealed her evolutionary narrative through “Darwinism and Religion,” demonstrating an emphasis on theism and mutuality while maintaining natural selection’s lawfulness, situating her ideas between the arguments of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. Following “Darwinism and Religion” and her position as Lyell’s secretary, Buckley focused her time as a science lecturer, popularizer, and writer. Her works were well reviewed by her contemporaries, who noted their

¹⁹ Buckley, “Darwinism and Religion,” 50.

²⁰ Buckley, “Darwinism and Religion,” 51.

“liberal, while also reverential”²¹ and “wholesome” tone and recommended their use in schools.²² Buckley’s first book, *A Short History of Natural Science* in 1876, offered an outline of numerous branches of science with the aim of educating and peaking the interest of readers, characteristics of the genre of evolutionary epic. Her following texts were more imaginative, though still dedicated to education, particularly that of children. In *The Fairyland of Science* (1879) and its sequel *Through Magic Glasses* (1890), Buckley “instructs children in the wonders of a science that should seem to them as magical the wonders of a fairyland, and far more accessible.”²³ As Barbara T. Gates describes in *Kindred Nature*, Buckley urges young readers to employ not only their observation skills but also their imaginations in the study of natural history. Buckley parallels the magic of fairies and magicians with the power of science and scientific understanding. Drawing upon the idea that contemporary and revisable scientific theory is a fiction based in human imagination as fairy stories are, Buckley creates narratives that transcend human sensory experience to describe to children the scientific phenomena that also often transcend human sensory experience.²⁴

“Darwinism and Religion” demonstrated Buckley’s theistic evolutionary narrative, but Gates argues that Buckley’s evolutionary narrative is principally

²¹ Review of *Winners In Life’s Race*, by Arabella Buckley, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), originally published in *The American Naturalist*, vol. 18, No. 1 (01, 1884), 49, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2450821>.

²² Review of *Life and Her Children*, by Arabella Buckley, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), originally published in *The American Naturalist*, vol. 18, No. 3 (03, 1884), 274, accessed September 17, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2450775>.

²³ Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 52.

²⁴ Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 57.

mutualistic, driven by a commitment to the maternal tradition. Gates describes Buckley as “a knowledgeable and authoritative popularizer of science who also accepted the woman’s social responsibility to teach morality to the uneducated and the young.”²⁵ In addition to *Fairyland of Science* and *Through Magic Glasses*, Buckley penned *Life and Her Children* (1881), *Winners of Life’s Race* (1882), and *Moral Teachings of Science* (1891). These titles alone offer an idea of Buckley’s progressive, mutualistic comprehension of evolution, but Gates further demonstrates Buckley’s commitment to mutuality through both her content and literary conventions.

Though Darwin first suggests the evolution of morals as arising from the social instinct of parental and filial affection, Buckley is the first to overtly emphasize parenting and mutualism in shaping the higher faculties of man, Gates argues. In *Winners of Life’s Race*, the title referring to the vertebrate animals, Buckley writes, “The great moral lesson taught at every step in the history of development of the animal world [is] that amidst toil and suffering, struggle and death, the supreme law of life is the law of SELF-DEVOTION AND LOVE.”²⁶ This sentence resembles Darwin’s conclusion to *The Origin*, in which he stated, “from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows.” This parallel provides more evidence of Buckley’s popularization of Darwinian evolution with a “pioneering” emphasis, as Gates would attribute,²⁷ on mutualism. Buckley filled her books with stories of sympathy in nature,

²⁵ Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 51.

²⁶ Arabella Buckley, *Winners of Life’s Race, or The Great Backboned Family*, (London: Edward Stanford, 1882), 353.

²⁷ Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 61.

detailing, for example, the loyalty of pet snakes, in an effort to educate children in both morals and natural history. With this goal of a moral and natural history education for children, Gates claims, Buckley follows in the Victorian maternal tradition of science popularization by women for children. Buckley modifies this tradition, however, through her masterful use of the evolutionary epic.

While Charles Darwin did much to shape the evolutionary epic, it was already a popular genre among Victorian science popularizers. In the introduction to “The Evolutionary Epic,” David Amigoni and James Elwick reveal how “by telling stories about development, the epic format helped legitimize evolution with popular audiences,”²⁸ particularly the children Buckley wrote for. Amigoni and Elwick outline the characteristics of the genre of evolutionary epic as progressive and rhetorical, featuring deep time, competition, and the division of labor.²⁹ Though Barbara T. Gates does not specifically use the term evolutionary epic, she describes Buckley’s use of its characteristics in her argument for Buckley’s mutualism.

With respect to progressivity, Buckley’s writing fits the description: Gates details her narratives of nature, with the backboneed animals cast as epic heroes, the winners of life’s race. Buckley, like Darwin, believed that human form and human consciousness are nobler than those of the lower animals, and did not focus on degeneration through evolution. Gates also makes a case for Buckley’s use of deep time. She argues that Lyell likely influenced Buckley’s incorporation of deep time and non-human narration, for he played with scope and perspective in order to communicate the great expanses of

²⁸ David Amigoni and James Elwick. Introduction to “The Evolutionary Epic,” edited by Amigoni and Elwick. Vol. 4 of *Victorian Science and Literature*, edited by Gowan Dawson and Bernard Lightman, ix-xxi. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), xv.

²⁹ Amigoni and Elwick, “The Evolutionary Epic,” xv.

geology.³⁰ An account of evolution must address a long range of time and cover a wide range of disciplines, and Buckley achieved both by employing strategies of fiction, as in *The Fairyland of Science*, and of shifting narration outside of the human perspective, as in *Life and Her Children*. While Buckley believed that mutualism, not competition, ruled nature, she acknowledged that competition drove progress. As part of the progressive evolutionary epic, competition offers the drama of a struggle resulting in triumph, similar to the narrative of literary epics. Amigoni and Elwick also point out the characteristic division of labor, and how some popularizers argued that the division of labor regarding sex played a role in the maternal development of sympathy,³¹ a sentiment Buckley would likely support based on her attribution of morality to parental and filial affection.

Buckley includes each of these characteristics of evolutionary epic in her writing, but the one most pertinent to Gates' argument for mutuality is the epic's rhetorical nature. The rhetoric of epic is manifest in the personification of nature, use of metaphors, and appeals to historicity.³² Gates describes how Buckley personifies life, giving it a maternal, sympathetic quality in *Life and Her Children*. Similarly, parenting is a central metaphor for Buckley, and she finds ways to express the parallel of mutualism in nature to mutualism in human society. Appealing to historicity, Buckley attempts to convince her readers of the value in learning about the development and origins of an object, convinced that an understanding of the origins of social instincts leads to the comprehension and enhancement of morals. As Amigoni and Elwick reveal, utilizing the genre of evolutionary epic helped popularizers engage their audiences; Gates

³⁰ Gates, *Kindred Nature*, 53.

³¹ Amigoni and Elwick, "The Evolutionary Epic," xvii.

³² Amigoni and Elwick, "The Evolutionary Epic," xix.

demonstrates that for Buckley, the epic format also helped her demonstrate the mutuality of evolution and educate readers in the maternal tradition.

Arabella Buckley's evolutionary narrative was decidedly mutualistic, but was it pioneering, as Gates claims? Historian of science Thomas Dixon contends in *The Invention of Altruism* that Buckley's "moral categories and evolutionary explanations are essentially Darwinian" and notes that he differs from Gates in her assertion that Buckley's account of sympathy was innovative and corrective with respect to Darwin.³³ He allows that Buckley went beyond Darwin in her emphasis on parenting and theology, but he denies her originality, stating, "like him, she did not offer any account of the primal origins of these affections."³⁴ While I disagree with Dixon, believing that Buckley does offer a unique perspective to the debate over the evolution of morals, I find her most innovative ideas in her relation of evolution with religion, which Gates leaves out of her argument. Though Gates offers a detailed account of Arabella Buckley's evolutionary narrative as characterized by mutualism and the genre of the epic, she fails to address the overwhelming influence of Buckley's religion, spiritualism.

As scientific advancements of the 19th Century undermined the foundations of traditional religion, Victorians increasingly turned to spiritualism for comfort and answers about death and the afterlife.³⁵ In *An Elusive Victorian*, Martin Fichman defines spiritualism as a "belief that departed souls...could influence and communicate with

³³ Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

³⁴ Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism*, 64.

³⁵ *Science and the Séance*, BBC, video, 59:06, broadcast August 31, 2005, accessed September 25, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDnV31J30>.

humans, usually through a medium by means of physical phenomena or during unusual mental states such as trances.”³⁶ While many Victorians viewed Spiritualism as occult, radical and unscientific, numerous men and women of science and high society were spiritualists during the 19th Century. In fact, a few of the most important communication technologies like the telegraph arose from efforts to communicate with the afterlife.³⁷ Several men of science tried to marry science and spiritualism through psychical research, aiming to establish a scientific foundation for the phenomena and claims they witnessed at séances and from mediums. Fichman claims that spiritualism was a “vehicle for mediating between the often competing claims of traditional religions and modern science,” and could be “epistemologically significant, politically influential, and emotionally rewarding.”³⁸

One of the most notable spiritualists of the scientific world was naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace. According to Fichman, Wallace “considered spiritualism as a fruitful standpoint from which to explicate the broader meaning of evolution, particularly at the moral and intellectual level,” and viewed natural selection and spiritualism as “mutually supportive elements in the grander scheme of things.”³⁹ In his correspondence with Charles Darwin, he attributed his change of belief in natural selection’s pervasiveness to

³⁶ Martin Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian: The Evolution of Alfred Russel Wallace*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 139.

³⁷ *Science and the Séance*, BBC.

³⁸ Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian*, 140.

³⁹ Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian*, 159.

his encounters with Spiritualism.⁴⁰ The séances he observed, with a critical eye, he always notes, led him to maintain that a higher spiritual power guided human evolution. But a rejection of lawful natural selection did not always follow a belief in spiritualism, for Arabella Buckley herself was a spiritualist.

While Barbara T. Gates' examination of Buckley's mutualism and rhetorical strategies provides a detailed argument for the evolutionary narrative Buckley constructed, Gates' exclusion of Buckley's spiritualism restricts her analysis. In his 2007 *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, historian of science popularization Bernard Lightman investigates Buckley's religion and demonstrates that it informed and encouraged her work on popularizing and writing about evolution.⁴¹ He asserts that scholars have practically ignored Buckley's spiritualism, an error, for "if the subtext of Buckley's works is connected to her spiritualist leanings, then her entire conception of the evolutionary epic will be seen in a different light."⁴² Though Wallace was better known as a spiritualist, it was Buckley who played the leading role in uniting spiritualism and the evolutionary epic, as Lightman claims. For the details in which Gates demonstrated mutualism, Lightman also makes a case for spiritualism. Buckley infused her mutualistic epic with a theology of nature, evident in her stories of morals and virtues in animals. Her anthropomorphizing of life, such as in *Life and Her Children*, reflects her proposed

⁴⁰ Alfred Russel Wallace to Charles Darwin, 24 March 1869, Darwin Correspondence Database, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-6681>.

⁴¹ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

⁴² Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

process for the evolution of morals involving the spirit, or life principle.⁴³ In *Moral Teachings of Science*, she discusses immortality and refers to souls as spiritually uniting all life through evolutionary connections, an innovation not gleaned from Darwin, and one that goes undiscovered by neglecting Buckley's religious life and thought. Without an understanding of her spiritualism, as Lightman asserts, Buckley's evolutionary narrative is incomplete.

In addition to writing about spiritual evolution, Arabella Buckley explored spiritualism through experiences with mediums and séances, and correspondence with spiritualist family and friends. Introduced through Lyell, Buckley maintained correspondence with leading men of Victorian science like Thomas Henry Huxley, Darwin, and Wallace even after Lyell's death. As the first two men disapproved of spiritualism, she kept her spiritualist ideas out of her letters to them. Many members of scientific society criticized Alfred Russel Wallace for his active spiritualism; Bernard Lightman argues that Buckley concealed her beliefs from Lyell, Darwin, and Huxley to maintain her credibility as a scientific author.⁴⁴ Throughout *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, Lightman references Buckley's ambiguity, her secrecy concerning her spiritualistic beliefs, but I am not convinced to the extent Lightman is of her active concealment. Lightman uses a November 14th, 1880 letter from Darwin to Buckley to demonstrate Darwin's conviction that Buckley held "ambivalent" religious views like he did at this point in time, and to further suggest that Buckley hid her true religious

⁴³ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 250.

⁴⁴ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 239.

beliefs.⁴⁵ In the letter, Darwin praises Buckley's evolutionary epic *Life and Her Children* and goes on to say, "it will be a very savage heretic-hunter who will persecute you. I daresay that you will escape, and you will not be called a dangerous woman."⁴⁶ I find it a stretch to believe this comment is enough to claim that Darwin understood Buckley's religious tone to be falsified for the sake of popular approval. After all, Buckley sent Darwin his copy of *Life and Her Children*, a text that both Gates and Lightman have shown to be saturated with mutualism and spiritualism. Buckley's works and correspondence convince me, unlike Lightman, that she laid her spiritualism out quite openly, and simply left it out of her personal correspondence if her correspondent did not engage it.

Though Buckley's correspondence with Darwin focused primarily on popularizing evolution, fellow spiritualists Buckley and Wallace openly corresponded over spiritualism from 1863-1913.⁴⁷ In their letters, they discuss séances, the skills of mediums, and spiritual literature, and debate the scientific validity of spiritualism. Wallace credits Buckley as being his closest friend during this period. He trusted her more than anyone else, Fichman reveals, and confided in her alone about his financial hardships; Buckley subsequently worked with Darwin to secure a civil service pension for him.⁴⁸ Their bond is particularly evident in a letter written to Wallace by Buckley on April 25th, 1874. Wallace's 6-year-old son Bertie had just died from scarlet fever.

⁴⁵ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 252.

⁴⁶ C. Darwin to A.B. Buckley, 14 November, 1880. Pre-publication transcript provided by Darwin Correspondence Project.

⁴⁷ Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, 242.

⁴⁸ Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian*, 181.

Buckley offers her condolences, and then shares a spiritual communication she may have had with Bertie. She is careful, prefacing with “I should hesitate to send so soon after your loss if I did not know that you are able to balance probabilities and take it for what it is worth.”⁴⁹ The communication she received as medium suggested that Bertie was well and being watched over by deceased relatives. She continues, respectful but optimistic, “How wonderful it is how completely Spiritualism alters one’s idea of death!” This correspondence demonstrates the comfort spiritualism brought to family members of the dead, and helps explain the surge in spiritualism during and after war. Wallace and Buckley maintained communications until Wallace’s own death in 1913.

Though they discussed spiritualism as close friends and admired each other’s work, Wallace and Buckley did not maintain the same spiritualistic beliefs. Buckley details her form of spiritualism in an 1879 essay titled “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution.” In this significant article, she offers a more fleshed out position on spiritualism informed by science. Bernard Lightman notes this article as furthering her spiritual evolutionary epic, but I believe he fails to demonstrate its importance in outlining a unifying theory for the evolution of the moral faculties.

In “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” Buckley first notes that materialists are unable to show how molecular action can produce consciousness, an argument similar to one she made in her “Darwinism and Religion” essay eight years earlier. The mechanism of natural selection reinforced the theory of evolution, but many questions about the origin of life and consciousness remain unanswered. She proceeds to discuss

⁴⁹ A.B. Buckley to A.R. Wallace, 25 April, 1874, “Wallace Letters Online.” *Natural History Museum*. Accessed December 18, 2015. <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/scientific-resources/collections/library-collections/wallace-letters-online/519/519/B/details.html>

how the spiritualist accounts for the origin and nature of consciousness. The spiritualist “assumes that man has a dual nature, consisting of a soul or spirit united to a bodily organism,” she quickly establishes.⁵⁰ However, spiritualists have no more evidence of a first cause than materialists; various doctrines explaining the nature of consciousness must then be tested to eliminate erroneous theories. Buckley, well versed in scientific discourse, notes that tests may only help eliminate error rather than provide a positive conclusion,⁵¹ evidence of her attempt to legitimize spiritualism through science, the attempt of many psychological researchers. Buckley offers three options for the origin of the soul considered at some point within sects of the Christian Church: creationism, metempsychosis, and traducianism.

The first mechanism for the origin of the soul, creationism, declares that a deity creates a soul to be joined to each new body. Creationism is the doctrine endorsed by the Church of England and most Christians worldwide, the doctrine Wallace appears to favor with his spiritualism necessitating divine intervention. However, Buckley swiftly finds fault with it. For her, the special creation of individual souls does not hold with a beneficent God nor the laws of evolution or thermodynamics. A beneficent God would not create an impure soul, one with original sin and mental deficiencies; creationism is thus incompatible with theodicy, another tenet of the church.⁵² In another appeal to scientific authority, Buckley maintains that soul creation does not align with the laws of thermodynamics, for individual existence cannot continue to increase. Nor does it fit

⁵⁰ Arabella B. Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution.” *The University Magazine, 1878-1880* 3, (01, 1879): 2. Accessed October 15, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/6977006?accountid=12964>.

⁵¹ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 2.

⁵² Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 2.

with evolution, for at what point could the soul be transferred, and how could a child resemble her parents in ability and temperament if a deity specially creates each soul? Buckley concludes, “the whole series of facts which were incomprehensible on the theory of soul creation now find their natural explanation in evolution, as a compound of the inheritance and accumulated experiences of each new individual.”⁵³ She rejects creationism as the mechanism for the origin of the soul.

The next option Buckley presents is metempsychosis, the belief that souls “existed from the beginning of all things, and have passed successively through many bodily forms, being released from an organization at its dissolution only to enter after a time into another and newly-born creature.”⁵⁴ The originally Eastern doctrine of metempsychosis found favor with the ancients as well as some contemporary philosophers, including Buckley’s contemporary William Knight, professor of moral philosophy at St. Andrews in Scotland.⁵⁵ Knight argues that the transmigration of souls, or renewal of existence, is the only explanation for the origin of souls compatible with theodicy, immortality, and science.⁵⁶ Reincarnated souls suffer or thrive based on how they lived their past life, and an immortality founded on the transmigration rather than constant increase of new souls fits with thermodynamics. But metempsychosis fails Buckley’s test concerning the laws of inheritance. “The necessity of a previous existence to account for the peculiarities and weaknesses of our nature cease to exist...if we assume

⁵³ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 6.

⁵⁴ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 2.

⁵⁵ William Knight, “The Doctrine of Metempsychosis,” *Fortnightly Review* 1865-1934 24, 141 (09, 1878): 425, accessed October 9, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2466152?accountid=12964>.

⁵⁶ Knight, “The Doctrine of Metempsychosis,” 440.

that the whole of our being at birth is the result of the inheritance of the experiences of all who have gone before us,” she argues against metempsychosis.⁵⁷

Therefore, traducianism, the inheritance of the life principle, or soul, from one’s parents, remains as Buckley’s mechanism for the origin of soul and the evolution of morals. Buckley unites evolution and theology by concluding that the life principle, or spirit, is passed from animals to their offspring, drawing experience and individualization from each generation. As she explains, “if we allow the whole being of a child to be inherited from his parents, the possible combinations are so infinite that we have a sufficient explanation of all sudden varieties; and it is not only unnecessary, but irrational, to call in a previously developed soul to account for mental characteristics.”⁵⁸ These mental characteristics, as well as morals, are localized and transmitted through the soul, and evolve through lawful natural selection. Buckley supports her conviction from 1871 that Wallace need not reject the lawful development of human morality through evolution by her acceptance of and updates to traducianism.

Compatible with the sciences of evolution and thermodynamics as well as theodicy and an immortality gradually developed through the animal kingdom, traducianism passes Buckley’s scrutiny. She also appeals to religious authority, stressing that early fathers of the church held beliefs in traducianism too. Tertullian, St. Gregory, and St. Augustine advocated it, though the church later condemned it for implying materiality of the soul.⁵⁹ She admits that the early church would not favor traducianism’s alliance with evolution because it only slightly differentiates the moral and mental nature

⁵⁷ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 4.

⁵⁸ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 6.

⁵⁹ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 6.

of humans and lower animals, but she contends that the modern church should find no fault, particularly because traducianism requires a first cause that she believes is spiritual and theistic.⁶⁰ While Buckley's spiritualism does not align with typical Christian creationism, she demonstrates that traducianism is compatible with both religion, Christian and otherwise, and evolution, even maintaining the pervasive lawfulness of natural selection. An analysis of her evolutionary epic is not complete without a synthesis of her ideas regarding mutualism, the evolutionary epic, and spiritualism.

In traducianism, Buckley finds at last a mechanism for the reconciliation of the evolution of morals and religion. Just as the human body evolves gradually from the lower animals, she theorizes, so too has the soul been evolving and individualizing, gradually progressing in moral and mental power and the capacity for immortality. Her theory is original and comprehensive, addressing numerous scientific and social questions of the Victorian Period. However, the term traducianism appears nowhere in modern scholars' analysis of Buckley, and most discount her spiritualism. In light of the conversation between scholars Gates and Lightman, I argue that the significance of Buckley's distinctive, mutualistic addition to the narrative on the evolution of morals begun by Darwin lies in her theory of traducianism, neatly unifying evolutionary epic, mutualism, and spiritualism.

Buckley best demonstrates this unification in "The Soul, and Theory of Evolution" when she concludes, "If, then, we can conceive permanent impressions accumulating through countless generations of animals, leading to developed instincts, emotions, and passions, and thus on to the complex nature of man, who through savage

⁶⁰ Buckley, "The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution," 7.

life gains new experiences; then the upward struggle, with all its difficulties and pain, finds an explanation and a moral justification.”⁶¹

⁶¹ Buckley, “The Soul, and the Theory of Evolution,” 8.

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