PART THREE

RECONCILING PLATO, DARWIN AND THE BIBLE

CHAPTER SIX

CHARLES KINGSLEY—THE MISSING LINK

The ongoing fusion of Christian and Platonic thought is evident in the writings of Spenser, More, Milton, and Donne. In *Gulliver's Travels* Swift informs his predominantly Christian writing with Platonic political theory and a Platonic view of the relationship between mind and body. Moreover he addresses the subject of evolution (within the Lucretian system) and degeneration (within the Platonic system). *Melincourt* blends myth and Wild Man lore with evolutionary theory of the most romantic and speculative kind, based on serious scholarship. With the arrival of Charles Kingsley (1819-75) all of these themes come together. Kingsley was not only a disciple of Plato and Jesus, but of Charles Darwin as well. His ability to absorb and, in his own opinion, to reconcile all three masters did not reside in the virtue of consistent thought. He was able quite unblushingly to discard the Platonic doctrine of the fixity of species, and embrace the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection, while at the same time turning the Darwinian process into a Platonically operated part of God's Creation. Likewise his hold on theological doctrine was equally idiosyncratic. Guy Kendall comments on Kingsley's

> extraordinarily uncritical treatment of Scripture, taking isolated texts apart from their context and treating them as of equal value and authority, in Old and New Testaments alike, with a rather literal application.[1]

Yet at the same time it was the authority of Scripture which helped Kingsley assimilate Darwin's theory. In the preface (1871) to his *Westminster Sermons* he discusses Natural Theology and the questions which it must address: one of them being the problem of Race. Kingsley declares – using a term associated with Darwin – that all of the races in the world "had one common ancestor." [2] However, he continues, "this is not matter of natural Theology. What is matter thereof, is this."[3] And he raises a theme which lies at the heart of *Jekyll and Hyde*—heredity:

> Physical science is proving more and more the immense importance of Race; the importance of hereditary powers, hereditary organs, hereditary habits, in all organized beings, from the lowest plant to the highest animal.[4]

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[1] Guy Kendall, *Charles Kingsley and His Ideas* (London: Hutchinson, 1947), p.133.
[2] *Westminster Sermons* (London: Macmillan, [1874]; repr. 1894), p.xvi.
[3] *Westminster Sermons*, p.xvi.
[4] *Westminster Sermons*, p.xvi.

He goes on to discuss competition between individuals and competition between races, leading to oppression and extermination; and then shows how Darwin is simply following in the footsteps of Scripture:

> The Natural Theology of the future must take count of these tremendous and even painful facts. She may take count of them. For Scripture has taken count of them already. It talks continually—it has been blamed for talking so much—of races; of families; of their wars, their struggles, their exterminations; of races favoured, of races rejected; of remnants being saved, to continue the race; of hereditary tendencies, hereditary excellencies, hereditary guilt. Its sense of the reality and importance of descent is so intense, that it speaks of a whole tribe or a whole family by the name of its common ancestor; and the whole nation of the Jews is Israel, to the end.[5]

It is this biblical Darwinism – mankind, risen from a common prehistoric ancestor and burdened with hereditary guilt – which will provide another aid to understanding the mystery of Edward Hyde.

Kingsley of course was not alone in these feats of mental gymnastics. Georg Roppen, in his survey of the works of some Victorian "evolutionary" writers, observes:

> The idea of evolution does not […] impose upon the writer a rigid formula: it is for the poets to make their choice, to impose upon the specific theory their own visionary pattern. Thus the scientific data remain to them merely framework concepts, a bridge towards significance, value, duty, and the ultimate mysteries of existence.[6]

In a chapter entitled 'Evolution in the Platonic Tradition' Roppen discusses the poetry of Tennyson and Browning, with whom "the idea of evolution becomes a seminal theme in English poetry of the nineteenth century"[7] (163). However, as the title of the chapter indicates, evolution does not manage to displace Platonism, nor, for that matter, its bedfellow Christianity. In *The Water-Babies* Kingsley brings these three great themes together in an obvious and accessible way; and in so doing provides a text which thematically serves as a precursor to *Jekyll and Hyde*. But how did Kingsley, a minister of the Church, come to write such a book?

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[5] *Westminster Sermons*, p.xvii.
[6] *Evolution and Poetic Belief: A Study in Some Victorian and Modern Writers* (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1956), p.458. Roppen mentions Kingsley only in passing, and not in connection with the above quotation.
[7] Roppen, p.163.

This son of a clergyman imbibed his father's vocation from his infancy, and from the age of four would deliver sermons from a make-believe pulpit in his nursery.[8] However, his enthusiasm waned, and during his time at Cambridge he turned from Christianity. Susan Chitty comments:

> In adolescence his faith had not been strong. The only mention of religion in his letters to his mother was a dutiful promise, too often repeated, to read his Bible. It was in Nature, not in God, that he found inspiration.[9]

If Kingsley found inspiration in Nature, he found comfort and wisdom in Plato. When in 1839 he won an academic prize at Cambridge, he chose an edition of Plato in eleven volumes.[10] However, Nature and Plato could not prevent him from falling into bad habits while he was studying there. By day he indulged the gentleman's pursuits of hunting, fishing and shooting; by night he indulged the rake's pursuits of smoking, drinking and gambling at cards; and – on at least one occasion which he afterwards bitterly repented – he had a sexual encounter.[11] Fortunately salvation was at hand.

In July 1839 Kingsley met his future wife Frances (Fanny) Grenfell, and immediately felt, as a good Platonist and metempsychosist, that their newly begun relationship "yet seemed old—from the first more of a recognition than an acquaintance."[12] At the time he was not in a good way, as Fanny recounts:

> He was then full of religious doubts; and his face, with its unsatisfied hungering look, bore witness to the state of his mind. It had a sad longing expression, too, as if he had all his life been looking for a sympathy he had never found—a rest which he would never attain in this world. His peculiar character had not been understood hitherto, and his heart had been half asleep. It woke up now, and never slept again.[13]

Neither, it would seem, did Fanny's. She fell in love with Kingsley and, being deeply

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[8] *Charles Kingsley, His Letters and Memories of His Life,* ed. by his wife (Frances E. Kingsley), 2 vols (London: King, 1877), I, 8. (Hereafter *CKL.*) Fanny includes the infant prodigy's first sermon.
[9] Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1975), p.53.
[10] *CKL,* I, 43. Kingsley was also thoroughly familiar with the Cambridge Platonists, especially Henry More (*Alexandria*, p.127; *CKL.* II, 96), and he was a lover of Milton's poetry (*CKL,* II, 456).
[11] Chitty, p.57. Chitty quotes from a collection of unpublished letters to Fanny, in the possession of Kingsley's literary executrix, Mrs Angela Covey-Crump. Letter 45, 1843. (Hereafter ULF.)
[12] *CKL,* I, 44.
[13] *CKL*, I, 44.

religious, took it upon herself to redeem this lost sheep. She writes to him:

> How I remember your wild troubled look that first day, as if you lived such a *lone* life, and I felt, from our first conversation, that I alone could understand you, that I alone had the key to your spiritual being and could raise you to your proper height.[14]

After an initial kick against the pricks, Kingsley took to redemption with gusto, and underwent a mediaeval mortification of his flesh, which included fasting, scourging, sleeping on the floor, a specially made undergarment of canvas to mimic a hair shirt, and, on one occasion, lying naked on thorns.[15]

He was a person of enormous energy (he once walked the fifty-two miles from Cambridge to London in one day),[16] and gloried in "the excitement of animal exercise."[17] But it was the animal side of his nature that had led him into his "wild beast life,"[18] and it had to be curbed. He writes to Fanny that his "superfluous excitement has to be broken in like that of a dog or a horse—for it is utterly animal."[19] And, in 1850, the year of Stevenson's birth, he writes in *Alton Locke*:

> That there is a duality in us—a lifelong battle between flesh and spirit—we all, alas! know well enough.[20]

He decided to fight this war in the members with the help of a strong ally:

> I feel more and more daily that a clergyman's life is the one for which both my *physique* and *morale* were intended—that the profession will check and guide the faulty parts of my mind, while it gives full room for my energy—that energy which had so nearly ruined me; but will now be devoted utterly, I hope, to the service of God.[21]

Kingsley was ordained in July, 1842, and at once took up his duties as a curate at Eversley. But he was also intending to marry Fanny; and, as some of his unpublished letters show, his snake had been scotched, not killed. His carnal impulses and divine aspirations found a curious accommodation, as Chitty relates:

> 'Matter is holy,' he told Fanny, 'awful glorious matter. Let us never use those

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[14] Unpublished letter from Fanny to Charles, 14 March, 1854. Quoted in Chitty, p.55.
[15] The full horrors of Kingsley's penance, and his bizarre courtship of Fanny, may be found in Chitty.
[16] *CKL,* I, 52.
[17] *CKL*, I, 51.
[18] Quoted in Chitty, p.57. No details.
[19] *CKL,* I, 52.
[20] *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p.4. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
[21] *CKL,* I, 53.

> words *animal* and *brutal* in a degrading sense. Our animal enjoyments must be religious ceremonies.' He carried the analogy to almost unbelievable lengths. 'When you go to bed tonight, forget that you ever wore a garment, and open your lips for my kisses and spread out each limb that I may lie between your breasts all night (Canticles 1,13)' [ULF no.22, October 2, 1843]. 'At a quarter past eleven lie down, clasp your arms and every limb around me, and with me repeat the *Te Deum* aloud'.[22]

The complexity of Kingsley's emotions at this time may be seen in a letter to Fanny in which he moves seamlessly from the Christian penitent – "Darling, one resolution I made in my sorrow, that I would ask a boon of you and I wish to show you and my God that I have gained purity and self-control," – to the Platonist – "that intense though my love is for your body, I do not love it but as an expression of your soul" – to the Hindu tantric yogi – "And therefore, when we are married, will you consent to remain for the first month in my arms a virgin bride, a sister only?"[23]

By the day of their wedding in January 1844, they were both worn out and ill. But Kingsley had been saved; and later that year became Rector at Eversley. The suffering which he had endured during his reformation (not to mention his life-shortening addiction to tobacco which, despite the pleadings of his wife and mother he could never master) should have left him with an understanding of how hard it can be for people to overcome their failings; but oddly enough he had neither patience nor sympathy for those vessels of weaker clay, "the idle and drunken, the reckless and improvident, who always must and always ought to suffer."[24]

For someone who had returned to his faith with such travail, and abode in it with such vigorous determination, Kingsley "became a convert to Darwin's views"[25] with apparent ease, but as the following letter shows, he was not just a man of God, he was also a man of science, who was as deeply committed to the one as the other:

> Those who fancy me a 'sentimentalist' and a 'fanatic' little know how thoroughly my own bent is for physical science; how I have been trained in it from earliest boyhood; how I am happier now in classifying a new polype, or solving a geognostic problem of strata, or any other bit of hard Baconian induction, than in writing all the novels in the world; or how, again, my theological creed has grown slowly and naturally out of my physical one, till I have seen, and do believe more and more utterly, that the peculiar doctrines of Christianity (as they are in the Bible, not as some preachers represent them from the pulpit) coincide

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[22] Chitty, p.80.
[23] Chitty, p.81. ULF no.53, 1843.
[24] *CKL,* II, 111. Sermon, 'Why should we pray for fair weather?' (1860).
[25] *CKL*, II, 175.

> with the loftiest and severest science. This blessed belief did not come to me at once, and therefore I complain of no man who arrives at it slowly, either from the scientific or religious side; nor have I yet spoken out all that is in me, much less all that I see coming; but I feel that I am on a right path, and please God, I will hold it to the end.[26]

Even so, it still would have needed an enormous effort of will to accept that mankind had risen from an ape; and before the *Origin* persuaded him, Kingsley was hostile to the idea. But being Kingsley, it was not enough to disagree; he needed a counter-argument. He writes in *Westward Ho!* (1855):

> Humboldt has somewhere a curious passage, in which, looking on some wretched group of Indians, squatting stupidly round their fires, besmeared with grease and paint, and devouring ants and clay, he somewhat naïvely remarks, that were it not for science, which teaches us that such is the crude material of humanity, and thus the state from which we all have risen, he should have been tempted rather to look upon these hapless beings as the last degraded remnants of some fallen and dying race. One wishes that the great traveller had been bold enough to yield to that temptation, which his own reason and common sense presented to him as the real explanation of the sad sight, instead of following the dogmas of a so-called science, which has not a fact whereon to base its wild notion, and must ignore a thousand facts in asserting it. His own good sense, it seems, coincided instinctively with the Bible doctrine, that man in a state of nature is a fallen being, doomed to death—a view which may be a sad one, but still one more honourable to poor humanity than the theory that we all began as some sort of two-handed apes. It is surely more hopeful to believe that those poor Ottomacs or Guahibas were not what they ought to be, than to believe that they were. It is certainly more complimentary to them, to think that they had been somewhat nobler and more prudent in centuries gone by, than that they were such blockheads as to have dragged on, the son after the father, for all the thousands of years which have elapsed since man was made, without having had wit enough to discover any better food than ants and clay.[27]

Darwin, however, expressed the exact opposite opinion, although in *The Descent of Man* he couches it in much the same language:

> To believe that man was aboriginally civilised and then suffered utter degradation in so many regions, is to take a pitiably low view of human nature. It is apparently a truer and more cheerful view that progress has been much more general than retrogression; that man has risen, though by slow and interrupted steps, from a lowly condition to the highest standard as yet attained by him in knowledge, morals and religion (511).

Although as a man of science the pre-Darwin Kingsley rejected evolution theory,

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[26] *CKL*, I, 380. Letter to Thomas Cooper, 1854.
[27] *Westward Ho!* (London: Dent, 1906; repr. 1960), pp.445–46. Kingsley also refers to another group of Indians as "low-browed, dirty Orsons" (444).

as a writer he allowed it to play on his imagination. In *Alton Locke,* in a chapter entitled 'Dreamland', Alton lies delirious in a fever, and watches himself as he sinks into darkness:

> And I was at the lowest point of created life; a madrepore rooted to the rock, fathoms below the tide-mark; and worst of all, my individuality was gone (265).

At this point Kingsley introduces the kind of evolution that appeals to him—not evolution of the species, but evolution of the individual through successive Platonic incarnations:

> He who falls from the golden ladder must climb through ages to its top. He who tears himself in pieces by his lusts, ages only can make him one again. The madrepore shall become a shell, and the shell a fish, and the fish a bird, and the bird a beast; and then he shall become a man again, and see the glory of the latter days (265).

Alton then becomes successively a shell, a fish, a bird, a beast, and a human. But Kingsley departs from this scheme in one significant detail. From a bird, Alton becomes an extinct prehistoric mylodon; but when he dies he reincarnates not as a human, but as yet another beast—an ape. This beast is not only physically closest to mankind, but feels "germs of a new and higher consciousness" (269). The ape thus occupies for Kingsley an intermediate state on the golden ladder of the Great Chain of Being between pure brute and pure human.

What enabled Kingsley to arrive subsequently at the point where he could claim to accept Darwin's theory? For one thing, his ability to use it to suit himself. He writes to Darwin:

> Ah, that I could begin to study nature anew, now that you have made it to me a live thing, not a dead collection of names. But my work lies elsewhere now. Your work, nevertheless, helps mine at every turn. It is better that the division of labour should be complete, and that each man should do only one thing, while he looks on, as he finds time, at what others are doing, and so gets laws from other sciences which he can apply, as I do, to my own.[28]

And this is how he applies Darwin:

> We were taught—some of us at least—by Holy Scripture, to believe that the whole history of the universe was made up of Special Providences. If, then, that should be true which Mr Darwin writes: "It may be metaphorically said that

[28] *CKL,* II, 173. Letter of 14 June, 1863.

> natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up that which is good, silently and incessantly whenever and wherever opportunity offers at the improvement of every organic being"—if that, I say, were proven to be true, ought God's care and God's providence to seem less or more magnificent in our eyes? Of old it was said by Him without whom nothing is made: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Shall we quarrel with Science if she should show how those words are true? What, in one word, should we have to say but this?—We knew of old that God was so wise that He could make all things; but behold, He is so much wiser than even that, that He can make all things make themselves.[29]

But Kingsley already had a lifelong and more cherished companion to share his belief "that the God of Nature and the God of Grace are one,"[30] and that was his favourite author, Edmund Spenser.[31] Fanny Kingsley writes:

> [F]rom first to last Sir Thomas Mallory's "Morte d'Arthur," and Spenser's "Faerie Queen," [*sic*] were among his most beloved books. Spenser was more dear to him than even Shakespeare; and in later life, when his brain was weary, especially on Sunday evenings, he would turn instinctively for rest and refreshment to the "Faerie Queen."[32]

It is in Spenser that he finds the kindred sentiment which informs *The Water-Babies:*

> I cannot but believe it to have been a mighty gain to such men as Sidney, Raleigh, and Spenser, that they had drunk, however slightly, of the wells of Proclus and Plotinus. One cannot read Spenser's Fairy Queen, above all his Garden of Adonis, and his cantos on Mutability, without feeling that his Neoplatonism must have kept him safe from many a dark eschatological superstition, many a narrow and bitter dogmatism, which was even then tormenting the English mind and must have helped to give him altogether a freer and more loving conception, if not a consistent or accurate one, of the wondrous harmony of that mysterious analogy between the physical and the spiritual, which alone makes poetry (and I had almost said philosophy also) possible, and have taught him to behold alike in suns and planets, in flowers and insects, in man and in beings higher than man, one glorious order of love and wisdom, linking them all to Him from whom they all proceed, rays from His cloudless sunlight, mirrors of His eternal glory.[33]

Kingsley's love of Spenser led him to include the poet in *Westward Ho!* In 1580 Spenser was secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, Deputy of Ireland. Kingsley describes

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[29] 'The Natural Theology of the Future', *Scientific Lectures and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1890), p.332. This lecture was delivered in 1871.
[30] Ibid., p.314.
[31] *CKL,* II, 399.
[32] *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. by his wife, 1 vol. (London and New York: Macmillan, 1883; repr. 1904), p.10.
[33] *Alexandria,* pp.126–27.

a scene during a military campaign in Ireland, in which young Amyas Leigh interrupts a debate between Spenser and Raleigh about poetry. Raleigh asks Spenser:

> Wilt put the lad into the 'Fairy Queen,' then, by my side? He deserves as good a place there, believe me, as ever a Guyon, or even as Lord Grey your Arthegall (200).

Several swashbuckling years later, when Amyas and his brother Frank are visiting their mother in London, they are surprised to see her enter the room with Spenser, who, she tells them, "Has been vowing to me to give your adventure a whole canto to itself in his 'Fairy Queen'" (335). After a discussion in which Spenser offers to include Mrs Leigh as well, Kingsley breaks off the scene with an author's aside to the reader:

> How that conversation ended I know not, nor whether Spenser fulfilled his purpose of introducing the two brothers and their mother into his "Fairy Queen." If so, the manuscripts must have been lost among those which perished (along with Spenser's baby) in the sack of Kilcolman by the Irish in 1598. But we need hardly regret the loss of them; for the temper of the Leighs and their mother is the same which inspires every canto of that noblest of poems (337).

Kingsley's Spenser may or may not have put Amyas in *The Faerie Queene*, but there can be little doubt that, just as Kingsley wove Spenser into *Westward Ho!* so he also wove elements of *The Faerie Queene* into *The Water-Babies*.

THE WATER-BABIES

In 1862, while Kingsley was Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and tutor by appointment to the Prince of Wales, he wrote *The Water-Babies* for his youngest son Grenville. It was serialized in *Macmillan's Magazine,* and in 1863 reincarnated as a book.

The Water-Babies tells the story of Tom, a Yorkshire chimney-sweep in the employ of the loutish and drunken Mr Grimes. When we first meet Tom, the animal is dominant in him; and he is more beast than human. He can neither read nor write, and has no interest in learning to do so. He does not wash. He has a taste for beer—although it would probably be safer than the water. He does not say his prayers, and has never heard of God. His ambition in life is to follow in his master's footsteps and become a lazy drunken brute who bullies his apprentices. Knowing little but the low mores of his surroundings and the skills of survival, Tom goes one day with his

master to clean the chimneys of the grand Harthover House. On the way they meet an Irishwoman who seems to know all about Grimes's misdeeds. She talks with Tom as they walk, he hears for the first time of a place beyond his own experience, and it awakens in him a desire for something which he has never seen:

> Then he asked her where she lived; and she said far away by the sea. And Tom asked her about the sea; and she told him how it rolled and roared over the rocks in winter nights, and lay still in the bright summer days, for the children to bathe and play in it; and many a story more, till Tom longed to go and see the sea, and bathe in it likewise. [34]

Here the Fairy has sown the seed which will lead to Tom's salvation.

Grimes, hungover and oppressed by the heat of the day, dips his head in a cooling spring, but makes the point:

> 'Twasn't for cleanliness I did it, but for coolness. I'd be ashamed to want washing every week or so, like any smutty collier-lad (10).

When Tom begins to wash his face, Grimes beats him, but is prevented by the Irishwoman, who utters a prophetic pronouncement:

> Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be (12).

Tom and Grimes arrive at Harthover, and Tom is sent up the chimney. He becomes lost in the pitch dark, but is "as much at home in a chimney as a mole is underground" (17). He comes down into a room unlike any that he has seen before. It is all white. There are two pictures of Jesus: one with him surrounded by children; the other, of the crucifixion. Here we see the two aspects of God's love: the care of the innocents; and sacrifice for others. Next Tom sees all the apparatus for purification, including "a large bath, full of clean water" (18). Finally he sees Ellie, the embodiment of worldly purity, asleep in bed:

> Under the snow-white coverlet, upon the snow-white pillow, lay the most beautiful little girl that Tom had ever seen. Her cheeks were almost as white as the pillow, and her hair was like threads of gold spread all about over the bed (18–19).

Ellie's appearance conforms with traditional figures of purity, as one can see by comparing her with any of several heroines from *The Faerie Queene*. For example,

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[34] Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies: A Fairy-Tale For A Land Baby,* illust. by Rosalie K. Fry (London: Dent, 1973), p.9. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

Una's complexion is whiter than snow (I.1.4), and in her final appearance she is clad in garments "All lilly white, withouten spot, or pride" (I.12.22). Furthermore she accompanies and supports Redcross in his quest. The beautiful warrior-virgin Britomart wears a "snow-white smocke" (III.1.63) under her armour, and has long golden hair which reaches to her heels (IV.1.13). The even more beautiful Florimell has golden hair which streams behind her as she rides (III.1.16). Fidelia in the House of Holiness appears "araied all in lilly white" (I.10.13), and one can find a verbal association with Ellie in part of her name – FidELIa.

Tom gazes in awe:

> And then he thought, 'And are all people like that when they are washed?' And he looked at his own wrist, and tried to rub the soot off, and wondered whether it ever would come off. 'Certainly I should look much prettier then, if I grew at all like her' (19).

At Tom's moment of self-realization Kingsley does not simply describe Tom, but for the first time mentions his inner condition:

> And looking round, he suddenly saw, standing close to him, a little ugly, black, ragged figure, with bleared eyes and grinning white teeth. He turned on it angrily. What did such a little black ape want in that sweet young lady's room? And behold, it was himself reflected in a great mirror, the like of which Tom had never seen before.
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> And Tom, for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty; and burst into tears with shame and anger; and turned to sneak up the chimney again and hide (19).

But God has other plans for Tom, and will not let him return to the darkness and dirt of his former life. Tom trips over the fire-irons, which wakes Ellie who screams at the sight of him. Ellie's Nurse rushes in and attempts to catch him; so he is forced to jump out of the window and climb down a tree, "like a cat" (21), says Kingsley, keeping the focus on Tom's animal self. The entire staff of the great house pursue Tom who runs "up the park with his little bare feet, like a small black gorilla fleeing to the forest" (23). When he comes to the estate's boundary wall he climbs over it "like a squirrel" (24); and finds himself out on the moors and entering into the natural world of spiders, lizards, birds, and foxes. He comes, to the top of Lewthwaite Crag; and a thousand feet below, a stream running through the valley. He begins to climb down, "as if he had been born a jolly little black ape, with four

hands instead of two" (36).[35]

By the time he arrives at the bottom, Tom is almost literally dying of thirst; he needs water that he might live. But when he stumbles into the school run by the old dame (who, it is eventually revealed, is Grimes's mother), she gives him, not water, but milk. Nor, when she offers him bread, can he eat it. He needs water both to revive and purify him.

Lying in the hay in an outhouse where the old dame has put him to rest, he is tormented by his unclean state:

> and then he fell half asleep, and dreamt that he heard the little white lady crying to him, 'Oh, you're so dirty; go and be washed'; and then that he heard the Irishwoman saying, 'Those that wish to be clean, clean they will be' (40).

During his flight Tom has begun to hear church bells ringing—at first a long way off. He consistently heads towards them, knowing that there will be people near them who will give him something to eat and drink. By the time he is lying in the hay the church bells have become louder and more insistent. He wants to go to church, but worries that he will not be let in because he is so dirty.

> He must go to the river and wash first. And he said out aloud again and again, though being half asleep he did not know it, 'I must be clean, I must be clean.'
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> And all of a sudden he found himself, not in the outhouse on the hay, but in the middle of a meadow, over the road, with a stream just before him, saying continually, 'I must be clean, I must be clean.' [... He] went on to the bank of the brook, and lay down on the grass, and looked into the clear, clear limestone water, [...] while the little silver trout dashed about in fright at the sight of his black face; and he dipped his hand in and found it so cool, cool, cool; and he said, 'I will be a fish; I will swim in the water; I must be clean, I must be clean.'
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> So he pulled off all his clothes in such haste that he tore some of them, which was easy enough with such ragged old things. And he put his poor hot sore feet into the water; and then his legs; and the further he went in the more the church bells rang in his head.
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> 'Ah,' said Tom, 'I must be quick and wash myself; the bells are ringing quite loud now; and they will stop soon, and then the doors will be shut, and I shall never be able to get in at all.'
>
> Tom was mistaken: for in England the church doors are left open all service time, for everybody who likes to come in [... to] God's house, which belongs to all alike (41–42).

Tom sinks into the water and falls asleep.

There is quite a lot happening in this passage, which is an elegant blending of

[35] Harking back to Swift and Gulliver, all of the animals to which Tom is likened – mole, cat, squirrel and ape – are unclean according to the Levitican proscriptions.

Platonism and Christianity. From the Christian perspective Tom is the soiled heathen, or the prodigal son, seeking redemption; and entering through baptism into the church of Christ which is open to all who repent of their sins. From the Platonist perspective Tom is ensuring himself a superior birth in his next life by focusing obsessively, in his last moments, on the words of the Irishwoman, before his soul passes into the other realm and chooses a new body. This new body will be chosen based on a reaction against the former life, and a new-found desire for a better life.

But there is still much to be done before Tom is purged of his animal life, as the Irishwoman realizes. She has followed Tom all the way from Harthover, and has slipped unseen into the water before him:

> and her shawl and her petticoat floated off her, and the green water-weeds floated round her sides, and the white water-lilies floated round her head, and the fairies of the stream came up from the bottom, and bore her away and down upon their arms; for she was the Queen of them all; and perhaps of more besides (42).

She tells the fairies that she has brought them a little brother, who has turned into a water-baby, leaving his husk behind him:

> But mind, maidens, he must not see you, or know that you are here. He is but a savage now, and like the beasts which perish; and from the beasts which perish he must learn (42–43).[36]

Thus Kingsley reveals that the Irishwoman is the Queen of the fairies, or the Fairy Queen. She is the first of the fairies whom we shall encounter in this tale; and, as Kingsley shows towards the end, they are all facets and embodiments of the great force represented in Spenser's *Mutabilitie Cantos* as Dame Nature. Spenser gives a detailed picture of Dame Nature, citing Chaucer as an authority.[37] Chaucer describes her thus:

> Tho was I war wher that ther sat a queene
> That, as of lyght the somer sonne shene
> Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure
> She fayrer was than any creature.

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[36] "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49.12).

[37] So hard it is for any liuing wight,
All her array and vestiments to tell,
That old *Dan Geffrey* (in whose gentle spright
The pure well head of Poesie did dwell)
In his *Foules parley* durst not with it mel. (VII.7.9)

The Goddess Nature tradition of course pre-dated Chaucer. See the notes to the *Mutabilite Cantos* in the *Faerie Queene* Variorum edn, vol. VI, and see also Appendix I to Book VII.

And in a launde, upon an hil of floures,
Was set this noble goddesse Nature. (298-303)[38]

In the *Mutabilitie Cantos* the heathen gods assemble for a parliament on Arlo Hill in Ireland (a place which Spenser loved). The Titaness Mutabilitie claims herself to be mightier than the gods, and therefore fitter to be sovereign of heaven and earth, which are obviously under her sway; and appeals to the God of Nature to arbitrate.

Then forth issewed (great goddesse) great dame *Nature*,
With goodly port and gracious Maiesty;
Being far greater and more tall of stature
Then any of the gods or Powers on hie:
Yet certes by her face and physnomy,
Whether she man or woman inly were,
That could not any creature well descry:
For, with a veile that wimpled euery where,
Her head and face was hid, that mote to none appeare.

That some doe say was so by skill deuized,
To hide the terrour of her vncouth hew,
From mortall eyes that should be sore agrized;
For that her face did like a Lion shew,
That eye of wight could not endure to view:
But others tell that it so beautious was,
And round about such beames of splendor threw,
That it the Sunne a thousand times did pass,
Ne could be seene, but like an image in a glass. (VII.7.5-6)

The earth brings forth a pavilion of dainty trees which bow themselves into a throne. Nymphs sprinkle Dame Nature's footstool with sweet flowers. This, then, is the goddess whom Chaucer calls, "Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord" (line 379). This, too, as we shall see, is Kingsley's Fairy Queen.

Kingsley introduces his Dame Nature in the humble and unremarkable form of the Irishwoman,

> trudging along with a bundle at her back. She had a grey shawl over her head, and a crimson madder petticoat; so you may be sure she came from Galway. She had neither shoes nor stockings, and limped along as if she were tired and footsore: but she was a very tall, handsome woman, with bright grey eyes, and heavy black hair hanging about her cheeks (8–9).

Spenser says that Dame Nature is tall; Kingsley says that the Irishwoman is tall. Spenser says that her face is "beautious"; Kingsley, that she is "handsome." Spenser

[38] *The Parlement of Foules*, in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by F.N. Robinson, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1966; repr. 1974).

describes her veil "that wimpled every where"; Kingsley describes the "grey shawl over her head," and the "heavy black hair hanging about her cheeks." Spenser tells how, after delivering her judgment, "Natur's selfe did vanish, whither no man list" (VII.7.59); Kingsley tells how, after delivering her prophetic judgment on Grimes and Tom, the Irishwoman vanishes, much to their surprise (12).

Kingsley locates most of his action in a natural world reminiscent of Spenser's Garden of Adonis. Spenser says:

> It sited was in fruitfull soyle of old,
> And girt in with two walles on either side;
> The one of yron, the other of bright gold. (III.6.31)

Tom descends Lewthwaite Crag – a limestone cliff one thousand feet high – just before he drowns in the stream and becomes a water-baby. At the far end of the natural world, stands the great ice Shiny Wall surrounding Peacepool, "where the good whales go when they die" (108). It is from here that Tom travels on to the Other-end-of-Nowhere. Thus the natural world of the water-babies is girt in with two walls.

Of life forms in the Garden of Adonis Spenser says:

> Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
> And vncouth formes, which none yet euer knew. (III.6.35).

Kingsley paints an aquatic world vibrantly exploding with life in all its variety. Tom's journey – from the stream in which he drowns, to the river, to the seashore and across the vast ocean – includes everything from microscopic pond life to great whales, especially creatures that evolve from one bizarre form to another. And overseeing all is the Queen of the Fairies – or the Fairy Queen, also known as Dame Nature. Spenser says:

> In that same Gardin all the goodly flowres,
> Wherewith dame Nature doth her beautifie,
> And decks the girlonds of her paramoures,
> Are fetcht: there is the first seminarie
> Of all things, that are born to liue and die,
> According to their kindes. (III.6.30)

Tom has gone into the water for an education, which involves not only learning to understand and appreciate nature, but to mature intellectually and evolve morally and

spiritually through the interaction. He engages with the other creatures in the stream, beginning with insect larvae, then fish, then otters. He teases the other creatures, so they avoid him until he has learnt to behave responsibly. The season changes and the creatures begin moving down to the sea—including the fairies, who have been hiding from Tom. He follows downstream. One night he witnesses Grimes and his cronies poaching salmon. They are attacked by gamekeepers, and during the fight Grimes falls into the water and drowns. Tom arrives at the sea and befriends a lobster.

Ellie, meanwhile, has been taken on holiday to the seaside. One day she is walking along the shore in company with a Professor who scoops up Tom in a little net. Tom gets away, and Ellie, attempting to catch this strange creature, slips and knocks her head on a rock. She lingers in bed for a few days until the fairies come and take her.

Tom, who has spent most of his time in the water being naughty and tormenting the other creatures, saves the life of the lobster; and earns enough merit to meet other water-babies. He travels with them to their underwater home, St. Brandan's fairy isle, where he begins to learn the difference between right and wrong.

And what about the water-babies themselves? They are the "thousand thousand naked babes" from the Garden of Adonis (III.6.32). Kingsley says that there are "millions" (107) of them. But who are they? They live in St. Brandan's underwater isle, which Plato called Atlantis:

> And there were the water-babies in thousands, more than Tom, or you either, could count.—All the little children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not; all who are untaught and brought up heathens, and all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect; all the little children who are overlaid, or given gin when they are young, or are let to drink out of hot kettles, or to fall into the fire; all the little children in alleys and courts, and tumbledown cottages, who die by fever, and cholera, and measles, and scarlatina, and nasty complaints which no one has any business to have, and which no one will have some day, when folks have common sense; and all the little children who have been killed by cruel masters, and wicked soldiers; they were all there, except, of course, the babes of Bethlehem who were killed by wicked King Herod; for they were taken straight to heaven long ago, as everybody knows, and we call them the Holy Innocents (141).

These are the children whose lives have been blighted, and who have not been able to realize their potential. These are the ones who have to be taught in their underwater nursery by two fairies of opposite appearance. The ugly and severely just Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid – representing the Pauline observation, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6.7) – teaches them not to do wrong by

punishing them for their actions.[39] The beautiful and loving Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby – representing Christ's injunction, "what so ever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7.12; see also Luke 6.31) – teaches them to do right by telling them about God and proper conduct. These two Dames, both embodiments of Dame Nature – and both, like Dame Nature and the Irishwoman, tall – have opposite appearances and opposite functions, although their aim – reformation – is the same.[40]

It would seem that Kingsley has modelled the sweet Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby on Charissa in Spenser's House of Holiness in *The Faerie Queene*, where Una has taken Redcross for rest and improvement. Spenser describes Charissa:

> She was a woman in her freshest age,
> Of wondrous beauty, and of bountie rare,
> With goodly grace and comely personage,
> That was on earth not easie to compare;
> Full of great loue, but *Cupids* wanton snare
> As hell she hated, chast in worke and will;
> Her necke and breasts were euer open bare,
> That ay thereof her babes might sucke their fill;
> The rest was all in yellow robes arayed still.
>
> A multitude of babes about her hong,
> Playing their sports, that ioyed her to behold,
> Whom still she fed, whiles they were weake and young,
> But thrust them forth still, as they wexed old. (I.10.30-31)

Kingsley describes Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby:

> [S]he was the most nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature who ever nursed a baby; and she understood babies thoroughly, for she had plenty of her own, whole rows and regiments of them, and has to this day.[41] And all her delight was, whenever she had a spare moment, to play with babies, in which she showed herself a woman of sense; for babies are the best company, and the pleasantest playfellows, in the world; at least, so all the wise people in the world think. And therefore when the children saw her, they naturally all caught hold of her, and pulled her till she sat down on a stone, and climbed into her lap, and clung round her neck, and caught hold of her hands; and then they all put their

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[39] After Tom puts pebbles into anemones' mouths, she gives him a sweet; but it is in fact a pebble.

[40] In an address to the inaugural meeting of the Ladies' Sanitary Association in July 1861, Kingsley says, "Nature is fierce when she is offended, as she is bounteous and kind when she is obeyed" (*CKL*, II, 85).

[41] The end of this sentence may be inspired by Spenser's description of the Garden of Adonis:

> Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
> And vncouth formes, which none yet euer knew,
> And euery sort is in a sundry bed
> Set by it selfe, and ranckt in comely rew. (III.6.35)

Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby hardly seems the type to keep babies in rows.

> thumbs into their mouths, and began cuddling and purring like so many kittens, as they ought to have done (150).

She spies Tom. The other babies tell her that he is a new arrival, and never had a mother.

> 'Then I will be his mother, and he shall have the very best place; so get out all of you, this moment.'
>
> And she took up two great armsful of babies—nine hundred under one arm, and thirteen hundred under the other—and threw them away, right and left, into the water. But they [...] did not even take their thumbs out of their mouths, but came paddling and wriggling back to her like so many tadpoles, till you could see nothing of her from head to foot for the swarm of little babies (151).

Kingsley regarded the blighting of these little lives not only as a shame and disgrace, but anti-Christian; and it was something that touched him deeply:

> Oh! it is a distressing thing to see children die. God gives the most beautiful and precious thing that earth can have, and we just take it and cast it away; we cast our pearls upon the dunghill, and leave them. [...] I believe it to have been a priceless boon to the child to have lived for a week, or a day; but oh, what has God given to this thankless earth, and what has the earth thrown away, in nine cases out of ten, from its own neglect and carelessness?[42]

In a sermon he deplores the march of progress which leaves casualties in its wake:

> Shall we pass over the waste—the hereditary waste of human souls [...] in every great city in the world?—waste of human souls, human intellect, human character—waste, saddest of all, in the image of God in little children. That cannot be necessary. There must be a fault somewhere. It cannot be the will of God that one little one should perish by commerce or by manufacture, any more than by slavery or by war. [43]

And, as he reprises the image of Tom sinking into the purifying stream, he makes the Platonic observation:

> Their souls are like their bodies, not perfect, but beautiful enough, and fresh enough to shame any one who shall dare to look down upon them. Their souls are like their bodies, hidden by the rags, foul with the dirt, of what we miscall civilization. But take them to the pure stream; strip off the ugly shapeless rags; wash the young limbs again, and you shall find them, body and soul, fresh and lithe, graceful and capable—capable of how much, God alone, who made them, knows.[44]

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[42] *CKL,* II, 83–84. Address to the Ladies' Sanitary Association.
[43] 'On Human Soot', a sermon preached in Liverpool on behalf of the Kirkdale Ragged School, June 1870. *CKL,* II, 324.
[44] *CKL*, II, 325.

Kingsley says that the souls of the urchins are "not perfect." He puts all the water-babies in the same spiritual category, in the passage quoted above, where he distinguishes between the water-babies and the Holy Innocents who "were taken straight to heaven." These, then, are children who should be given another chance. But it is too late for those who have perished—some without even the benefit of baptism, who may not enter the kingdom of God. To Kingsley the Christian this is a deplorable loss and a tragedy which cannot be remedied. But to Kingsley the Platonist it is yet another painful step in the soul's upward evolution towards perfection, and the person's upward evolution towards true humanity.

But every human being who struggles towards salvation labours under the burden of duality—the duality of which Kingsley was only too well aware from his own personality. He saw the negative side of this duality as an expression of the animal part of our nature; but he saw this not as a metaphor, but as an actual fact. In a hair-raising letter he writes:

> I see by-the-bye that you have given out two 'Orations against taking away human life.' I wish you would let me see them. […] It is a painful and difficult subject. After much thought, I have come to the conclusion that you cannot take away *human* life. That *animal* life is all you take away; and that very often the best thing that you can do for a poor creature is to put him out of this world, saying, 'You are evidently unable to get on here. We render you back into God's hands that He may judge you, and set you to work again somewhere else, giving you a fresh chance as you have spoilt this one.' But I speak really in doubt and awe.[45]

Now begins a crucial phase in Tom's personal development. Just as Kingsley himself had rebelled initially during his reformation, so Tom lapses badly by stealing sweets from Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid's cabinet. When at last he confesses, she forgives him at once; but the damage has been done. Tom's body is now covered in prickles.

> Which was natural; for you must know and believe that people's souls make their bodies, just as a snail makes its shell (I am not joking, my little man; I am in serious, solemn earnest). And, therefore, when Tom's soul grew all prickly with naughty tempers, his body could not help growing prickly too, so that nobody would cuddle him, or play with him, or even like to look at him (161).

Here, as Kingsley says, is the "doctrine of this wonderful fairy-tale" (64). Unfortunately, Kingsley's example of the prickles does nothing more than further

[45] *CKL*, II, 380. Letter to Thomas Cooper, 1854.

confuse an already confused issue. Tom's prickles grow in response to his actions and moral decisions; in other words, Tom's existing body acquires features which reflect his actions. This is not what Kingsley has in mind when he writes to Professor George Rolleston:

> I am glad to see that you incline to my belief, which I hardly dare state in these days, even to those who call themselves spiritual, viz., that the soul of each living being down to the lowest, secretes the body thereof, as a snail secretes its shell, and that *the body is nothing more than the expression in terms of matter, of the stage of development to which the being has arrived.* [my emphasis] [46]

Tom's prickles are a Platonic reaction, but Kingsley's snail doctrine is an attempt to reconcile his theology with Darwinism; and specifically relates to the kind of body which the soul brings with it into the world; as the following letter, written a few months after the last, shows:

> I am very busy working out points of Natural Theology, by the strange light of Huxley, Darwin, and Lyell. […]
> [...]
> A Passage between me and [Huxley …] may amuse you. He says somewhere, 'the ape's brain is almost exactly like the man's, and so is his throat. See, then, what enormously different results may be produced by the slightest difference in structure!' I tell him, 'not a bit; You are putting the cart before the horse, like the rest of the world. If you won't believe my great new doctrine (which, by the bye, is as old as the Greeks), that souls secrete their bodies, as snails do shells, you will remain in outer darkness. [...] I know an ape's brain and throat are almost exactly like a man's—and what does that prove? That the ape is a fool and a muff, who has tools very nearly as good as a man's, and yet can't use them, while a man can do the most wonderful thing with tools very little better than an ape's.
> 'If men had had ape's [*sic*] bodies they would have got on very tolerably with them, because they had men's souls to work the bodies with. While an ape's soul in a man's body would be only a rather more filthy nuisance than he is now. You fancy that the axe uses the workman, I say that the workman uses the axe, and that though he can work rather better with a good tool than a bad one, the great point is, what sort of workman is he—an ape-soul or a human soul?'
> Whereby you may perceive that I am not going astray into materialism as yet.[47]

Kingsley's doctrine is, in short, soul is form and doth the body make. It may seem fanciful that a man who espoused the pursuit of science should attempt to counter Huxley with an idea which he could have picked up over dinner with Spenser. But, as he says, it is as old as the Greeks, and has exercised an ongoing influence. In Plato's *Timaeus* Timaeus says:

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[46] *CKL,* II, 143–44. Letter to Professor George Rolleston, 12 October 1862. As one can see from the date, the letter was written around the time that Kingsley was writing *The Water-Babies.*

> [T]he gods created in us the desire of sexual intercourse, contriving in man one animated substance, and in woman another (91a).

The "animated substance" in men is sperm, and in women is the uterus. Each agent of procreation has its own soul independent of the body in which it is contained.

Henry More, in his *Interpretation Generall,* under the heading *Sperm,* explains its function:

> It signifies ordinarily seed. I put it for the *Logos spermaticos,* [...] or the invisible plasticall form that shapes every visible creature.[48]

And the Swedish scientist and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) describes the process:

> Every one's soul is from the father, and it is only clothed with a body by the mother. [...] The soul is in the seed, for from the seed impregnation takes place, and the seed is what is clothed with a body by the mother.[49]

> [F]or in man's seed is his soul in perfect human form, covered over with substances from the purest things of nature, from which, in the mother's womb, is formed a body.[50]

Kingsley is therefore working within a long Platonic tradition, which has taken on an increasingly scientific explanation. He is, in his mind, countering science with science.

But the focus of Kingsley's attention with his snail doctrine is not to address Darwin's assertion that mankind has evolved from apes, but to demonstrate how mankind could degenerate back into apes. Kingsley was advancing his "degeneration theory" in 1862. In his letter to Professor Rolleston quoted above, he says:

> I wish you would *envisager* that gorilla brain for once in a way, and the baboon brain also under the fancy of their being *degraded* forms.

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[47] *CKL*, II, 171–72. Undated letter to Rev. F.D. Maurice, 1863.
[48] Grosart, p.164.
[49] *Angelic Wisdom Concerning the Divine Providence* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1934), par.338. Swedenborg was influenced directly by Plato, and also by the Cambridge Platonists and Milton when he was studying in England. In his philosophy he was a Platonist, with an especial interest in neo-Platonism. See Cyriel Odhner Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic: The Life and Works of Emanuel Swedenborg* (New York: Bookman, 1952), p.179.
[50] The *Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugial Love,* [1767. First English edn 1794], trans. by Alfred Acton (London: Swedenborg Society, 1953), par.183. Kingsley found "many noble and beautiful things" in the Swedish philosopher's writings (*CKL*, II, 94). Anne Bloomfield argues for Swedenborg's influence on *The Water-Babies* in 'Muscular Christian or Mystic? Charles Kingsley Reappraised', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 11 (1994), 172-90.

> I shall torment you and your compeers with my degradation theory, till you give me a plain Yes or No from facts.[51]

Of course, he was not alone in his speculations, as one can see from Huxley:

> It is an error to imagine that evolution signifies a constant tendency to increased perfection. That process undoubtedly involves a constant remodelling of the organism in adaptation to new conditions; but it depends on the nature of those conditions whether the direction of the modifications effected shall be upward or downward. Retrogressive is as practicable as progressive metamorphosis.[52]

From Monboddo:

> The necessary consequence of men living in so unnatural a way with respect to houses, clothes, and diet, and continuing to live so for many generations, each generation adding to the vices, diseases, and weaknesses produced by the unnatural life of the preceding is, that they must gradually decline in strength, health, and longevity, till at length the race dies out.[53]

From the explorer Thomas Savage:

> [Chimpanzees] are very filthy in their habits. [...] It is a tradition with the natives generally here, that they were once members of their own tribe: that for their depraved habits they were expelled from all human society, and that through an obstinate indulgence of their vile propensities, they have degenerated into their present state of organization.[54]

And from Kingsley's friend and one-time patron, Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881):

> Perhaps few narratives in History or Mythology are more significant than that Moslem one, of Moses and the dwellers by the Dead Sea. A tribe of men dwelt on the shores of that same Asphaltic Lake; and having forgotten, as we are all too prone to do, the inner facts of Nature, and taken up with the falsities and outer semblances of it, were fallen into sad conditions,—verging indeed towards a certain far deeper Lake. Whereupon it pleased kind Heaven to send them the Prophet Moses, with an instructive word of warning, out of which might have

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[51] *CKL,* II, 144.

[52] 'The Struggle For Existence in Human Society' [1888], *Evolution and Ethics*, *Collected Essays*, IX, 195-236, (p.199).

[53] *Ancient Metaphysics*, V, 237. Quoted in *Melincourt*, p.277.

[54] 'Observations on the external characters and habits of the Troglodytes Niger', *Boston Journal of Natural History*, 4 (1843-44), 362-86 (p.385). Quoted in Huxley, *Man's Place in Nature*, p.58. Savage adds an aside which makes one wonder how the chimps could be any more vile than their relatives who expelled them: "They are, however, eaten by them, and when cooked with the oil and pulp of the palm-nut considered a highly palatable morsel." Kingsley may have known this passage by Savage; he writes of apes that, "the wild negroes, among whom they live, hold them in abhorrance, and believe that they were once men like themselves, who were gradually changed into brute beasts, by giving way to detestable sins". *The Gospel of the Pentateuch and David* (London: Macmillan, 1885), sermon VII, 'Joseph', pp.91-103 (p.97). This sermon was preached on 8 March 1863. *Man's Place in Nature* was published in January 1863, but the lectures which comprise it were written in 1861. Kingsley corresponded with Huxley about the gorilla brain while he was writing *The Water-Babies*, so he could have had access to Huxley's lectures before they were published. Then again, he may simply have read Savage's book.

> sprung 'remedial measures' not a few. But no: the men of the Dead Sea discovered, as the valet-species always does in heroes or prophets, no comeliness in Moses; listened with real tedium to Moses, with light grinning, or with splenetic sniffs and sneers, affecting even to yawn; and signified, in short, that they found him a humbug, and even a bore. Such was the candid theory these men of the Asphalt Lake formed to themselves of Moses. That probably he was a humbug, that certainly he was a bore.
>
> Moses withdrew; but Nature and her rigorous veracities did not withdraw. The men of the Dead Sea, when we went next to visit them, were all 'changed into Apes' [footnote: Sale's Koran (*Introduction.*)]; sitting on the trees there, grinning now in the most *un*affected manner; gibbering and chattering very genuine nonsense; finding the whole Universe now a most indisputable Humbug! The Universe has *become* a Humbug to these Apes who thought it one. There they sit and chatter, to this hour: only, I believe, every Sabbath there returns to them a bewildered half-consciousness, half reminiscence; and they sit, with their wizened smoke-dried visages, and such an air of tragicality as Apes may; looking out through those blinking smoke-bleared eyes of theirs,[55] into the wonderfullest smoky Twilight and undecipherable disordered Dusk of Things; wholly an Uncertainty, Unintelligibility, they and it; and for commentary thereon, here and there an unmusical chatter or mew: — truest, tragicallest Humbug conceivable by the mind of man or ape! They made no use of their souls; and so have lost them. Their worship on the Sabbath now is to roost there, with unmusical screeches, and half-remember that they had souls.[56]

Carlyle writes that the tribe have lost their souls. What he means is that they have lost their rational souls. Having neglected to nourish their human souls, they have forfeited them, and the human souls have been replaced with the souls of apes, those shadowy denizens of the land somewhere between human and beast. Accordingly, their bodies have followed suit. This is reminiscent of Thomas Sheridan's analysis of the Yahoos:

> In your merely animal capacity, says [Swift] to man, without reason to guide you, and actuated only by blind instinct, I will show you that you would be degraded below the beasts of the field. That very form, that very body, you are now so proud of, as giving you such a superiority over all other animals, I will show you owe all their beauty, and all their greatest powers, to their being actuated by a rational soul. Let that be withdrawn, let the body be inhabited by the mind of a brute, let it be prone as theirs are, and suffered like theirs to take its natural course, without any assistance from art, you would in that case be the most

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[55] "And looking round, [Tom] suddenly saw, standing close to him, a little ugly, black, ragged figure with bleared eyes and grinning white teeth" (19).

[56] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* [1843] (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), bk 3, chap.3: 'Gospel of Dilettantism', pp.157–58. Carlyle became a fierce opponent of Darwinism. Also note the traditional apish behaviour of grinning and chattering. Carlyle was a strong and ongoing influence on Stevenson, who sent a postcard to Charles Baxter in June 1874 in which he mentions an expectation of meeting Carlyle. See *RLS Letters*, letter 284, II, 24. McLynn writes that as a young man Stevenson planned a biography of Carlyle (41); and that Carlyle declined the meeting (103).

deformed, as to your external appearance, the most detestable of all creatures.[57]

So taken was Kingsley with his degradation theory, that it appears not once, but twice in *The Water-Babies.* In its first appearance it seems little more than an abstract of the Carlyle passage in a new setting:[58]

> And where is the home of the water-babies? In St Brandan's fairy isle.
>
> Did you never hear of the blessed St Brandan, how he preached to the wild Irish, on the wild Kerry Coast; he and five other hermits, till they were weary, and longed to rest? For the wild Irish would not listen to them, or come to confession and to mass, but liked better to brew potheen, and dance the pater o'pee, [...] and burn each other's houses; till St Brandan and his friends were weary of them, for they would not learn to be peaceable Christians at all.
>
> So St Brandan went out to the point of old Dunmore, and looked over the tideway roaring round the Blasquets, at the end of the world, and away into the ocean, and sighed—'Ah that I had wings as a dove!' And far away, before the setting sun, he saw a blue fairy sea, and golden fairy islands, and he said, 'Those are the islands of the blest.' Then he and his friends got into a hooker, and sailed away and away to the westward, and were never heard of more. But the people who would not hear him were changed into gorillas, and gorillas they are until this day (137).[59]

Here is the heart of *The Water-Babies*; here is the heart of Kingsley's approach to the human soul—use it or lose it. And this is the engine that powers his degradation theory, as expressed in his sermon on 'The Wages of Sin'. He begins by saying that the sinner continues in his sin by comforting himself with the thought that God's punishments are arbitrarily determined, and that – somehow – God will forgive him and waive the punishment:

> But, it is a very terrible, heart-rending thought, for a man to find out that what he will receive is not punishment, but wages; not punishment, but the end of the very road he is travelling on. That the wages of sin, and the end of sin, to which it must lead, are death; and that every time he sins he is earning those wages, deserving them, meriting them, and therefore receiving them by the just laws of the world of God.[60] That does torment him, that does terrify him, if he will look

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[57] See above, Chapter 3, n44.

[58] Kingsley mentions *Past and Present* in a letter shortly before beginning *The Water-Babies*. See *CKL,* II, 136. David Rosen points out that Fanny gave Kingsley a copy of the book and that it "greatly influenced him". 'The Volcano and the Cathedral: Muscular Christianity and the Origins of Primal Manliness', in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.17-44 (p.25). C.N. Manlove writes that the story of the Doasyoulikes is "derived from" Carlyle's tale. See *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.270, n93.

[59] Kingsley regarded the poor Irish as chimpanzees. See below.

[60] These laws are embodied in Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, who tells the emprickled Tom, "You put them there yourself, and only you can take them away" (162).

> steadfastly at the broad plain fact. You need not dream of being let off, respited, reprieved, pardoned in any way. The thing cannot be done. It is contrary to the laws of God, and of God's universe. [...] Your sins are killing you by inches; all day long they are sowing in you the seeds of disease and death. Every sin which you commit with your body shortens your bodily life. Every sin you commit with your mind, every act of stupidity, folly, wilful ignorance, helps to destroy your mind, and leave you dull, silly, devoid of right reason. Every sin you commit with your spirit, every sin of passion and temper, envy and malice, pride and vanity, injustice and cruelty, extravagance and self-indulgence, helps to destroy your spiritual life, and leave you bad, more and more unable to do the right and avoid the wrong, more and more unable to discover right from wrong; and that last is spiritual death, the eternal death of your moral being. There are three parts in you—body, mind, and spirit; and every sin you commit helps to kill one of these three, and, in many cases, to kill all three together.[61]

This is bad enough on an individual level, but when it happens throughout an entire society the consequences are catastrophic. And Kingsley found examples of decaying humanity before his very eyes. In 1860 he took a holiday in Ireland, from where he writes to his wife:

> This place is full of glory—very lovely, and well kept up. [...]
>
> But I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours.[62]

As for the "black chimpanzees":

> [T]he niggers say that monkeys are men, only they won't work for fear of being made to talk; no, won't talk for fear of being made to work; that's it (right for once, as I live!) and put their hands over their eyes at night for fear of seeing the old gentleman—and I'm sure that's just like a reasonable creature, I used to when I was a little boy; and you see the niggers have lived among them for thousands of years, and are monstrous like them, too, d'ye see, and so they must know best.[63]

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[61] *The Water of Life, and other Sermons* (London: Macmillan, 1890), sermon IV, pp.40-55 (pp.44-45). Also quoted in *CKL,* II, 208–09. The sermon was preached at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, in 1864.

[62] *CKL,* II, 107. Letter of 4 July, 1860. Brantlinger and Boyle cite this letter when noting the ape-like Edward Hyde's resemblance to "the stereotype of the [ape-like] Irish hooligan." They also suggest that the cane with which he murders Carew "might easily have been a shillelagh" (*100* Years, pp.273; 274).

[63] *CKL*, II, 142. 'Speech Of Lord Dundreary In Section D, On Friday Last, On The Great Hippocampus Question.' This gem arose in response to a debate which Kingsley attended in Cambridge in October 1861 between Huxley and Sir Richard Owen (1804–92). "In this debate over the classification of mammals according to their brains, Owen had elevated man above the rest of nature on account of his brain; Huxley insisted that the mind as well as the body was a product of evolution, and pointed to his discoveries, such as that the *Hippocampus minor* is found in the brains of both man and ape, to substantiate this." Leo Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel 1860-1910:*

Kingsley also identifies black people with apes in Alton Locke's dream:

> I was a baby-ape in Borneon forests, perched among fragrant trailers and fantastic orchis flowers; and as I looked down, beneath the green roof, into the clear waters paved with unknown water-lilies on which the sun had never shone, I saw my face reflected in the pool—a melancholy, thoughtful countenance, with large projecting brow—it might have been a negro child's (268–69).

Brutishness is the fate of lesser individuals and lesser races. But Kingsley foresaw a great destiny for the English people, which he expresses in almost Messianic language in his 1846 lecture, 'How to Study Natural History':

> And bear in mind, as I said just now, that this study of natural history is the grammar of that very physical science which has enabled England thus to replenish the earth and subdue it. Do you not see, then, that by following these studies you are walking in the very path to which England owes her wealth; that you are training in yourselves that habit of mind which God has approved as the one which He has ordained for Englishmen, and are doing what in you lies toward carrying out, in after life, the glorious work which God seems to have laid on the English race, to replenish the earth and subdue it?[64]

This passage reveals a great deal about Kingsley's attitudes. In *Westward Ho!* Kingsley refers to "the Bible doctrine, that man in a state of nature is a fallen being, doomed to death."[65] But in his lecture he twice mentions the English ability "to replenish the earth and subdue it." The quotation is from Genesis 1.28:

> And God blessed [Adam and Eve], and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

God here is addressing Adam and Eve *before* the Fall; and it is likely that Kingsley has not chosen the quotation lightly, but is using it to suggest a return by the educated Christian Englishman to a state of pre-Lapsarian nobility which makes his superiority over other peoples not only a right but a duty. He returns to this theme in his address to the Ladies' Sanitary Association, in which he begins by pointing out that, if their aims are realized, there will be a national population explosion as they save the lives of between thirty and forty percent of the children who are being born;

The Impact of Evolution on Victorian Fiction (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p.83. The *hippocampus minor* appears in *The Water-Babies* as the hippopotamus major (109-10). Huxley gives his side of the argument in *Man's Place in Nature*, pp.133-38.

[64] *Scientific Lectures and Essays*, p.308.

[65] See the full quotation above, n26.

and that, from a purely economic viewpoint, it might be better to let them die. But, he continues, if the ladies believe

> that of all races upon earth now, probably the English race is the finest, and that it gives not the slightest sign whatever of exhaustion; that it seems to be on the whole a young race, and to have very great capabilities in it which have not yet been developed, and above all, the most marvellous capability of adapting itself to every sort of climate, and every form of life that any nation, except the old Roman, ever had in the world: if they consider with me that it is worth the while of political economists and social philosophers to look at the map, and see that about four-fifths of the globe cannot be said as yet to be in anywise inhabited or cultivated, or in the state in which men could make it by any fair supply of population and industry and human intellect:—then, perhaps, they may think with me that it is a duty, one of the noblest duties, to help the increase of the English race as much as possible, and to see that every child that is born into this great nation of England be developed to the highest pitch to which we can develop him, in physical strength and in beauty, as well as in intellect and in virtue.[66]

Meanwhile, Tom – Kingsley's Everyboy – is in his undersea nursery. From Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid he has learned the prudence of not doing wrong; from Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby he has learned the virtue of doing right. To speed Tom's education he is given a schoolmistress—Ellie, who has been sent from her beautiful home (which she visits on Sundays) to teach him, although she did not want to. Tom also wants to go there, but is not morally fit. He begs her "to teach him to be good" (162), which she does—she teaches him (as Kingsley puts it, addressing the young reader) "what you have been taught ever since you said your first prayers at your mother's knee" (163). But his education is not yet complete, and he longs to know where Ellie goes when she goes home on Sundays; and so comes his greatest challenge, and the final step in his moral evolution. He asks Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid why he cannot go with Ellie on Sundays.

> 'Little boys who are only fit to play with sea-beasts cannot go there,' she said. 'Those who go there must go first where they do not like, and do what they do not like, and help somebody they do not like' (165).

Ellie has done this in coming to teach Tom; but a comparable effort seems too much for him. After more tears and tantrums Tom finds his situation unendurable, and determines to undertake a quest to help Grimes, whom Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid has stuck in a chimney at the Other-end-of-Nowhere. This is a true rite of passage, which Kingsley returns to more than once. Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid comforts Tom:

> And then she told him how he had been in the nursery long enough, and must go out now and see the world, if he intended ever to be a man; and how he must go all alone by himself, as everyone else that was ever born has to go, and see with his own eyes, and smell with his own nose, and make his own bed and lie on it, and burn his own fingers if he put them into the fire (169).

Tom prepares to set of for the Other-end-of-Nowhere, but worries that he does not know the way. Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid tells him:

> 'Little boys must take the trouble to find out things for themselves, or they will never grow to be men [...].'
> 'Well,' said Tom, 'it will be a long journey, so I had better start at once. Good-bye, Miss Ellie; you know I am getting a big boy, and I must go out and see the world' (180-81).

Ellie displays the pluck of Victorian womanhood, and like Una farewelling Redcross, sends him off on his quest:

> 'I know you must,' said Ellie: 'but you will not forget me, Tom. I shall wait here till you come' (181).

Tom travels north, acquiring the canine equivalent of a water-baby on the way, and comes to the pack-ice and Shiny Wall. There is no way through, so he must dive under the floe.

> So Tom dived under the great white gate which never was opened yet, and went on in black darkness, at the bottom of the sea, for seven days and seven nights. And yet he was not a bit frightened. Why should he be? He was a brave English lad, whose business is to go out and see all the world (197).[67]

He surfaces in Peacepool, and asks a whale the way to Mother Carey. The whale directs him to what appears to be a large iceberg.

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[66] *CKL,* II, 81–82.

[67] Kingsley's Shiny Wall, the Arctic ice-shelf which closes off the entrance to the North West Passage, may owe somewhat to Milton's watery crystal wall in the Creation sequence of *Paradise Lost*:

> Immediatly the Mountains huge appeer
> Emergent, and thir broad bare backs upheave
> Into the Clouds, thir tops ascend the Skie:
> So high as heav'd the tumid Hills, so low
> Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
> Capacious bed of Waters: thither they
> Hasted with glad precipitance, uprowld
> As drops on dust conglobing from the drie;
> Part rise in crystal Wall, or ridge direct,
> For haste; such flight the great command impressd
> On the swift flouds. (VII.285-95)

Cf. also Milton's description of the parting of the Red Sea, through which God lets the Israelites pass "As on drie land between two crystal walls" (XII.197).

> ‘That’s Mother Carey,’ said the whale, ‘[…]. There she sits making old beasts into new all the year round’ (199).

Tom swims towards the iceberg, and finds:

> The grandest old lady he had ever seen—a white marble lady, sitting on a white marble throne. […]
> [...]
> […] Her hair was as white as the snow—for she was very very old—in fact, as old as anything you are likely to come across, except the difference between right and wrong (200).

Mother Carey[68] is Kingsley’s penultimate expression of Dame Nature; and he has borrowed some of her attributes from Spenser. Spenser describes Dame Nature as she, like Mother Carey, sits upon her throne:

> This great Grandmother of all creatures bred
> Great *Nature*, ever young yet full of eld,
> Still moouing, yet unmoved from her sted;
> Vnseene of any, yet of all beheld. (VII.7.13)

Kingsley describes what Tom sees:

> [F]rom the foot of the throne there swum away, out and out into the sea, millions of new-born creatures, of more shapes and colours than man ever dreamed. And they were Mother Carey’s children, whom she makes out of the sea-water all day long (200).

But Mother Carey makes her children within specifically Darwinian principles. In Kingsley’s lecture ‘The Natural Theology of the Future’, already quoted above, he says:

> We knew of old that God was so wise that He could make all things; but behold, He is so much wiser than even that, that He can make all things make themselves.[69]

And so it is with Mother Carey. Tom says to her:

> ‘I won’t trouble your ladyship any more; I hear you are very busy.’

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[68] “*Mater cara* or *madre cara* (‘mother dear’, with reference to the Virgin Mary).” Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Cassell, 1970). Quoted in Manlove, p.267, n63.

[69] See above, n28. Kingsley is here restating an argument put forward by Erasmus Darwin: “For if we may compare infinities, it would seem to require a greater infinity of power to cause the causes of effects, than to cause the effects themselves.” *Zoonomia*, 2 vols (London: Johnson, 2nd edn, 1796), I, 509.

> ‘I am never more busy than I am now,’ she said, without stirring a finger.
> ‘I heard, ma’am, that you were always making new beasts out of old.’
> ‘So people fancy. But I am not going to trouble myself to make things, my little dear. I sit here and make them make themselves’ (201).

For Kingsley, Nature is the creative expression of “a living, immanent, ever-working God.”[70]

After many adventures – including a visit to Gulliver’s island of Laputa (222) – Tom arrives at the Other-end-of-Nowhere, and is taken to meet Grimes who is still stuck in the chimney. Tom’s task is to forgive Grimes and do what he can to help him; Grimes’s task is to repent. When he genuinely does so, hearing of the death of his mother, his tears wash away both the soot which covers him and the mortar from between the bricks which hold him. Beaten, penitent, Grimes is given one last chance, and set to sweep out the crater of Mt. Etna.

Tom’s quest is complete. Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid (who has appeared suddenly at the Other-end-of-Nowhere) returns him to St Brandan’s isle – via her backstairs, Kingsley’s equivalent of Spenser’s hinder gate[71] – where Ellie has been waiting for “many a hundred years” (242). They are “both quite grown up—he into a tall man, and she into a beautiful woman” (242). Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid – now grown beautiful – changes into Mother Carey – now grown young – then into the Irishwoman, then into “neither of them, and yet all of them at once” (243), and is finally transfigured into she whom we must call Dame Nature. She speaks:

> ‘My name is written in my eyes, if you have eyes to see it there.’
> And they looked into her great, deep, soft eyes, and they changed again and again into every hue, as the light changes in a diamond.
> ‘Now read my name,’ said she, at last.
> And her eyes flashed, for one moment, clear, white, blazing light: but the children could not read her name; for they were dazzled, and hid their faces in

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[70] *CKL,* II, 171. Letter to Rev. F.D. Maurice, 1863.

[71]
> He letteth in, he letteth out to wend,
> All that to come into the world desire;
> A thousand thousand naked babes attend
> About him day and night, which doe require,
> That he with fleshly weedes would them attire:
> Such as him list, such as eternall fate
> Ordained hath, he clothes with sinfull mire,
> And sendeth forth to liue in mortall state,
> Till they againe returne backe by the hinder gate. (III.6.32)

Manlove (46) draws his readers’ attention to a passage in Kingsley’s sermon ‘The Wages of Sin’: “We cannot escape the consequences of our actions. […] There are no backstairs up which we may be smuggled into heaven.” This was written after *The Water-Babies*. See also *CKL*, II, 209, where Fanny Kingsley excerpts the sermon.

their hands (243).[72]

This passage points directly to Spenser's Dame Nature, and her position as God's regent on Earth.[73] Chaucer and Spenser both liken the beauty and radiance of Nature's face to the light of the Sun. Chaucer says that her beauty excels that of other creatures, as the light of the summer Sun excels that of a star; Spenser says that the beams of splendour about her face are a thousand times more dazzling than the Sun. Spenser then specifically identifies Nature (whose gender may be either male or female) with the transfigured Christ. He writes:

> Her garment was so bright and wondrous sheene,
> That my fraile wit cannot deuize to what
> It to compare, nor finde like stuffe to that,
> As those three sacred *Saints*, though else most wise,
> Yet on mount *Thabor* quite their wits forgat,
> When they their glorious Lord in strange disguise
> Transfigur'd sawe; his garments so did daze their eyes. (VII.7.7)

And here is St. Matthew:

> And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.
> And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
> [...]
> [...] A bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
> And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid (17.1–6).

Just as the humble wandering carpenter's son is transfigured and revealed as the Son of God; so the Irishwoman, transformed through the incorporation of her several aspects, is revealed finally as an agent of Divine power.

Tom's adventure has taken him from illiterate "heathen" (159) sweep to cultivated, educated man of science. When he is a child he understands as a child, and Nature appears to him through the glass of his simple understanding. When he becomes a man, and turns again to gaze upon Nature, he is dazzled by her beauty and

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[72] Kingsley likens God to the Sun in his lecture from *Alexandria and Her Schools.* See above, n32.

[73] Stephen Prickett argues for another source: "The reference is, of course, to the final Canto of Dante's *Paradiso*, where in the climax of the 'high fantasy' the Godhead is described as three interlocking circles of different colours, each reflecting the other, dazzling the poet's vision as it draws up his will into 'the Love that moves the sun and other stars.'" [endnote 43: Canto XXXIII, lines 142-45.] *Victorian Fantasy* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979), p.167.

miraculous complexity. Nature transfigured is Nature understood. Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid tells Ellie:

> 'You may take him home with you now on Sundays, Ellie. He has won his spurs in the great battle, and become fit to go with you, and be a man; because he has done the thing he did not like.'
>
> So Tom went home with Ellie on Sundays, and sometimes on week-days, too; and he is now a great man of science, and can plan railroads, and steam-engines, and electric telegraphs, and rifled guns, and so forth; and knows everything about everything, [...]. And all this from what he learnt when he was a water-baby, underneath the sea (243–44).

Although it is not clearly expressed, Tom and Ellie have both reincarnated into more evolved people. Kingsley of course has left himself with no way in which to demonstrate Ellie's evolution, but Tom has left his half-beast self behind and evolved into a God-fearing Victorian man of science. He has followed the advice of Tennyson:

> Arise, and fly
> The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die.[74]

This is not simply within one life, but many:

> I held it truth, with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.[75]

Tom has won his spurs; but he has also had a narrow escape. Just before he sets out on his quest, Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid tells him:

> You were very near being turned into a beast once or twice, little Tom. Indeed, if you had not made up your mind to go on this journey, and see the world, like an Englishman, I am not sure but that you would have ended as an eft in a pond (177).

One can see this Platonic degenerative process at work in Tom's encounter with a flock of mollymocks on his way to Shiny Wall:

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[74] *In Memoriam* [1850], intro. and notes by Kingsley Hart (London: The Folio Society, 1975), CXVIII.25-28. Charles Kingsley quotes this stanza in the preface to *Westminster Sermons* (p.xviii). Note yet again how mankind is possessed by beasts both real and mythic.

[75] *In Memoriam*, I.1-4.

> 'Who are you, you jolly birds?' asked Tom.
> 'We are the spirits of the old Greenland skippers (as every sailor knows), who hunted here, right whales and horse-whales, full hundreds of years agone. But, because we were saucy and greedy, we were all turned into mollys, to eat whale's blubber all our days' (196).

In Plato's *Phaedo* Socrates explains that the souls of inferior men wander as ghosts until their desire for a body leads them to incarnate again in bodies which reflect their character:

> And those who have chosen the portion of injustice, and tyranny, and violence, will pass into wolves, or into hawks and kites:–whither else can we suppose them to go? (82a).

This, of course, as Kingsley keeps insisting, is not arbitrary. In Plato's *Laws* the unnamed Athenian says:

> The ruler of the universe has ordered all things with a view to the excellence and preservation of the whole, and each part, as far as may be, has an action and passion appropriate to it. […] Now, as the soul combining first with one body and then with another undergoes all sorts of changes, either of herself or through the influence of another soul, all that remains to the player of the game is that he should shift the pieces; sending the better nature to the better place, and the worse to the worse, and so assigning to them their proper portion (X, 903b-e).

This, then, is the Platonic process of coming and going in form after form. It is important to note that this process is one in which an individual soul moves into an appropriate body, which already exists as an identifiable type.

Darwinism, however, says that species evolve slowly through the survival of those individuals most adapted to the changing environment. It is a purely physical, undirected process (which just happens to have culminated in the English gentleman). Fortunately for Kingsley's equanimity he was able to absorb from evolutionary theory whatever he found congenial, and disregard the rest. Darwinism fitted neatly with his theory of degraded races, and he was able to take the theory to its logical Darwinian conclusion in the story of the Doasyoulikes. Kingsley seems to have been quite excited by it, as he writes to Fanny:

> I have got a deal more [of *The Water-Babies*] ready, among others a wonderful waterproof picture-book, in which Tom sees how a race of men, in time, become gorillas by being brutish. I have worked out the theory till I quite believe it.[76]

[76] *CKL*, II, 137.

Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, who owns the waterproof book, says of the gorillas:

> Folks say now that I can make beasts into men, by circumstance, and selection, and competition, and so forth. Well, perhaps they are right; and perhaps, again, they are wrong. [...] Whatever their ancestors were, men they are; and I advise them to behave as such, and act accordingly. But let them recollect this, that there are two sides to every question, and a downhill as well as an uphill road; and, if I can turn beasts into men, I can, by the same laws of circumstance, and selection, and competition, turn men into beasts (177).

She then goes straight on to say, "You were very near being turned into a beast once or twice, little Tom," which completely blurs the distinction between Platonic metempsychosis and Darwinian evolution; and by the end of the book one is left with the impression that in Kingsley's mind there probably is not one—at least, not when it comes to de-volution.

When Kingsley introduces the "great and famous nation of the Doasyoulikes" (171) they are humans living an Arcadian existence where all of their needs are met providentially, "till there were never such comfortable, easy-going, happy-go-lucky people in the world" (172).

Kingsley begins the story of their sad decline with a catastrophe. The Doasyoulikes are living near a volcano, which blows up some time in the next five hundred years, killing two-thirds of the people. But they are too lazy to move, and assume that the volcano will not erupt again. However, all of their traditional, easy food sources are gone, and they have to dig in the ground for roots and nuts. They have forgotten how to plough, and, anyway, have eaten all their seed-corn. They begin their descent—first into Irishmen:

> So they lived miserably on roots and nuts, and all the weakly little children had great stomachs, and then died.
>
> 'Why,' said Tom, 'they are growing no better than savages.'
>
> 'And look how ugly they are all getting,' said Ellie.
>
> 'Yes [said Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid]; when people live on poor vegetables instead of roast beef and plum pudding, their jaws grow large, and their lips grow coarse, like the poor Paddies who eat potatoes' (174).

Then into uncivilized primitives:

> And she turned over the next five hundred years. And there they were all living up in trees, and making nests to keep off the rain. And underneath the trees lions were prowling about (174).

Now Kingsley introduces the Darwinian mechanisms of competition and selection

as the survivors turn into Lucretian Wild Men:

> 'Why,' said Ellie, 'the lions seem to have eaten a good many of them, for there are very few left now.'
>
> 'Yes,' said the fairy; 'you see it was only the strongest and most active ones who could climb the trees and so escape.'
>
> 'But what great, hulking, broad-shouldered chaps they are,' said Tom, 'they are a rough lot as ever I saw.'
>
> 'Yes, they are getting very strong now; for the ladies will not marry any but the strongest and fiercest gentlemen, who can help them up the trees out of the lions' way' (174).

Five hundred years later their feet are evolving into hands, by which some have an advantage in the trees, out-compete the others, and pass on their improved limbs while their competitors die out.

Now Kingsley introduces environmental pressure:

> 'But there is a hairy one among them,' said Ellie.
>
> 'Ah!' said the fairy, 'that will be a great man in his time, and chief of all the tribe.'[77]
>
> And, when she turned over the next five hundred years, it was true.
>
> For this hairy chief had had hairy children, and they hairier children still; and everyone wished to marry hairy husbands, and have hairy children too; for the climate was growing so damp that none but the hairy ones could live: all the rest coughed and sneezed, and had sore throats, and went into consumptions, before they could grow up to be men and women (175).

Five hundred years later we find them drifting in the twilight between man and beast:

> 'Why, there is one on the ground picking up roots,' said Ellie, 'and he cannot walk upright.'
>
> No more he could; for in the same way that the shape of their feet had altered, the shape of their backs had altered also.
>
> 'Why,' cried Tom, 'I declare they are all apes' (175).

Kingsley here draws the crucial distinction between humans and animals—humans can talk. The Doasyoulikes, despite outward appearances, are still human; and are to be judged as humans:

> 'Something fearfully like it, poor foolish creatures,' said the fairy. 'They are grown so stupid now, that they can hardly think: for none of them have used their wits for many hundred years. They have almost forgotten, too, how to talk. For each stupid child forgot some of the words it heard from its stupid parents, and had not wits enough to make fresh words for itself. Beside, they are grown so

[77] Note that they have also degenerated socially, from a nation to a tribe.

> fierce and suspicious and brutal that they keep out of each other's way, and mope and sulk in the dark forests, never hearing each other's voice, till they have forgotten almost what speech is like. I am afraid they will all be apes very soon, and all by doing only what they liked' (175–76).

And so Kingsley comes to the end of the Doasyoulikes. They have lost the use of language, and have become true beasts. And he ends this cautionary tale with a little joke:

> And in the next five hundred years they were all dead and gone, by bad food and wild beasts and hunters; all except one tremendous old fellow with jaws like a jack, who stood full seven feet high; and M. du Chaillu came up to him, and shot him, as he stood roaring and thumping his breast. And he remembered that his ancestors had once been men, and tried to say, 'Am I not a man and a brother?' but had forgotten how to use his tongue; and then he had tried to call for a doctor, but he had forgotten the word for one. So all he said was 'Ubboboo!' and died (176).[78]

This "joke" requires some explanation. Beginning in 1789, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade mounted its first great campaign to raise public awareness. One of the Society's weapons in this campaign was a plaque, reproduced as cameos, showing a black man in chains asking the rhetorical question: "AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?" The plaque was designed by Josiah Wedgwood, Charles Darwin's grandfather.

In 1861 *Punch* published a cartoon which relied in part on the reader knowing the connection between the Wedgwoods and Darwin, which had been strengthened by his marriage to his cousin Emma Wedgwood in 1839. The cartoon shows a large ape, wielding the traditional staff, wearing a placard on which is written the very un-rhetorical question: "AM I A MAN AND A BROTHER?"[79] Kingsley obviously has this recent cartoon in mind for the last Doasyoulike.

But Kingsley is giving one more turn of the screw. By conflating the Wedgwood

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[78] Paul du Chaillu (1830?–1903) was a French-born adventurer who travelled in Africa, where he famously encountered live gorillas. The year 1861 saw both the publication of his *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa,* and his appearance at the same British Association meeting which hosted the *Hippocampus* debate between Huxley and Owen. Most likely Kingsley heard du Chaillu lecture there on his exploits. The scene between the Doasyoulike and du Chaillu is reminiscent of that described by Sir Walter Scott: "The last [orang-outang] we have heard of was seen, we believe, in the island of Sumatra; it was of great size and strength, and upwards of seven feet high. It died defending desperately its innocent life against a party of Europeans, who, we cannot help thinking, might have better employed the superiority which their knowledge gave them over the poor native of the forest. It was probably this creature, seldom seen, but when once seen never forgotten, which occasioned the ancient belief in the god Pan, with his sylvans and satyrs." *Count Robert of Paris* [1832] (London and Edinburgh: Black, 1894), pp.200-01. Note how Scott also links the orang-outang with mythic figures.

[79] 'Monkeyana', *Punch*, 40 (18 May 1861), 206.

cameo and the *Punch* cartoon, he is inviting his readers, yet again, to identify black people with apes.[80]

Finally, having told a tale of Darwinian evolution, over a long – if inadequate – time, Kingsley looks past the mechanism to the true reason for the decline. Ellie turns to Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid:

> 'But could you not have saved them from becoming apes?' said little Ellie, at last.
>
> 'At first, my dear; if only they would have behaved like men, and set to work to do what they did not like. But the longer they waited, and behaved like the dumb beasts, who only do what they like, the stupider and clumsier they grew; till at last they were past all cure, for they had thrown their own wits away' (176–77).

Here we have it: the soul secretes the body as the snail secretes its shell. Kingsley need not look to Darwin for the physical degradation of the Doasyoulikes; he already has the principle explained by Timaeus in Plato's *Timaeus*:

> But the race of birds was created out of innocent lightminded men […]. The race of wild pedestrian animals, again, came from those who had no philosophy in any of their thoughts, and never considered at all about the nature of the heavens, because they had ceased to use the courses of the head, but followed the guidance of those parts of the soul which are in the breast. In consequence of these habits of theirs they had their front legs and their heads resting upon the earth to which they were drawn by natural affinity; and the crowns of their heads were elongated and of all sorts of shapes, into which the courses of the soul were crushed by reason of disuse (91d-e).

Timaeus goes on to describe creatures with even less sense, as they are drawn closer and closer to the earth until they lose the need for legs and go upon their stomachs. The most ignorant take up abode in the sea as fish or oysters. "These", says Timaeus,

> are the laws by which all animals pass into one another, now, as in the beginning, changing as they lose or gain wisdom and folly (92c).

No doubt Kingsley was exaggerating somewhat when he proclaimed himself a convert to Darwin's views; after all, the story of the Douasyoulikes shows that Kingsley's thinking did not progress beyond the opinion he expressed in 1855 in *Westward Ho!*, that uncivilized races are degraded from a former superior state, rather than risen from something lower. But in the story of the Doasyoulikes – based as it is on an existing tradition which owes nothing to Darwin – he shows that he has

[80] In his sermons Kingsley is more circumspect. In the preface to his *Westminster Sermons* he declares that the Negro is "a man and a brother" (p.xvi).

accepted and adopted the most contentious aspect of Darwin's theory—the relationship between man and ape. In a book filled with fairies and water-babies; in which the souls of the old Greenland skippers reincarnate as birds; Kingsley takes pains to show that – although individual souls may transmigrate from body to body and species to species – when it comes to changes over generations, the physical mechanisms have to be the Darwinian ones of circumstance, selection, and competition. Furthermore, that when this Darwinian process takes place, the human race has to devolve into the one animal to which scientifically it is known to be related—the ape.

Darwin's *Origin of Species* opened the door to a new kind of scientific evolutionary fiction, while at the same time defining the limits of what it could do: we come from apes, we go back to apes. Although we may eventually return to oysters, we do not degenerate into something with feathers while we are on the way.

Stevenson is similarly inspired and constrained by the new science. Henry Jekyll, learned, disciplined, energetic, driven by societal pressures to conform to the muscular Kingsleyan model, is a secret Doasyoulike. He does not want to do the thing he does not like, preferring instead to indulge his vices; he has an "aversion to the dryness of a life of study" (85); he cannot keep to his good resolutions; he returns again and again to the evil draught; and finally indulges his lower passions in the vehicle of his own body. Each sin, each lapse, leaves him more beast-like both in body and soul, until he finds himself too far down the path of degeneration—animal in form, yet still human enough to reason and speak.

But although Jekyll is a Doasyoulike, his transformation into Hyde occurs within his own body, and within years, not centuries. Hyde's hairy, ugly body is therefore the equivalent of Tom's prickles,

> for you must know and believe that people's souls make their bodies, just as a snail makes its shell [...]. And, therefore, when Tom's soul grew all prickly with naughty tempers, his body could not help growing prickly too, so that nobody would cuddle him, or play with him, or even like to look at him (161).

Tom finds the strength of character to remove his prickles. Jekyll's tragedy happens because he has no strength of character. He is helpless to avert his downfall, while at the same time – to take the Kingsleyan view – he gets what he deserves.

The first comment one could make about *The Water-Babies* is that it is strongly autobiographical: the half-beast Tom (Kingsley) is saved from his "beast life" by the

pure and virtuous Ellie (Fanny). The second comment is that it is heavily influenced by *The Faerie Queene*. I do not wish to suggest that Kingsley set out to base his work on Spenser's; but, there are many suggestive parallels between the two. The intention of Spenser is "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline",[81] which is also the intention of Kingsley, whose gentleman enjoys the added virtue of scientific knowledge. Spenser's heroes undertake a series of quests; Tom undertakes a quest. Kingsley appears to have adapted characters and locales from Spenser; and the conclusions of both works involve the revelation of the refulgent Dame Nature. Spenser and Kingsley were kindred spirits in their Christiano-Platonic view of nature and their belief that God was working unceasingly in the natural world. Is it any wonder, then, that Kingsley, deliberately or not, employed Spenserian material in a work so intimately connected with themes which Spenser had also addressed?

How, then, should one define *The Water-Babies*? Is it Darwinian? Christian? Platonist? Undoubtedly it is all three. But which lies at its heart; and which has been incorporated and adapted to the major theme? This is an important question, because it is one which one must also ask about *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Scholars of Darwin-inspired literature include *The Water-Babies* among their texts. But they also comment on Kingsley's distortion of Darwin's theory. Leo Henkin writes:

> The purpose of the tale seems to have been to adapt Darwin's theory of the natural selection of species to the understanding of children, by giving it a moral and religious as well as a scientific application (199).

Henkin is therefore saying that the Darwinism is the cornerstone of the story, and has been overlaid with religious language and symbolism. Gillian Beer, however, argues that Kingsley adapted Darwinism to his original cosmic view:

> Kingsley, in his images of extinction, of degeneration, and or recapitulation and development, mythologises Darwinian theory with remarkable insight. […] In its unguarded and unanalytic response to Darwin's ideas and rhetoric, Kingsley's work represents the first phase of assimilation. He grasped much of what was fresh in Darwin's ideas while at the same time retaining a creationist view of experience.[82]

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[81] Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, 23 January 1589. Quoted in *Edmund Spenser's Poetry*, ed. by Hugh Maclean (New York: Norton, 1968), p.1.

[82] *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p.138.

Peter Morton explains how Kingsley was able to do it:

> He found no, or little, difficulty in absorbing the new image of a God who creates a single primeval form capable of endless proliferation and variation. […] We notice, however, that Kingsley fits evolutionary theory into his theology, not by importing the supernatural into biology as [Alfred Russel] Wallace did, but by making natural selection itself an agent of divine power.[83]

How does this work? In *The Water-Babies* natural selection is a mechanism controlled and ordered by Mother Carey, or Dame Nature, who would appear to be a mythical figure. Where, then, is the divine power? For an answer to this – and to gain an insight into Kingsley's ability to accommodate propositions at variance with his theology – we must turn again to Spenser. In the transfiguration of Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid (243), Kingsley presents the revealed Dame Nature as a being of dazzling brilliant light. In the *Mutabilitie Cantos* Spenser's language associates Nature with the dazzling transfigured Christ; but in his 'Hymne of Heavenly Beautie' Spenser employs the same imagery in his description of God Himself. Spenser tries to picture the beauty of God's presence, and the even greater beauty of God's qualities,

> By which he lends us of himselfe a sight.
>
> Those unto all he daily doth display,
> And shew himselfe in th'image of his grace,
> As in a looking glasse, through which he may
> Be seene, of all his creatures vile and base,
> That are unable else to see his face,
> His glorious face which glistereth else so bright,
> That th'Angels selves can not endure his sight. (112-19)[84]

How, then, asks Spenser, if the angels can not look upon God, can puny creatures

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[83] *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984), p.68.

[84] Cf. Milton's description of God in *Paradise Lost,* III.372-82, which could well owe somewhat to Spenser:

> Thee Father first they [angels] sung Omnipotent,
> Immutable, Immortal, Infinite,
> Eternal King; thee Author of all being,
> Fountain of Light, thy self invisible
> Amidst the glorious brightness where thou sit'st
> Thron'd inaccessible, but when thou shad'st
> The full blaze of thy beams, and through a cloud
> Drawn round about thee like a radiant Shrine,
> Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appeer,
> Yet dazle Heav'n, that brightest Seraphim
> Approach not, but with both wings veil thir eyes.

such as we do so? He gives the answer:

> The meanes therefore which unto us is lent,
> Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
> Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
> And in the same, as in a brasen booke,
> To reade enregistred in every nooke
> His goodnesse, which his beautie doth declare,
> For all thats good, is beautifull and faire.[85]

This could almost have been written by Kingsley: God may be seen; God may be understood; God may be even, to a degree, worshipped, in His great work—the natural world. In Kingsley's lecture quoted above he writes that the neo-Platonism evident in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*,

> above all his Garden of Adonis, and his cantos on Mutability, […] must have […] taught him to behold alike in suns and planets, in flowers and insects, in man and in beings higher than man, one glorious order of love and wisdom, linking them all to Him from whom they all proceed, rays from His cloudless sunlight, mirrors of His eternal glory.[86]

Does God the Creator, then, oversee the minutiae of nature? Yes; but not in person. God has a consort:

> There in his bosom *Sapience* doth sit,
> The soveraine dearling of the *Deity*,
> Clad like a Queene in royall robes, most fit
> For so great powre and peerelesse majesty.[87]

And of course she partakes in the divine effulgence, which also shines out through the transfigured Christ, through Spenser's Nature, and through Kingsley's Mother Carey:

> And all with gemmes and jewels gorgeously
> Adornd, that brighter then the starres appeare,
> And make her native brightnes seeme more cleare.[88]

She, like Chaucer's Nature, is "the vicaire of the almyghty Lord":[89] she wears a

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[85] 'Heavenly Beautie', 127-33.
[86] *Alexandria*, pp.126-27. See above, n32. In a letter to Fanny as early as 1842 Kingsley writes that there are three ways in which she may study God. The third way is: "From His works. […] Do not study matter for its own sake, but as the countenance of God! [… Study the beauties of nature] as allegories and examples from whence moral examples may be drawn" (*CKL*, I, 88).
[87] 'Heavenly Beautie', 183-86.
[88] 'Heavenly Beautie', 187-89.
[89] *Parlement of Foules*, 379.

crown, and carries a sceptre,

> With which she rules the house of God on hy,
> And menageth the ever-moving sky,
> And in the same these lower creatures all,
> Subjected to her powre imperiall.
> Both heaven and earth obey unto her will,
> And all the creatures which they both containe.[90]

One cannot take the argument too far: like Donne's, Spenser's creatures "do in state remaine,/ As their great Maker did at first ordaine" (199); whereas Kingsley's creatures, including mankind, are in a state of continual flux. The point to bear in mind is that natural selection is a mechanism by which Dame Nature manages her affairs here on Earth; and by studying the works of Nature we come to recognize and appreciate the hand of God. However, the type, or Idea, of Nature is the Judaeo-Christian Sapience, or Wisdom, the vicar of the Lord, whose will prevails in both Heaven and Earth.[91] Therefore Darwin's theory of natural selection, which violates both Platonic philosophy and Christian theology, in Kingsley's system fits neatly into God's plan because God ordained it through His servants. Thus in *The Water-Babies* Kingsley has not given equal weight to Platonism, Christianity, and Darwinism, but, in order to tell a moral tale about the human condition, he has subsumed Darwinism within his original and formative Platonic and Christian beliefs.

Kingsley was forty years old when Darwin published *The Origin of Species*. He had an intense and focused religious upbringing; he was by inclination a Platonist; he was also, by inclination, an ardent natural philosopher; he read the Bible, Plato, Spenser, Milton, Swift, Carlyle, Darwin, and Huxley. All of these influences, and more, come together in the great intellectual log-jam that is *The Water-Babies*. Consequently an ape, for Kingsley, is not simply an animal: it is a symbol of lower inner impulses in the soul which we must transcend, as we find in Tennyson; it is a symbol of a degraded condition, both inner and, then, outer, as we find in Carlyle; it is an unfinished primitive related stage of human evolution, as we find in Darwin.

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[90] 'Heavenly Beautie', 193-98.

[91] The Spenserian Kingsley could not have been unaware of the relationship between Sapience and Nature. Josephine Waters Bennett writes that Sapience ("the personification of the divine Wisdom, or Mind of God") and Nature ("a Neo-Platonic goddess who emanates from ultimate divinity") are not "distinct and independent", but manifestations at different levels of one divine power. See 'Spenser's Venus and the Goddess Nature of the *Cantos of Mutabilitie*', *Studies in Philology*, 30 (1933), 160-92 (pp.163-64). Here is yet another example of the mingling of Platonic and Christian thought in Spenser and his successors.

Most importantly, it can exist as the morally, intellectually, and spiritually fallen aspect within the soul of a normal human being, which may be glimpsed on occasion by those with eyes to see:

> And looking round, he suddenly saw, standing close to him, a little ugly, black, ragged figure, with bleared eyes and grinning white teeth. He turned on it angrily. What did such a little black ape want in that sweet young lady's room? And behold, it was himself reflected in a great mirror, the like of which Tom had never seen before.
>
> And Tom, for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty; and burst into tears with shame and anger; and turned to sneak up the chimney again and hide (19).

Surely it is asking too much of human nature to expect that hundreds of years of literature, language, and symbolism should relinquish their grip on the creative imagination with the arrival of Darwin's theory. *The Water-Babies* shows that, rather than retreat, this ancient and ever-evolving culture was able to accommodate Darwinism and, while acknowledging it, adapt it and use it to its own purpose, in much the same way (as I shall argue in the following chapters) that Stevenson – who also read the Bible, Spenser, Milton, Carlyle, Tennyson and Darwin – does in *Jekyll and Hyde*.