

Signifying and Understanding



Semiotics, Communication and Cognition 2

Editor

Paul Copley

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Signifying and Understanding

Reading the Works of Victoria Welby
and the Signific Movement

by

Susan Petrilli

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Peace cannot be kept by force.
It can only be achieved by understanding
(Albert Einstein, *Notes on Pacifism*)

Dedicated to the memory
of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and Thomas A. Sebeok,
to my mentor, Augusto Ponzio,
and to the younger generations around the world

Foreword

Paul Cobley

Although I was vaguely acquainted with semiotics as a result of reading Barthes, Foucault, Althusser and other figures then associated with French ‘structuralism’, I first started to study semiotics in the early 1980s as an undergraduate. At my university, one building in particular was devoted exclusively to ongoing open lectures, and a fellow undergraduate had told me she had just attended the first in a series of lectures by Jacqueline Rose who talked of ‘signifiers’ and ‘signifieds’. It all seemed a bit tricky to me, but I decided to investigate anyway. Within a few months, the English paperback version of Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* had been published and I was suggesting it as set reading to my tutor on the ‘Modern European Mind’ module.

Subsequently (I thought) I read widely on structuralism and poststructuralism, the latter a new development which baffled both me and my lecturers when we heard it discussed in a one-off lecture by Malcolm Bradbury, then visiting the university. Reading some of the key poststructuralists with their oblique prose – and their commentators: some with less oblique prose than their subjects, some equally obfuscatory, and many basking in reflected glory and going along for the heady, ‘radical’ ride – I was left with the feeling that this would be a great club to join if they were willing to have me. As far as studying signs was concerned, this was *it* – linguistics was a science; it mapped precisely onto Marxism; this, in turn, mapped onto psychoanalysis. If I could only grasp just how the mirror phase worked, what were the consequences of the ‘materiality of the signifier’ (and it *was* material: Barthes said so; no need to read all of Saussure’s *Course*), why the axes of metonymy and metaphor were so important, what the big deal about *différance* was (apart from the *oh-so-witty* pun), and how ‘discourse’ was such a massive advance on the term ‘ideology’ – then the world would be mine. I might even get an academic job.

Yet I was left with a nagging feeling. As the 1980s turned to the 1990s and I saw how publishing academic books on ‘postmodernism’ (i.e. poststructuralism with more pictures) had become a lucrative industry, my unease grew. Some of the stuff I had been reading referred to an American called Peirce (sometimes he was called ‘Pierce’, and this [mis]naming was usually accompanied with no references whatsoever to his work). Of course, a few commentators *had* to mention Peirce, because they were trying to use Jakobson’s emphasis on iconicity, indexicality and symbolicity. Peter Wollen, the film theorist, was one of these. Curiously, the writers on film from the journal *Screen* (who were *incredibly* important for reasons so trivial now I can scarcely remember them) never mentioned Peirce. It was beginning to seem to me as though they were deliberately avoiding something. Reading Peirce would entail a load of toil which may not have enhanced one’s profile as swiftly as a quick shot of Deleuze or Baudrillard. Also, those writing favourably about Saussure seemed broadly to subscribe to the idea that the world was ‘constructed in discourse’, particularly such current aspects of the world as ‘identity’. That was good news, indeed: it meant worries about the real world could be consigned to the dustbin, these constructions could be attended to, instead, and we could order some more ivory for the extensions to our towers.

So, in the midst of my unease, I was asked by my PhD supervisor (round about 1987) to find good summaries of ‘semiotics’ as potential reading to accompany a presentation by undergraduates. Taking the task literally (rather than was his figurative intention), I proceeded to find out about just that – not the Parisian theory with which I was vaguely familiar, but semiotics, the study of signs, or, rather, the *action* of signs. As a result, I started to learn about Peirce (spelled and pronounced correctly). I found out that he was one of the most confusing writers ever to walk this planet, but nevertheless overbrimming with ideas that exceeded even his voluminous works. Getting to the most preliminary of grips with Peirce would be a Sisyphean task. But then I found a card in the library index which pointed me to the Fawcett library (now the Women’s Library), located in the basement of the City of London Polytechnic where I was doing my thesis and a fair bit of part-time teaching. It was a card indexing Charles Hardwick’s 1977 collection of the Peirce-Welby correspondence. If he writes in an epistolary tone, I thought, then I’ll be able at least to start to understand what Peirce is on about. And I wasn’t disappointed. Peirce’s letters offered the clarity on sign theory which I could not, untutored, find in the *Collected Papers*. From then on, I knew semiotics was a different proposition, only dimly resembling the *semiological* verbiage I’d been mugging up. After having read, here and there, odd essays of Sebeok in my quest for a summing up in the 1980s, I went back to him with a different purpose. I bought his collection *A Sign is Just a Sign* and his monograph *Semiotics in the United States* when they came out in 1991, and the importance of Peirce running through them was clear. When I reached the Berkeley Congress of the IASS in 1994, Saussure was almost nowhere and it became obvious that semiotics had travelled a great distance since the Parisians and their lackeys had briefly tarried with it.

Yet that was not the only thing that started to strike me after my time in the Fawcett Library with Hardwick’s collection. Reading Welby’s letters, it became clear that she was not just Peirce’s interlocutor, or some British noblewoman who might have helped his financial situation by way of patronage (as I had assumed when I had first seen the volume mentioned in the card index); rather, she was a formidable intellect with a focus on matters which were becoming important to me, particularly the pros and cons of ‘clarity’ in the understanding of how signs work. I then found that the library also had books by ‘Mrs. Henry Cust’ (Welby’s daughter) and, on reading *Echoes of Larger Life* and *Wanderers*, I was transported to a nineteenth century world of leisure, unfettered intellectual pursuits, and double-barrelled (sometimes triple-barrelled) names. I entertained the idea that this could be the subject of one of the (thus far) great unwritten intellectual biographies. I fancied I could spend a decade or so writing it myself. So I started at the beginning and, by way of inter-library loan, ordered a copy of Welby’s first book, *Links and Clues*, published under the pen name of ‘Vita’.

Links and Clues duly arrived; but it was impenetrable. I needed some secondary literature – anything – to give me a leg up. Firstly, I discovered Schmitz’ 1985 reprint of *Significs and Language*, full of potentially great material and scholarship. But Schmitz’s apparently comprehensive editorial material was not as engagingly written as it might have been. I then ordered, through inter-library loan again, Schmitz’ collection of *Essays on Significs*, then recently published. One title jumped out at me: it signalled a ‘confrontation’ of Welby and Bakhtin in an essay by Susan Petrilli, an essay which economically discussed the relation of both as a means to explore the plurivocality of ‘significs’ and ‘semiotics’. I was particularly interested because I was preparing a lecture

on Voloshinov. However, I ended up learning more about both Bakhtin and Peirce, as well as Welby, than I had hitherto. All of this was offered in engaging, urgent prose, demonstrating at the same time that here was a commanding authority, not only on the minutiae of Welby's work, but on where the latter fitted in terms of contemporary sign study.

I looked up Petrilli's other publications, and found she had written quite a few articles in Italian, a book (which I later learned was a collection of her essays), and had published a small Italian collection of Welby's work, *Significato, metafora, interpretazione* (which, for some reason, I did not twig as being translated into Italian by Petrilli, too). A number of her articles were written with Augusto Ponzio, a scholar with a plethora of publications on his CV and also a contributor to the Schmitz collection on signification. I realized my whim to publish a biography of Lady Welby now had to be put on hold – indefinitely, it turned out. Furthermore, in order just to get up to speed on Welby from a theoretical angle, as well as to make contact with the fount of knowledge by the name of Susan Petrilli, I would be advised to learn Italian. I signed up for a beginner's class with Westminster Adult Education.

Around that time, not long after the Berkeley Congress, I also made the acquaintance of Tom Sebeok who, with his legendary facility for bringing people together, immediately put me in contact with Petrilli and Ponzio (in academic terms, “a class act”, he called them). I was taken aback to learn that Petrilli was actually an Australian from Adelaide and as fluent in English as me, if not more so. Still, I kept going to my Italian class for the meantime, and can now just about dispute a bill in a restaurant should the need ever arise when I visit Italy. Yet, what dawned on me was that Petrilli's status as a native speaker of English went some way to explaining why she had such a grasp of the nuances of Welby's writing, one fact that also gave her an advantage over other, non-native scholars of Welby's signification. It did not, of course, explain away her phenomenal research in the archives at York University, Ontario, and elsewhere. Indeed, I even took a brief glance at the Welby Collection in Senate House Library in the hope that Petrilli would one day come to London to work. Nevertheless, the fledgling internet and email allowed us to correspond until I finally met with her, and also with Ponzio, in Dresden in 1999, a short time after the publication of her *Su Welby*.

Since then, I have visited Bari on a number of occasions for conferences and talks, partaking of the lively scholarly atmosphere there – although disavowing myself of my early ambition to write a Welby biography. And it is this disavowal that has precipitated the no doubt apparently indecorous and (seemingly) indulgent autobiographical nature of this Foreword. My point is that my Welby ambition was abandoned mercifully early as I encountered the staggering scholarly capacity of Susan Petrilli. That was evident from the start, as it is in this present work. The degree of scholarship coupled with theoretical expertise and a vision for the future exemplified in the book you are reading is seldom to be met with in academic life. Petrilli's work ‘divorced’ or apart from the recovery of Welby is impressive enough. It comprises single author publications such as *Significs, semiotica, significazione* (1988), *Materia segnica e interpretazione. Figure e prospettive* (1995), *Che cosa significa significare? Itinerari nello studio dei segni* (1996), *Su Victoria Welby. Significs e filosofia del linguaggio* (1998), *Teoria dei segni e del linguaggio* (1998), *Percorsi della semiotica* (2005), *Sign Crossroads in Global Perspective* (2008), as well as the current monumental volume for which this is the Foreword. On top of this is her co-authored work which comprises numerous journal

special issues, articles and books. Notable in particular for the holistic sense they give of the work carried out in Bari with Augusto Ponzio are *Signs of Research on Signs*, the 1998 special issue of *Semiotische Berichte*, and the huge book of 2005, *Semiotics Unbounded* (which places Welby in a substantial section of her own among other giants of semiotics). Petrilli's work as a conference organizer is legendary, but is almost eclipsed by another major contribution to the international scholarly community: her ability to get the work of other scholars into print, in journals and proceedings volumes, in almost superhuman time.

Petrilli's work is *au courant*: in consonance with the foundational work of Sebeok, she promotes a global (or 'holistic') semiotic perspective on phenomena, eschewing glottocentrism and monologism. Her observations on globalization eschew the common understanding that it is a socio-economic phenomenon and assert, instead, that it is also a semiotic phenomenon. This issue is approached through a synthesis of Peircean sign theory, Bakhtinian dialogue, biosemiotics and the recovered insights of Welby. Along with her collaborative formulation of the idea of the 'semiotic animal' (with Deely and Ponzio), she has been inspired by Welby's signifiés to present an outline of 'semioethics' – an imperative that is not merely discursively constructed but is the result of the 'concrete' demands of the other (Levinas, as well as Bakhtin, is a key figure, here, as is Ponzio, whose contribution to Schmitz' volume projected an 'ethosemiotics'). Furthermore, for her, and following Welby's formulation of the 'mother-sense', otherness is not just a matter of explicit requests from our co-habitants on earth. Rather, it is thoroughly grounded in the sign, both in communication and non communication.

Petrilli's work *with* Welby – in the sense of being *on* Welby and *informed by* Welby – is among the leading endeavours in the disciplinary field of semiotics. It is a major work of archaeology, recovering an almost forgotten figure from library stacks that have become dusty and archival papers that are beginning to fade drastically. It is also a revision: semiotics has not just two founding *fathers* but also a founding *mother*. Furthermore, that founding mother's perspective not only reorientates much of the theoretical impetus of semiotics but also re-draws the history of linguistics in the twentieth century, the shadow that has sometimes obscured the semiotic enterprise. The re-discovery of Welby is on a par with the recovery of John Poinsett and, before this, even Peirce. Yet Petrilli's work, especially as represented in this current book, not only presents Welby on her own, as it were, but also gives a rounded sense of the context and milieu in which Welby operated.

But, more than all of this, perhaps, Petrilli makes Welby mean much to both the present and the future. In my own relatively feeble (yet, for me, meaningful) semiotic odyssey, I described some intellectual doubts that led me to the particular reading strategy which alighted, ultimately, on Petrilli and Welby. Petrilli's odyssey, on the other hand, has taken her from Australia to Italy, from a PhD thesis idea to the depths of the archives, and now to a future for a politically inflected, ethically permeated, semiotics. More than a reading project, Petrilli's has been a journey of writing: where I longed to visit, she had already been, charted and cultivated the landscape. Far from the smugness of poststructuralism and the shortcuts of complacent critique, Petrilli's work embodies an eclectic but theoretically and research informed perspective. With the current volume, she delves into the past – Welby – with a view to the future. So, if you want to learn just how important signifiés is, start with this book. If you want to learn how important Welby's writings *will be*, start with this book.

Acknowledgments

My interest in Victoria Welby has its origins in the fact that Ferruccio Rossi-Landi commissioned me to write an essay, given that he could not do it himself, for a book edited by H. Walter Schmitz. This led to my monograph in Italian of 1998. But as I became more and more aware of Welby, my involvement increased. In an essay co-authored with Thomas A. Sebeok, Welby figures as one of the most important 'women in semiotics.' To me this was an important act of recognition in the face of an author who, as much as she might be known in the sphere of studies on signs and language, is hardly mentioned despite her crossing paths with such important authors as Charles S. Peirce, Bertrand Russell, Charles K. Ogden and Ivor A. Richards, etc. Given the consistent corpus of materials in the Welby Collection, Tom Sebeok proposed that I prepare a Special Issue of the journal *Semiotica*, the official organ of the International Society for Semiotic Studies, entirely dedicated to Victoria Welby. When Sebeok died, this project was supported by Marcel Danesi, who has continued Sebeok's work as Editor-in-Chief of *Semiotica*. But my volume continued growing with the addition of published and unpublished writings by Welby as well as with texts by scholars who develop the general framework of her research, the 'significians' from the name Welby herself chose for her own standpoint and orientation, 'significs.' At this point, just as the volume was becoming rather difficult to publish because of its size, Paul Cobley came onto the scene. He had already been working back stage, and not a few times from the prompter's box warmly encouraging me to finish my work towards publication, and even taking upon himself the task of reading my 'monster manuscript' (the expression is Sebeok's). And here I take the opportunity to thank Vincent Colapietro as well who also read an initial draft of the manuscript. He, along with a number of scholars including Jeff Bernard, Massimo A. Bonfantini, John Deely, Nathan Houser, Frank Nuessel, Eero Tarasti have followed the development of this project with interest and have contributed to an atmosphere of anticipation. I express my gratitude in particular to Paul Cobley for his constant interest in my work, his suggestions for improvement, and for promoting this volume with Mouton de Gruyter and accepting it for publication in his book series 'Semiotics, Communication and Cognition.'

Of course none of the people so far mentioned, and here I wish to name Augusto Ponzio (whom I must inevitably thank as my mentor), is responsible for any limits eventually traced in this work.

The University of Bari through the Department of Pratiche Linguistiche e Analisi di Testi has contributed to financing my research at the York University Archives, Toronto Canada, at the Lady Welby Library, University of London Library, and The British Library in London, United Kingdom. This financing made it possible for me to consult the archives, and gather the papers assembled in this volume. My thanks to the Department secretary, Alba D'Albero, for taking care of all the administrative issues.

Over the years I have enjoyed the assistance of Suzanne Dubeau, Kent M. Haworth, Phyllis Platnick, Dennis Skinner, Carolyn Cannon, Laurel Parson, and Michael Moir at the York University Archives in Toronto; also Pam Baker at the University of London Library. I wish to thank them all.

I am specially grateful to H. Walter Schmitz. We have been in contact over Victoria Welby and her signifiacs since the mid 1980s, even though irregularly and without ever meeting personally. Exchanges with Schmitz began at the time of writing my first essay on Welby, commissioned for his volume *Essays on Signifiacs*, published in 1990. I have never left Welby since, and have stayed in touch with Schmitz also in relation to my studies for my doctoral dissertation *Segno e valore. La signifiacs di Welby e la semiotica novecentesca*, 1993–1994, and again for my monograph in Italian, *Su Victoria Welby. Signifiacs e filosofia del linguaggio*, published in 1998. My interview with Schmitz on Welby and her signifiacs was published in 1988, in the volume *The Semiotic Web 1987*, again by initiative of Thomas A. Sebeok.

Other scholars who have kindly responded to my inquiries concerning signifiacs-related research projects, work in progress and published literature on Welby and signifiacs include: Paul Chipcase, Terrence W. Gordon, Adriaan D. De Groot, Erik Heijerman, Brigitte Nerlich, Rita Nolan, Timothy J. Reiss, Christian Thiel, Henk Visser, and more recently Jan Noordegraaf, and Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen. The essays sent to me by these authors in response to my search for information concerning any publications on signifiacs and the signifiac movement have all been listed in the relative bibliography at the end of this volume. These people too I warmly thank for their generosity and participation.

The assistance of two librarians in my department has proven indispensable for accessing necessary materials and bibliographical information. My thanks go to Valeria Maranò, succeeded by Simona Ricci. In particular Simona has patiently assisted me in surfing the net on numerous information searches. I am grateful for such competent support.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Margaret Hosking from Barr Smith Library, Adelaide University in South Australia, for her unfailing assistance during my many visits there in search of materials and bibliographical information.

I have enjoyed help in typing or scanning much of the materials assembled in this volume, in particular from my niece Nicole Petrilli and from student assistant Claudia Romanazzi. Thanks also to my research assistant Rosa Stella Cassotti, as well as to Arianna De Luca, Antonella Barile, Tiziana Giudice, Manuela Messina, Tiziana Navarra, Ida Rodriguez, Antonella Russo, and Stefano Carlucci, all of whom contributed to translating manuscripts from the Welby Archives into digital format. Too, Rosa Stella's assistance has been precious in web searches for information otherwise unretrievable, and in the final editing of this volume for publication with Mouton de Gruyter.

Last but not least, many thanks to Anke Beck from Mouton for her interest in publishing this volume and Marcia Schwartz for her editorial care.

Solitary as research and writing may be, I have always had the pleasure and the privilege of working in generous, even joyful dialogue with others – and for this I am truly grateful.

Susan Petrilli
The University of Bari, Italy
June 2009

About this volume

This volume presents a selection of Victoria Lady Welby's published and unpublished writings from the Welby Collection, York University Archives and Special Collections, Scott Library (North York, Toronto, Ontario, Canada), and from the Lady Welby Library, University of London Library (London, United Kingdom). The whole course of Welby's production is delineated in its various phases from its inception through to developments beyond Welby herself with the Signific Movement in the Netherlands, and still other ramifications, contemporary and subsequent to her. In addition to her unpublished manuscripts, the volume also presents a selection from her unpublished correspondence from the York University Archives; a choice of 'essaylets' originally printed during her lifetime for private circulation; a series of excerpts from her two early monographs long out of print, *Links and Clues* (1881) and *Grains of Sense* (1897); a selection of essays published between the 1880s and the first decade of the 20th century. The important essays 'Metaphor and Meaning' (1893) and 'Sense, Meaning, Interpretation' (1896) have also been included. And her main monographs, *What is Meaning?* (1903, 2nd ed. 1983) and *Significs and Language* (1911, 2nd ed. 1985) have been amply cited throughout my own chapters examining significs.

Welby's correspondence with Charles S. Peirce is generally known to the specialist thanks to the editions produced first by Irwin C. Lieb, *Charles S. Peirce's Letters to Lady Welby*, 1953, and subsequently by Charles S. Hardwick, *Semiotic and Significs. The Correspondence Between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, 1977. Her correspondence with such figures as Michel Bréal, André Lalande, Bertrand Russell, Charles K. Ogden, Ferdinand S. C. Schiller, Ferdinand Tönnies, Frederik van Eeden, to name just a few among the many significant intellectuals of the time who entered her network of relations, is also worthy of attention, but still today remains mostly unpublished. A selection from the massive corpus of unpublished correspondence in the Welby Collection has been included in the present volume, with the hope, apart from all else, of stimulating work towards the publication of complete annotated editions. Welby's exchanges with Mary Everst Boole, Julia Wedgewood, and many others are also presented from the published collections edited by her daughter, Mrs. Henry (Nina) Cust, *Echoes of Larger Life*, 1929, and *Other Dimensions*, 1931, now long out of print.

Apart from some exceptions which are not lacking (as indicated in the last two chapters in this volume), the general silence around Welby, her connections and influence, the development of significs after her, represents a real gap in the history of ideas. This volume is intended as an appeal to the scientific community and to enthusiastic researchers, for a commitment to restore and reconstruct, on both the historical and theoretical levels, a period in cultural history which deserves more attention, concerning not only Victoria Welby and her ideas, significant in their own right, but more extensively all those (famous and less famous) personalities that had anything to do with her significs (directly or indirectly), and were somehow influenced by her ideas (declaredly or not).

A small selection of essays by first generation significians contributing to the Signific Movement in the Netherlands completes the present volume. The plan is to provide historical documentation testifying to the progress of significs after Welby and even independently from her. These papers are like signposts indicating itineraries in signifi-
cational

research followed during the first half of the twentieth century and beyond, in developments across the second half of the twentieth century, influenced by signification or somehow connected to signification, or prefigured by signification, as in the case of anglo-american speech act theory or psycholinguistics. The selection is necessarily limited and was difficult as is often the case when having to make choices, but also considering the fact that the main corpus of these texts is in Dutch. In any case, I believe the texts gathered suffice to evidence the desirability of continuing research and publication projects in this direction. The ambition of this volume is to convey a sense of the theoretical topicality of signification and its developments, in particular its thematization of the question of values and the connection with signs, meaning, and understanding, therefore with human verbal and nonverbal behaviour, with language and communication.

Papers in the Welby Collection (York University Archives) are organized into files and boxes (see description in Chapter 1, and in Appendices 2 and 3), and are mostly dated, but not always. Sometimes these papers are not arranged in any particular order. Where possible, the main criterion used for presentation in the present volume is chronology. Often more than one copy of the same manuscript is available in the same file, or in different files even, with more or less significant variants. This is the case, for example, of the manuscript entitled 'A Plea for Signification' (now appended to Chapter 3), included both in the file entitled 'Mother-sense' (Box 28, File 24), and in 'Signification' (Box 30, file 43).

In many cases the papers in the Welby Collection (York University Archives) seem ready for publication, and though indications on how to assemble them are mostly lacking, Welby had planned to publish several books using these materials, as can be inferred from the correspondence, schemes for some of which are also presented in this volume. The Welby Collection offers an abundant corpus of unpublished manuscripts including correspondence and theoretical papers, representing work in progress, sometimes close to the publication phase. The present volume offers a representation of Welby's writings that is necessarily partial, though significant, of the materials effectively available at the archives. A serious problem not to be underestimated is the physical state of the manuscripts – in many cases the writing is slowly fading away as the paper becomes ever more fragile on its return to the dust. Consequently, beyond the fact of making a part of the Welby manuscripts available as best as I could, with the present volume I hope to communicate at least an idea of the worth and importance of the woman, her ideas, of the cultural ferment generated by her research and writing as in the case of the Significant Movement in the Netherlands, and therefore to encourage further signification-related inquiry not only into Welby's signification, but also beyond.

The following conventions have been used: CP = *Collected Papers* by Charles Sanders Peirce; WCYA = Welby Collection, York University Archives. In the Chapters written by myself, footnotes that are not my own are placed in square brackets. Instead, in the sections entitled 'The Texts' featuring writings by Victoria Welby and the significationists, the footnotes in square brackets are my own.

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Introduction

... it was with Life – Life more abundant here, Life unspeakable beyond the point where knowledge for the present ends – that Lady Welby was ultimately and always concerned, and only with Language as it was the means and attribute, the expression and the power of Life. (W. Macdonald 1912, in Cust 1931: 355)

This volume is dedicated to the life-long research of the English scholar Victoria Lady Welby (1837–1912) as it found expression in her theory of meaning or Significs. My Italian monograph, *Su Victoria Welby. Significs e filosofia del linguaggio*, 1998, is a stepping-stone towards this volume and in turn a development of my doctoral dissertation, *Segno e valore. La significs di Welby e la semiotica novecentesca*, written under the direction of my original mentor in semiotics, Augusto Ponzio, and delivered at the University of Bari, Italy, in 1993. A general overview of Welby's plurifaceted research is attempted through a selection from her published and unpublished writings, as well as from her correspondence with numerous personalities of the time who somehow entered what I propose to call the 'Welby Network.' 'Significs' is the term coined by Victoria Welby in the 1890s for her original contribution to studies on signs, meaning, and understanding. It provided her with a methodology, theoretical framework, and unifying perspective on the broad range of issues and fields of research at the centre of her attention.

In the past, Welby's work in its own right was largely ignored, or misunderstood. However, *What is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance*, her main monograph, first published in 1903, was republished in 1983 under the editorship of German scholar Achim Eschbach. This was followed in 1985 by the re-edition of Welby's 1911 book, *Significs and Language. The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources*, in a volume collecting other writings by Welby, under the editorship of another German scholar and significs expert, H. Walter Schmitz. Welby was never completely forgotten, even if only as a consequence of her association with Charles S. Peirce and publication of their correspondence in the volume, *Semiotic and Significs. The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, 1977, edited by Charles S. Hardwick. This important editorial enterprise was preceded in 1953 by an earlier edition, albeit a partial one for it included Peirce's letters, but not Welby's (see Lieb 1953). Other important volumes relating to Welby include: a biography on herself and her mother, *Wanderers: Episodes From the Travels of Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley and Her Daughter Victoria, 1849–1955*, 1928, written by her daughter Elizabeth (known as Mrs. Henry or Nina Cust); and two volumes of correspondence, *Echoes of Larger Life. A Selection from the Early Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, 1929; and *Other Dimensions. A Selection from the Later Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, 1931, again both edited by Welby's daughter. To my knowledge, no major works repropounding Welby's writings have appeared since 1985, though important editions of her correspondence with single authors have been published in articles by various significs scholars.

These are reported in Chapter 8 of this volume as well as in the Section entitled, 'Writings on Welby, the Signific Movement and Current Developments,' appended at the end. Apart from single essays by Welby, two volumes collecting her writings in Italian translation have also appeared, and a third is forthcoming, respectively: *Significato, metafora, interpretazione*, 1985, *Senso, significato, significatività*, 2007, and *Come interpretare, comprendere, comunicare*, 2009.

After considering 'sensifics' along with other possible alternatives such as 'semantics,' 'semasiology,' 'sematology,' 'semiology,' 'sem(e)iotics,' etc., Welby introduced the neologism 'significs' for her own special approach to the study of sign, language and meaning. In *What is Meaning?*, Welby describes significs as 'philosophy of interpretation,' 'philosophy of translation,' and 'philosophy of significance.' Significs studies the conditions that make meaning possible, its principles and foundations, keeping account also of the biological basis of signifying processes. The relation between sign theory and value theory is a central concern, between signs and values, signs and sense, signs, values and subject, signs, values and behaviour. In this context, value is understood in a broad sense as the object of study of the general theory of value, axiology, and not specifically as economic, linguistic or cognitive value, etc., which it includes. In Welby's thought system a general theory of sign and meaning cannot prescind from the problem of value and vice versa, which means eschewing a purely descriptive attitude towards the study of signifying processes in the human world, and evidencing the need for a critical approach to signs, values and behaviour, verbal and nonverbal. Therefore, significs transcends pure descriptivism and strictly logico-epistemological boundaries to study signifying processes from a global perspective where signs, values and behaviour converge. Welby's global and critical approach makes her contribution to our understanding of signs and meaning particularly significant. By contrast with dominant trends across the twentieth century, Welby aimed to expand traditional epistemological-cognitive boundaries into a 'significant' framework, where sign theory and value theory, signs and values are interconnected. With co-author Augusto Ponzio, I have proposed a development on this orientation in terms of 'semioethics' (see Petrilli and Ponzio 2003b and 2005).

Significs is associated with such sign sciences as general semiotics, psycholinguistics, philosophy of language, etc. where by 'language' is not only understood verbal language, but most significantly the concept of 'modelling device' specific to human beings. Here the connection with Welby's original concept of 'mother-sense' is particularly interesting, and represents another important contribution to our understanding of human signifying, expressive and interpretive behaviour. As used in this volume, the term 'language' has different meanings: it refers to 'verbal sign systems' as distinct from 'nonverbal sign systems'; it thus refers to so-called 'historical-natural languages' and the different 'special languages' forming a given language; and, again, it refers to the great plurality of different 'nonverbal sign systems' that are also considered as languages, precisely, 'nonverbal languages' (as distinct from nonverbal sign systems that are not languages) which proliferate in the world of human semiosis (anthroposemiosis). From an evolutionary perspective, the modelling device identified as 'language' arises with the process of hominization, which it makes possible, and is specific to the human species. On the basis of this species-specific modelling device, verbal and nonverbal languages subsequently arise for communication. In other words, 'language,' under-

stood as a modelling device, like Welby's 'mother-sense,' is the condition of possibility for the acquisition of experience, its expression and communication in the properly human world through the development of verbal and nonverbal languages (see Petrilli and Ponzio 2005: 343–376).

In a letter to Welby of 1903, the Italian philosopher of language and mathematician Giovanni Vailati commented Welby's choice of the term 'significs' as follows:

I would subordinately object to the word 'Significs': it could, as it seems to me, with some advantage, be replaced by 'Semiotics', which has already been appropriated to the very same meaning by no less an authority than that of Locke (*Essay* IV, 21, *in fine*). (Vailati to Welby, 18 March 1903, WCYA,¹ Box 18; now in Vailati 1971: 143)

Welby replied defending her standpoint:

Allow me to thank you for the kind words wherewith you have honoured my book [*What is Meaning?*], and to explain that the word 'Significs' was chosen after consultation with English scholars, because (1) it had not been used before and had no *technical associations*, like those of semiotic, semasiology, semantic, etc.; and (2) because in English idiom it appeals not merely to the student and the scholar but also to what we call 'the Man in the street.'

All men alike with us ask naturally 'What does it Signify?'' and put aside, ignore what does not *signify*. They unconsciously give the Sign its true place and value. They say 'never mind that' throw it away, it does not signify (it is no *sign* and has therefore no *sense*). I think it is important to take a case where the popular instinct is unconsciously philosophical and utilise this in favour of an advance in thought which must concern us all, though in different ways. I much hope that this explanation may remove your objection...May I add one more word. Neither Locke nor any other thinker, it appears has ever yet analysed on 'signific' lines *the conception of 'Meaning' itself*. (Welby to Vailati, 28 March 1903, WCYA, Box 18)

The question 'What is Meaning?' inspires all Welby's research and as we have seen gives the title to her main monograph of 1903. She developed her theory of sign and meaning transversally and in an inter-disciplinary frame as she studied life in its different expressions as well as the great array of sciences that reflect upon them – theology, philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, logic, literature, sociology, psychology, medicine, neurology, optics, biology, mathematics, physics, astronomy, astrology, cosmology, in other words in her studies she easily ranged indiscriminately across the human sciences, the hard sciences, the life sciences, the sign sciences, etc. Nothing seemed to escape Welby's attention as she contemplated the multiple and diversified expressions of signifying and interpretive processes, without ever making claims to specialized expertise in any single field taken separately. She considered the different problematics and issues at the center of her studies as 'witnesses' to the signifying processes of life in their complex globality, and aimed to interpret them in light of her quest for sense, meaning and significance. Without losing sight of specificities and differences, she described the multiplicity of life and its expressions as united in a common denominator, meaning. In Welby's thought system, meaning is engendered in the relation among signs in open-ended signifying and interpretive-translative processes. Her quest for meaning – 'the very condition on which all forms of study and knowledge depend

1. WCYA = Welby Collection, York University Archives and Special Collections, Scott Library, Downsview, Toronto, Canada.

[...], that very meaning which to intelligence is the quality of fact' (Welby 1983 [1903]: 1) – led her to scrutinize the expressive universe from as many angles as possible and from the unifying perspective of signification: the relation between signs, sense and value.

A fundamental assumption guiding Welby's research is that perception, experience and knowledge are mediated by signs. Indeed, the sign-mediated relation between the knowing subject and the object of analysis, a relation that is not direct but rather is mediated by signs in interpretive processes, is constantly thematized by Welby throughout her published and unpublished writings. In Welby's view, all that which concerns the relation between one human being and another, between the human being and the universe, may be re-conducted to the problem of interpretive mediation and, in the last analysis, is a question of translation in the movement towards ever higher degrees in significance.

Welby's gaze ranges from sign processes pervading the universe at large to those specific to human semiosis, including what in present-day research are identified as 'metasemiotic' or 'semiotic' processes. In addition to naming the general science of signs, recent trends in semiotic studies now also use the term 'semiotic' to indicate the specificity of *human* semiosis. Taking this specification into account, the human being is not only a 'semiotic animal' like all other animals, but also a 'semiotic animal' (Deely, Petrilli and Ponzio 2005). At the primary level of semiosis, interpretation and the direct response to signs coincide. Semiosis understood as 'semiotics' or 'metasemiosis' refers to the human capacity for reflection on signs, for the suspension of response and deliberation, where sign activity is no longer limited to direct response, but becomes the object itself of interpretation. A third level also emerges in Welby's discourse, that is, the methodological: signification is described as a method, the significant method, an interpretive-translative method. As she stated in her *Encyclopaedia* article of 1911, 'Signification':

It is clear that stress needs to be laid upon the application of the principles and method involved, not merely, though notably, to language, but to all other types of human function. There is need to insist on the rectification of mental attitude and increase of interpretative power which must follow on the adoption of the significant method, throughout all stages and forms of mental training and in the demands and contingencies of life. (Welby in Hardwick 1977: 167–168, now this volume, Section 3.15)

Developing her position as outlined in 1902 with the *Dictionary* entry 'Signification' (Welby/Baldwin/Stout 1902: 529), or in 1903 with her monograph *What is Meaning?*, Welby invested signification with a methodic function for 'mental training,' that is, for the development of our 'mental attitude' and 'interpretative power.' In an unpublished letter of 1903 to André Lalande who had proposed the expression '*théorie des significations*' as the French translation of 'signification,' Welby responded underlining that the term 'signification' indicated 'the study of the Significant Method and not only a "theory of signification (or meaning)"' (Welby to Lalande, 23 August 1903, WCYA, Box 9).

Welby elaborated her signification in the context of an international network of relations thanks to her correspondence with scholars, scientists and friends from different countries (beyond the United Kingdom, the United States of America and diverse countries in continental Europe). Her correspondents counted such important personalities as Charles S. Peirce, Giovanni Vailati, Michel Bréal, André Lalande, Ferdinand

S. C. Schiller, Max Müller, Frederik van Eeden, Ferdinand Tönnies, Charles K. Ogden, Bertrand Russell, Herbert G. Wells, Henry and William James, Mary Everest Boole, and many others with whom she confronted her viewpoints. Dialogical exchange was structural to the very formulation of her ideas, as evidenced in particular by her correspondence. Beyond dialogue in formal terms, dialogism and polyphony as understood by Mikhail Bakhtin characterize Welby's method of inquiry in a substantial sense: she was always ready to listen and respond to the word of the other, to critically rethink and reformulate her ideas in the light of her exchanges, and to explore the open plurality of different perspectives as a means of verification.

Her dialogical approach was also enhanced by recourse to different discourse genres: in addition to her correspondence, which no doubt represents one of the most significant places for the development of her ideas, apart from her scientific essays and monographs she also wrote essaylets, newspaper articles, aphorisms, short stories, dialogues, and poetry – what, recalling Charles Morris and his own literary production, I propose to name 'wisdom poetry' (see Morris 1966, 1976). Victoria Welby's poetry is collected in a file at the York University Archives entitled 'Poems of Victoria Welby: *Thoughts in Rhythm*' (Box 37, file 10, WCYA). The corpus of materials in this file is consistent and merits publication as an independent volume, like many other files containing her theoretical papers. The present volume aims to give voice and visibility at least to a part of Welby's research and writings.

A whole period in the history of ideas as represented by Welby's signifiics and its various ramifications, including the Signific Movement in the Netherlands, though neglected, has never been completely forgotten. As signalled in Chapters 7 and 8 and in the Section entitled 'Writings on Welby, the Signific Movement and current developments,' at the end of this volume, scholarship devoted to signifiics is not lacking and hopefully will continue to flourish. Given the theoretical importance of the signifiical approach to studies on signs, language and communication, its topicality for research today, the prospects it offers for progress in knowledge and understanding, my hope is that more scholars dedicate their attention to fully recovering and reconstructing this particular phase in cultural history.

The main goal of the present volume is to outline the overall architectonics of Victoria Welby's thought system through a selection of her writings. These are not always easily accessible, either because they remained unpublished and are now dissolving in the archives, or were published privately for limited circulation and, in any case, like her monographs, have long been out of print. Welby's signifiics found an important following in the Signific Movement of the Netherlands. This movement officially recognized its debt to her in its initial stages, and subsequently took other courses. Documents testifying to this particular trend in studies on sign, language, and meaning are also included in this volume.

The consistent corpus of Welby's correspondence with numerous personalities of the time is mostly unpublished. Here again, the selection presented in this volume aims to signal the interest of these materials from both a theoretical and historical point of view. It is to be hoped that research projects continue, resulting in the integral publication of Welby's epistolary exchanges, as in the case of the volume collecting the correspondence between Welby and Charles S. Peirce, *Semiotic and Signifiics. The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, 1977. As testified by their exchanges,

Peirce and Welby worked together closely during the last decade of their lives and reciprocally influenced each other's research, though they never met personally.

The quantity of unpublished papers by Welby, together with her yet unpublished correspondence resting in the archives, is substantial and calls for attention. It is important to continue working on the Welby Collection at the York University Archives, simply considering the physical state of these papers. Manuscripts are deteriorating with time – the writing is fading away and the paper itself is disappearing. No doubt the materiality of ideas is more resistant than the physical material supporting them, but it cannot be denied that the physical means, whether oral or written, is the necessary condition for handing down ideas and allowing them to flourish. It is important to communicate Welby's signifiacs and its developments to an eventual readership, rather than keeping materials locked away in the archives or trapped in computers. I hope the present volume may at least contribute to firing the necessary interest in young scholars ready to take on the task.

Following the methodological orientation of Welby's signifiacs, in particular her theory of translation, her ideas are also examined and developed in dialogue with others in relations of 'responsive understanding,' as Bakhtin would say. Welby theorized the need for dialogue and confrontation, as well as translation across the different spheres of human experience as a means of verifying the validity of ideas and developing them further in the common quest for truth, knowledge and understanding. Applied *to* Welby and her signifiacs, and not just *by* Welby, this interpretive-translative approach has evidenced the topicality of her thinking, its potential and relevance for ongoing research today in a great variety of different fields, from the human sciences to the hard sciences in interdisciplinary, indeed transdisciplinary and transcultural perspective.

Epitaph on the Archival Monument

Here lies the dame who thought she saw a truth
 She buried was without or rock or ruth;
 But life is that which bursts the stoniest shroud
 And (whisper this) she yet may cry aloud.
 (V. Welby, 11 March 1907, Box 28, File 29, titled 'Personalia: "Projects of Draft Schemes of Books"')

Chapter 1

Welby's intellectual development and writings

For her, philosophy is not the monologue of a lonely thinker, but essentially a dramatic process, in which our present mind holds intercourse with a larger mind beyond itself, whose 'cosmic' vision it seeks to penetrate, the question asked becoming equally significant with the answer given when both are placed in that wider perspective. (Jacks in Cust 1931: 11)

1.1. Her life and early studies. An outline

I never had any 'schoolroom' lessons; mine were world-room lessons. I never personally learnt to hate the words 'school' and 'lessons': never learnt instinctively to shrink from anything they suggested: never thought that learnly days, discovery days, work days were not holy days – except through those who had thus 'learnt.' (28 July 1910, Box 28, File 29: 'Personalia: "Projects of Draft Schemes of Books"')

Lady Victoria Alexandrina Maria Louisa Stuart-Wortley (1837–1912), whose married surname was Welby (and subsequently Welby-Gregory), was born into the highest circles of the English nobility on 27 April 1837, England. She was the last of three children of the Honourable Charles James Stuart-Wortley (1802–1844), and his wife, Lady Emmeline Charlotte Elizabeth, *née* Manners (1806–1855), writer, poet and traveler. James Archibald Stuart-Wortley (1776–1845), fifth Duke of Rutland, was her grandfather.

Victoria Welby was named after Queen Alexandrina Victoria who acted as her godmother with the Duchess of Kent, the Queen mother. After her mother's tragic death on the road to Beirut, during their many travels, she lived with a succession of relatives before being taken in by her godmother, the Duchess of Kent. In 1861 she was appointed Maid of Honour to Queen Victoria and spent almost two years at the royal court before her marriage at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, London, on 4 July 1863, to Sir William Earle Welby (1829–1898), military official, MP, and high sheriff, who with his father's death in 1875 became fourth baronet and assumed the additional surname Gregory. It followed that Victoria Welby's surname became Welby-Gregory. Her children were Victor Albert William (1864–1876), Charles Glynne Earle (1865–1938), assistant undersecretary of state at the war office and MP, and Emmeline Mary Elizabeth (1867–1955), also known as Nina and Mrs. Henry Cust (her married name), painter, sculptor and writer. Nina dedicated an official biography to her mother, Victoria Welby, and grand-mother, Lady Emmeline, entitled, *Wanderers: Episodes From the Travels of Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley and Her Daughter Victoria, 1849–1955*, published in 1928; and edited her mother's correspondence in two volumes, respectively *Echoes of Larger Life. A Selec-*

tion from the *Early Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, published in 1929; and *Other Dimensions. A Selection from the Later Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, 1931.

The following is a 'letter of congratulations' to Victoria Welby from Queen Victoria, written on learning of her god-daughter's intended marriage to Sir William, in which the Queen expresses her mixed emotions of joy and profound sorrow at the thought of Victoria moving away from daily sight. This letter was made available by Nina Cust who included it in the Appendix to her mother's biography (Cust 1928: 349–350):

Balmoral, 21 May 1863

My dear Victoria,

It was with very mixed feelings that I heard of your intended Marriage with Mr. Welby; for while I rejoice to think that you will be happily settled and will have a Home, which promises to you all that you and those who love you can wish for – I am very sorry to lose you. You were so bound up with recollections of my beloved Mother, and of my *own* happy blessed Life, now *crushed* and *ruined* for ever on *Earth*, that I am grieved to see in your departure another link which connected me with the happy past – broken! May you be as happy as it is possible to be in this uncertain [world], and may your happiness be of far longer duration than mine! I know that my beloved Husband would have taken great interest in this event! I write to you from a place *formerly* so full of joy and life and every enjoyment of health and vigour – now more utterly lonely and desolate than *all* the other beloved abodes of our former blessed Life, which also recalls you to my mind, as you were here with dear Mama.

Once more repeating my sincerest wishes for your welfare,
Believe me ever, dear Victoria,
Yours affectionately and sadly,

V. Reg.

In spite of her poor health (as a child she fell ill with scarlet fever), Victoria Welby spent the formative years of her life (from 1848 to 1855) travelling the world with her mother, who chose to continue living as she did with her husband before his premature death in 1844:

Fortunately for her inclinations, the delicacy of her little daughter, Victoria, provided a reasonable excuse for prolonged absences from England. It may however be doubted whether such strenuous enterprises as travelling through Italy and France during the revolutions of 1848, coaching on the notorious roads of Mexico, or crossing the Isthmus of Panama in a dug-out at the height of the gold-rush, were really a suitable rest-cure for a child so seriously weakened by virulent scarlet-fever, that she had been pronounced unfit for the ordinary business of childhood. (Cust 1928: 17–18)

Together Victoria and her mother visited many countries including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Morocco, Turkey, Palestine, Syria, often facing unbelievable difficulty and danger such as the time they were caught up in the revolutionary events of 1848 in France and Italy or the war in Crimea. In 1852 Victoria published her travel diary, *A Young Traveller's Journal of a Tour in North and South America during the Year 1850*, which she began writing in 1850 with the beginning of her travels in America, and did so with 'an eye on a possible public,' as her mother had done before her. As Victoria herself states in her 'Preface,' her intention was to amuse and to a degree instruct her fellow child readers:

It may seem presumptuous in so youthful a traveller (having only attained her twelfth year a week before starting for America), to put her every-day and naturally childish impressions and observations in print. This little book, however, is not destined to become a candidate for the honours of books or travels in general; since it is intended for children – those of her own age, for instance – whom it is her highest aim to amuse, and, to a certain degree, instruct. Her little volume, therefore, lays no claim to the attention of the public farther than its character as a child's book may deserve. (Welby 1852: 1)

While traveling across the Syrian desert in 1855, Lady Emmeline fell sick in the vicinity of Antioch, where she was abandoned by their guide and died in tragic circumstances leaving her daughter all alone until help came from Beirut. This dramatic event marked the end of Victoria's adventures over foreign lands and the beginning of her pilgrimage, which lasted from 1855 to 1861, among illustrious relatives who took turns in giving her hospitality. Victoria remained a 'wanderer' for she did not find permanent shelter and was relentlessly uprooted from a long series of homes. All the same, though she was without a permanent abode during this time in her life, Victoria in fact spent most of her time with the Queen mother in her various residences, and was dearly loved by her. After the Queen mother's death in 1861, she entered the court of Queen Victoria who took on the commitment of caring for those who had depended upon her mother, or in some way had referred to her.

Victoria Welby's daughter, Nina, acted as her assistant and collaborator. As anticipated, she edited two volumes of her mother's correspondence, published posthumously in 1929 and 1931, respectively: *Echoes of Larger Life*, which covers the years 1879 to 1891; and *Other Dimensions*, the years 1898 to 1911. Nina's biography, *Wanderers*, was published in 1928. Her primary sources were writings by Victoria and Lady Emmeline – their travel journals, diaries, correspondence, published volumes, unpublished manuscripts, and so forth, from which she quoted abundantly. Lady Emmeline was an exceptionally prolific writer herself – in verse and in prose. Indeed, her overwhelming passion for traveling and constant longing to visit all parts of the world was one with her love for writing and describing her experiences and impressions of the peoples, societies and institutions she had visited. Unfortunately, however, almost all her unpublished manuscripts and papers were either lost in Syria, or destroyed.

Wanderers is divided into three parts and narrates the adventures of Lady Emmeline and her daughter as they traveled through America, Spain and Syria, in third person. These characters emerge from this fascinating description as two extraordinarily unconventional figures from the early Victorian era, distinguished for originality, open-mindedness, capacity for criticism, tenacity, courage and generosity: two cosmopolitan citizens of a world devoid of chronotopical boundaries. They were wholly immersed in their studies and artistic pleasures (in addition to writing, they also indulged in music, sketching, embroidery, etc.), looking towards the future as prospected by progress in the sciences. Though written between 1913 and 1914, this volume was only completed nearly a decade after the First World War, in 1927, as we learn from Nina Cust with the following statement made in her closing note: 'The greater part of this book was written in 1913–1914, after the death of my mother, the younger traveller. When the War came it was put aside, and it is only lately that I have been able to complete it. July, 1927' (Cust 1928: 365). The volume was published in 1928 and is still today the most exhaustive source of information concerning the first thirty years of Victoria Welby's life.

Ronald Storrs opens his Preface by expressing his admiration for Nina (Mrs. Henry) Cust's capacity for narration. Her words intrigue the reader as she interweaves three voices into a single and plurivocal narrative text in her description of Victoria's and Lady Emmeline's literary and nonliterary wanderings:

Mrs. Henry Cust is already known to many as a sculptor and a poet, the rarity of whose work is its chief reproach; and as the author of one of the best modern studies of mediaeval adventure, the scholarly and entertaining *Gentlemen Errant*. In this new book she follows the travels of her own mother and grandmother, and with these two remarkable figures, Early Victorian to the core but, at that core, citizens of a world that knows no date, wanderers across the already disuniting and increasingly clamant America of the early 'fifties; down the great Mississippi River of death and tears, where their warnings have this year a tragic and topical interest; up into the Mexican land of perennial revolutions and performing bandits; over the incredible Isthmus of the Gold-Diggers; and so, with interludes in Peru, Morocco, Spain and the Constantinople of the Crimean War, to those Near Eastern scenes which also, and above all others, know no date and draw the citizens of every city. (Storrs, July 1927, in Cust 1928: 7)

Lady Emmeline and Victoria were careful observers, critical commentators, even active participants when at all possible in local events. They took an interest in political, cultural and economic affairs, described social behaviors, traditions, and beliefs, encounters with people from all walks of life, including eminent women and men, and were particularly sensitive to issues relating to social justice. With reference to their American journey they were careful to comment the state of slavery, the relation between negro slaves and owners; they observed the indigenous peoples, the Indians, and the complex relationships among the various races, including 'Negroes,' 'Indians' and the 'white population' – mostly tormented by prejudice of all sorts. Detailed descriptions are also lavished upon natural and cultural architecture – housing, transport systems, breathtaking landscapes with their infinite open spaces and sweeping skylines, as well as modern cities, country or desert townships, homesteads, huts in the woods, cottages, and plantations. The language of these three female writers is constantly enriched with literary references to authors and their heroes, which further enhance the adventures, or misadventures, experienced by Lady Emmeline and Victoria, the magnificence of their descriptions, the overwhelming multiplicity of senses and critical acumen engendered by their narrations.

Constant literary references include: Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Frederick Marryat, Herman Melville, Frances Trollope, Thomas Paine, William M. Thackeray, Madame Calderon de la Barca, Bayard Taylor, Walter Bagehot. Many of these writers were often fellow travelers, likewise committed to writing their own travel journeys, as was the custom of the day. The following three excerpts are descriptions, among the many, from journeys by Lady Emmeline and Victoria through Mexico, Havana, and the Isthmus. These descriptions evidence the latter's participative attention for the life conditions and vicissitudes of the peoples living in the countries they visited, their lucid criticism, together with their dauntless optimism and determination such that they were never deterred by danger nor discomfort, their capacity for irony and laughter:

... the two *Gringo* ladies shortly laughed with all Mexico at a caricature of their own appearance. For in the Carnival Masque there swaggered along a small pony-chaise in which, 'driving *themselves à l'Anglaise*,' sat two presentments of European ladies in the

height of the fashion. 'Over the bonnet, which in its size almost entirely covered the little chaise, loaded with every sort of flower and ornament, towered a huge feather, a yard in the air, nodding in all directions. This was purposely dashed into everybody's face as they passed along. In her hand one of the ladies held a ridiculous little parasol, no bigger than a pincushion, with fringe several yards deep, held, with particular care, in the exact contrary direction from that of the sun. It served also as a whip for the ponies, and a weapon to make way on all sides for this pompous equipage.' Escorting the turn-out, were masked ladies on horse-back, 'with immensely long habits trailing along (they were men dressed up), floating veils and jaunty riding-hats and whips – a quiz upon English and French equestrianesses.' (Cust 1928: 98–99)

At a later stage during their journey, the travelers learned that the 'negroes' of Cuba had an especially undesirable reputation. During a visit to a new prison in Kingston (Jamaica), they noted a striking variety among the prisoners, some being of a peculiarly repulsive and ferocious aspect, with 'a foreign dress and air.' On inquiring about these savage looking men, the questioners learnt they were *emancipados* from Cuba, by far the most hardened, irreclaimable and desperate men in the prison, but also the greater part of the criminal population. The *emancipados* were slaves imported illegally from Africa, who had been rescued and pronounced free by the 'Court of the Mixed Commission' at Havana. The freed negroes were apprenticed to certain families, who undertook to train and protect them for a period of five years. [...]

This system in the Havana is said to be the fertile source of frightful abuses. They are seldom or never properly taught any trade; while they are continually under-fed and overworked, and treated even worse than the commonest slaves in the regular employ of their masters. It is too often the sole object of the heartless persons, to whose charge they have been committed, to get as much labour out of the poor wretches as possible, without consideration as to their future value, strength or capabilities, as in the case of regular slaves. [...]

When the period of their apprenticeship came to an end, their slavery ('for such in real fact it is') frequently continued, with innumerable instances of *emancipados* being retained for fifteen or twenty years, not infrequently even for all their lives. [...]

Sometimes, instead of being taught a trade by which to support themselves when delivered from this intolerable bondage ... they are used more like beasts of burden than human beings. It will be readily imagined, that under such circumstances their moral and religious instruction is totally neglected. Can we wonder, then, at the result? [...] The prison (at Kingston) appeared to abound in exemplifications of this truth, and pity was mingled with the irrepressible shudder of abhorrence with which one glanced at the murderous looking *emancipados* as, sullen and ferocious, they stalked to and fro like caged tigers, with countenances from whose expression every faintest indication of goodness seemed irrevocably banished. (Cust 1928: 114–115)

But night was at hand, the fireflies were alight, the travellers were adrip, and, albeit the stars 'shone out like little suns,' the boatmen were a-feared. So, though they had only reached the hovels of San Pablo, where – said the men firmly – there was no accommodation for ladies, they were compelled to stop. 'Having told us that they would not go a step farther, since the river was very shallow and dangerous, they left us to our fate,' to remain, as preferred, in the wet boat, or on one of the numerous sand-banks. As for themselves, the ruffians prepared to sleep on shore. In vain did the sodden victims call into the darkness, praying for at least a fire to dry the running streams that were their garments: no answer came nor comfort, even from the faithless coloured clerk. At last the young traveller solved the

problem by a stroke of involuntary genius. Thinking to drown her sorrows in the flowing river, she rose from her seat to find her calabash, and so overbalanced, and fell plump into the water: making, in the event, a brave attempt to drown herself. The water, indeed, was at this point shallow, but it was a favourite haunt of the dreaded alligator, and matters might easily have gone ill with her. By happy chance, however, a Perseus at once appeared in the shape of a courteous American, who not only extricated the frightened and mud-caked maiden from her peril, but informed her mother of the existence of two huts in which assistance might probably be found. To these huts accordingly they betook them, 'like a damp procession of naiads learning to be amphibious,' the smallest of the naiads being indeed so coated and clogged with the slime of the river that she perhaps more closely resembled an infant crocodile walking upon its tail. (Cust 1928: 128)

Welby studied privately and lacked a formal education in any conventional or systematic sense of the word. In later life, she recognized in her unconventional upbringing, extensive traveling, experience of the world, and in her insatiable pleasure for reading, the condition for her open-mindedness and originality as an intellectual. In a letter to Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914) of 22 December 1903, who fully recognized her genius as testified by their correspondence, Welby offered the following autobiographical information with considerations on a child's capacity for learning, consequently on the importance of education – a constant concern throughout her lifetime (see Ch. 4):

As I'm now speaking personally I may perhaps mention that I never had any education whatever in the conventional sense of the term. Instead of that I travelled with my mother over a great part of the world under circumstances of difficulty and even hardship. The present facilities did not then exist! This I think accounts in some degree for my seeing things in a somewhat independent way. But the absence of any systematic mental training must be allowed for of course in any estimate of work done. These peculiar circumstances have suggested to me very strongly that the average ability of man in early childhood is higher than we suppose; and that the problem before us is how to preserve the freshness and penetration of the child's mind while supplying the – mainly logical – training, the lack of which is so great a disadvantage. But I only allude to the unusual conditions of my childhood in order partly to account for my way of looking at and putting things: and my very point is that any value in it is impersonal. It suggests an ignored heritage, an unexplored mine. This I have tried to indicate in *What is Meaning?* (Hardwick 1977: 13–14)

Not at all attracted to life at court, Welby retreated to Denton Manor, Grantham (Lincolnshire) after her marriage in 1863, where she soon began her research, with her husband's full support. Very little is known about the early years of her marriage except that she lived her domestic life fully and satisfied her social duties as demanded by her status as a representative of the English nobility. After contributing to the Royal School of Art Needlework, founded in 1872, Welby also set up and financed the Decorative Needlework Society (see William Macdonald's obituary, now appended to Ch. 8, below). As part of her more strictly intellectual life, she became a member of the Aristotelian Society of London (founded in 1870); in 1890 she was elected as member of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (founded in 1871, permission to add the word 'Royal' was granted in 1907; the Anthropological Institute was the result of a merger between two rival bodies, the Ethnological Society of London, founded in 1843, and the Anthropological Society of London, 1863–1870); she was also one of the original promoters and a founding member of the Sociological Society of Great Britain (established in 1903).

From 1863 until her death in 1912, Victoria Welby was friend and correspondent to many leading personalities of the time from different walks of life and professions – the sciences, literature and public life, often acting as their source of inspiration. She corresponded regularly with over 450 people from different countries across the world including Great Britain, the United States of America, France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands (see next section). The following is the introduction from *Echoes of Larger Life*, signed N. C. (Nina Cust), cited integrally to supplement information on Welby's biography:

The strange girlhood of Victoria Welby, her travels in three continents with her mother, Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley, her subsequent life with the Duchess of Kent and as maid-of-honour to Queen Victoria, and finally her marriage to Sir William Welby-Gregory: all these have been described in an earlier book (*Wanderers*: Jonathan Cape, 1928). The first years of her married life were filled chiefly with home and social occupations, the latter of which included the founding of the present Royal School of Art Needlework. At the end of the 'seventies, however, the writing and anonymous publishing of *Links and Clues* (Macmillan, 1881) opened for her a new and wide world of friends and correspondents, and it is from the letters of this date and of the ten following years that choice has been made. The book, wrote a stranger to a friend more than twenty years later, 'is most original and full of suggestive thought. In some respects it reminds me of Tolstoi in its startling and bold deductions. . . I am reminded too in reading it of Thoreau. It is a strong book, and I should not have guessed it as written by a woman. . .'

Certainly during this early period her brain had not been idle. Her erratic upbringing, with its complete omission of any education in the customary sense of the word, had, as it seemed, endowed her with an insatiable hunger for what lies beyond education; and she read, marked and learned with untiring zest. As the years passed, indeed, her craving for knowledge increased in a constant progression, and she quickly became the almost embarrassed possessor of innumerable books, scored from cover to cover with notes that never failed to excite if they sometimes tended to bewilder. No statement was allowed to pass unchallenged. Her thought-sword slept not in her hand, and never, till the last hours of her life, did she cease from mental fight.

And, with it all, both the courage and the content of her 'inmost uttering song' remained inviolately her own; for her mind was in the highest sense original, moving easily and habitually in a rarer atmosphere. From the time, also, of her Confirmation at Jerusalem, with its sorrowful setting and tragic outcome, her 'alive life' had been the inner life – its impulse and its energy spiritual. And though, as her powers developed, they seemed to concentrate increasingly on a sternly practical study of her own new science of Significs (see 'Significs' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in the *Oxford Dictionary*; also her books, *Grains of Sense*, Duckworth, 1897, *What is Meaning?*, Macmillan, 1903, *Significs and Language*, Macmillan, 1911, etc.), coupled with the relentless exposure of the entanglements and inaccuracies of all accepted data of thought and speech, yet ever for her, beyond this dark impeding region, were the radiant spaces of the Light, the vergeless yonders of Ultimate Significance, 'the promise of the Glory of God.'

It should perhaps be explained that the letters, or extracts from letters, here given are often only fragments of very long and full exchanges of thought. This is specially so in the case of Bishop Talbot, her cousin and life-long friend; and, in a lesser degree, of Charles Voysey, 'the Anti-Christian Theist'; of Andrew Jukes and Rowland Corbet, leading mystics of their day; of Bishop Westcott and Professor Max Müller; of Richard Holt Hutton, Julia Wedgwood, Mrs. W. K. Clifford (see her article 'Victoria Lady Welby: An Ethical Mystic,' in *The Hibbert Journal* of October 1924), and the author of *John Inglesant*. Overlapping

with the last chapters, moreover, are the beginnings of what were in some cases to prove even fuller correspondences with the philosophical and scientific friends to whom she was for a time at least very definitely to turn, among these being Shadworth Hodgson, Frederic Myers, Conwy Lloyd Morgan, Sir Francis Galton, Sir James Crichton-Browne, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Clifford Allbutt, Professor E. B. Poulton and many others. It should be remembered also that not only were her own letters frequently mere covering sheets for one or possibly several papers, too long for inclusions here, but that they are in many cases missing altogether, or extant only in her own almost undecipherable notes. On the other hand, the letters written to her seem sometimes to give indications of the many-sidedness of her personality more vivid than those written by her, and they have been for this reason rather lavishly used. It must again, however, not be forgotten that in all cases, including her own, the views expressed are by no means necessarily those which the writers should hold to-day. Finally, sincere thanks and apologies are due to all who kindly returned originals in response to a request made so long ago as before the War.

It remains only to say that the title of the book is taken from one of Victoria Welby's own early papers. The words occur also more than once in her letters. 'We must listen,' she writes in 1885 to Professor Max Müller, 'for the whispering echoes of the larger life: most surely are they quivering all round us, telling that this brief flash is only worthy of the name of life so far as we look through it into the Light of which it is a ray.' The fact that to-day this phrase suggests the faint strange 'wireless echoes,' said to be fathered ('in what distant deeps or skies?') by electrons thick-streaming from the sun, would have been to her but another witness to – another symbol of – the unending if gradual revelation, through the medium of science, of what she was later to call 'the Meaning of Meaning' – the supreme Meaning of Life. (N.C., 'Introduction,' in *Cust* 1929: 11–13)

1.2. Her correspondence

Welby carried out a significant part of her intellectual work through her extensive correspondence with approximately over 450 interlocutors, as mentioned. This material is mostly unpublished but available at the Welby Collection, York University Archives and Special Collections, York University, Toronto, Canada (from now on WCYA, see Appendix 3). In some cases Welby's epistolary relations lasted for many years in spite of polemical overtones, testifying to her influence on the scientists and philosophers of her day, indeed on cultural circuits and thinkers generally. On the basis of her direct personal contacts and correspondence, she weaved throughout her lifetime an ever expanding network of relations which developed across various phases, forming what I propose we call the 'Welby Network' or 'Welby Circle.' Welby used this network to articulate her ideas in dialogue with others, as well as to communicate the ideas of her correspondents whose letters, articles and papers she readily copied and circulated.

The two volumes of 1929 and 1931, *Echoes of Larger Life* (title inspired by the title of the essaylet 'An Echo of Larger Life,' of 1885, now in Ch. 3, below), and *Other Dimensions*, present an important selection from Welby's correspondence. The editorial criteria applied are rather arbitrary (e.g., letters from different periods are sometimes made to run into each other and presented as a single letter text), but these volumes, all the same, have the merit of delivering documents which would now be difficult, even impossible to recover. As such, they present a rich and important corpus of documents

not only for the reconstruction of Victoria Welby's theory of meaning, what she called 'significs' – the specific focus of the current volume –, but also more generally of a significant phase in the history of ideas.

By 1870 Welby had begun her relations with people representing a broad range of different competencies and experiences – aristocrats, politicians, spokesmen of the Church, theologians, scholars and intellectuals, writers and scientists, forming a network that began to rapidly expand from 1880 onwards at both the local and international levels. Interesting names that emerge from these papers as Welby's correspondents include, beyond the already mentioned Peirce, the Italian philosopher of language and mathematician Giovanni Vailati who was the first scholar in Italy to have taken an interest in both Welby and Peirce, introducing them both for the first time to the intellectual scene in that country, his collaborator Mario Calderoni, and further, in alphabetical order, Arnold Matthews, James M. Baldwin, Henri L. Bergson, Mary Everest Boole, Andrew C. and Francis H. Bradley, Michel Bréal, Rudolph Carnap, Lucy Clifford, William K. Clifford, Edward Clodd, Frederik van Eeden, Francis Galton, Frederic Harrison, Shadworth H. Hodgson, Thomas A. Huxley, Henry and William James, Benjamin Jowett, André Lalande, Andrew Lang, 'Vernon Lee' (pseudonym for Violet Paget), Lynn Linton, C. Lloyd-Morgan, 'Lucas Malet' (pseudonym for Mary St. Leger Harrison), Max F. Müller, Otto Neurath, Charles K. Ogden, Jules-Henri Poincaré, Bertrand Russell, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, George Bernard Shaw, Alfred and Henry Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen, George F. Stout, Ferdinand Tönnies, John Tyndall, Julia Wedgwood, Herbert G. Wells, and many more (other names are listed in Ch. 2: note 3, this volume). Welby's correspondence with Peirce is known firstly thanks to the edition produced by Irwin C. Lieb, and subsequently by Charles S. Hardwick. (On the relationship between Welby and Peirce, see Deledalle 1990: 133–150; Petrilli 1998a: 113–160, 2005b: 5–60, 2005c: 70–74). However, the correspondence with other significant figures of the time moving in these circles such as Ferdinand S. C. Schiller, Frederik van Eeden, Charles K. Ogden, or Mary Everest Boole, is also impressive and remains mostly unpublished (but see van Eeden-Welby 1954, and for Ogden-Welby, see Petrilli 1995a).

Welby privileged the epistolary genre as the place of encounter and confrontation of ideas, never losing an opportunity to sound out issues that preoccupied her as she interwaved the various threads of discourse into the unifying and detotalizing framework of her significs. She mastered different research areas and variously responded to the community of investigators in the language of their different competencies, methodologies and theoretical horizons, which she believed complemented each other and integrated her own vision of the world. The research areas she inquired into were unbounded and included such different spheres as religion, theology, philosophy, language studies, science, mathematics, axiology, theory of knowledge, theory of interpretation, theory of translation, semiotics, semantics, methodology, education, sociology, anthropology, etc. For Welby dialogical exchange, criticism, confrontation, and responsive understanding were the necessary requisites for the acquisition of knowledge. She emphasized the importance of asking questions which she intended as signposts for possible research, without claiming to provide replies – if not in the form of a new question. Thanks to her generous mediation, Welby's interlocutors entertained exchanges with each other, whether directly or indirectly through her mediation. Indeed, far from taking an individualistic, monological and sectarian standpoint, Welby materialized the ideal shared

with Peirce of conducting scientific research in the form of cooperation among the open community of investigators.

Regarding Welby's published correspondence: her exchanges with Peirce were made available in the volume, *Semiotic and Significs. The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*, edited by Charles S. Hardwick, in 1977. Important to signal is also the fact that Welby's daughter, Nina Cust, included a consistent part of the correspondence between Peirce and Welby from the years 1903–1905 and 1908–1911 in the volume *Other Dimensions*, 1931. Since publication of the Hardwick volume, another four unpublished letters from Welby to Peirce have emerged as well as a letter from Peirce to John W. Slaughter, one of Welby's interlocutors (see Schmitz 1985b: cxlviii–clvii). In addition to letters exchanged between Peirce and Welby from 1903 to 1911, *Semiotic and Significs* includes Welby's entry *Significs* for *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published in 1911 (see Ch. 3.15, this volume), and Peirce's review for the journal *Nation* 77, 15, of Welby's monograph, *What is Meaning? Studies in the Development of Significance*, which he associated with Bertrand Russell's, *The Principles of Mathematics*, Vol. 1, both published in 1903 (see CP 8.171–175 and Hardwick 1977: 157–159). As noted earlier, Hardwick's volume was preceded by a volume of 1953 edited by Irwin C. Lieb, *Charles S. Peirce's Letters to Lady Welby*, which however only included Peirce's letters to Welby while excluding Welby's to Peirce. Despite this, the volume had been out of print for many years when Hardwick decided to prepare his new edition (see Hardwick 1977: ix–xiv).

In chronological order of their appearance: during Welby's lifetime letters addressed to her by Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), (German born) English philologist and ethnologist, scholar of primitive cultures, oriental religions and comparative studies, were published in the latter's autobiographical volume (see Müller 1902: 63–67, 85ff. 104, 273). Müller worked at the translation of texts from the *Veda* which Welby (1983 [1903]: 46) quoted in her own writings. In fact, vedantic philosophy flows into her theory of meaning. Welby's correspondence in English with the Dutch psychiatrist Frederik van Eeden (1860–1932) lasted from 13 August 1892 (the year they met) to 11 February 1912. Their letters are centred on problems relevant to significs as well as on social and political issues. The originals are available at the van Eeden Archives, University of Amsterdam library, while a part of this extensive correspondence was published in 1954 under the title, *Briefwisseling met Lady Victoria* (see van Eeden-Welby 1954). Welby's exchanges with the Dutch philosopher Gerardus Johannes Petrus Josephus Bolland (1854–1922), whom she met through van Eeden, were published in 1991, annotated by Jan Noordegraaf (1991, and on the relation between van Eeden, Bolland, and Welby, see Noordegraaf 2005, which also includes the correspondence between Welby and Bolland). These collections of letters involving Welby with van Eeden and Bolland are important for an understanding of the connection between Welby, the lady significian (Petrilli 2005d: 80–137), and the Signific Movement in the Netherlands (see Ch. 8). In Italy, Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909) and consequently his collaborator Mario Calderoni (1879–1914) were in contact with Welby, which made her name indirectly familiar to Vailati and Calderoni scholars. Some of the letters exchanged between Welby and Vailati were published in 1971 in a volume collecting the latter's correspondence, *Epistolario 1891–1909*, edited by G. Lanaro with an introduction by M. Dal Pra. Moreover, a paper entitled *Anmerkungen zum Welby–Russell–Briefwechsel* presenting the correspondence

between Welby and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) was published by H. Walter Schmitz in 1995.

Appended to this chapter is a selection of letters, previously published and unpublished, from WCYA. Welby's correspondence with Ogden, Russell, Peirce, and Vailati is discussed further on in this volume, in relation to the problematics driving her research. The letter texts presented have been selected on the basis of their theoretical interest, while more personal comments are reported only when they illuminate some aspect of her studies, research method, and personality.

1.3. Her writings

The focus of the present volume is on Welby's studies on sign, meaning, understanding and value, therefore on the foundation of signifiacs. The problem of signifying, interpreting and communicating through signs, particularly verbal signs, provides the common denominator for her broad-ranging interest in manifold and seemingly disparate areas of study. Problems of language and meaning and the need for critical interpretation are the main focus of her early essays 'Meaning and Metaphor,' 1893, and 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation,' 1896. These were anticipated by her critical studies on the Sacred Scriptures and their interpretation, the results of which were published in the collection *Links and Clues*, 1881. Further developments were presented with her reflections in *Grains of Sense*, of 1897.

Encouraged by the English psychologists Edward B. Titchner and George F. Stout, Welby announced the 'Welby Prize' for the best essay on signifiacs in the journal *Mind* in 1896 (see Ch. 2, below). This was awarded to the German philosopher and sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) for the essay 'Philosophical Terminology,' published in 1889/1900 in English translation (by Madame B. Bosanquet) in *Mind*, and only subsequently, in 1906, in the German original in the form of a booklet entitled, *Philosophische Terminologie in psychologisch-soziologischer Ansicht*. Essays by participants were commented by Welby in 'Notes on the "Welby Prize Essay",' published in *Mind* in 1901 (see below, Ch. 2.16).

Welby's most systematic scientific contribution to the foundation of signifiacs is her monograph of 1903, *What is Meaning?* Her entries for James M. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology in Three Volumes*, 'Translation,' 'Sensal' (co-authored with G. F. Stout), and 'Signifiacs' (with J. M. Baldwin and G. F. Stout) had already appeared in 1902 (see Ch. 2.9). The Oxford dictionary entry, 'Signifiacs,' was published in *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, in 1911 (see Ch. 3.1), the same year Welby's second volume appeared, *Signifiacs and Language. The Articulate Form of Our Expressive and Interpretative Resources* as well as the above-mentioned encyclopaedic entry 'Signifiacs,' commissioned by the editor of *Times*, in 1907, for the 11th edition of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (see 3.15, below). This editorial event marked a fundamental step in the history of signifiacs, representing the official recognition Welby had so much desired for her general theory of sign and meaning, as she recounted in a letter to Charles K. Ogden of 17 December 1910 (see 7.5 below).

Some of Welby's essays are the published version of papers delivered at conferences attended as an 'outsider.' Welby in fact was not affiliated to any academic institution,

although she was a member of culturally prestigious organizations such as the Aristotelian Society, the Anthropological Institute, the Sociological Society, and with her writings she never failed to enter the heart of ongoing intellectual debate (at the time, often connected with Darwinian controversy, see below). In her essay, 'Truthfulness in Science and Religion,' 1888, she dealt with the problem of truth in terms of necessary dialogue between science and religion. In published lectures delivered at three different meetings during the early 1890s, she proposed what she described as a 'significant' approach to philosophical-anthropological issues relating to mental evolution and cognition: 'Is there a Break in Mental Evolution?' was delivered at the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Leeds, 5 September, 1890; 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution' was delivered at the Anthropological Institute, 9 December 1890; 'The Significance of Folk-Lore' at an International Folklore Conference, 1891 (all are appended to Ch. 2 in the present volume).

In addition to her correspondence and full-length essays published in scientific journals, Welby formulated her ideas through other discourse genres including 'essaylets,' used extensively (privately printed and short, even just a page), newspaper articles, and literary genres such as dialogues, stories, parables and poetry. Her writings were often commented on by her interlocutors in their letter exchanges with Welby and in reviews published in newspapers such as *The Rock*, *The Guardian* and *The Spectator*. The essaylets most discussed in the early phase of her research (as reported, for example, in the correspondence assembled in *Echoes of Larger Life*, or in her 1881 volume *Links and Clues*, and in her full-length published essays), include: 'Questions for Teachers,' 1885, 'An Echo of Larger Life,' 1885, 'Death and Life,' 1886, 'The Evolution of Heliology,' 1886, which all variously focus on problems of a philosophical, scientific, educational and theological order. A selection of Welby's essaylets has been appended to the present chapter: some were traced in the WCYA, and at the Lady Welby Library in London, others were generously provided to me in the early 1980s by the renowned signifiCS scholar from Germany, H. Walter Schmitz.

Welby edited four small anthologies (printed privately) which collect excerpts from a variety of writers with the intention of demonstrating the need for a critique of language and terminology and for the adequate development of a 'linguistic conscience': *Witnesses to Ambiguity*, 1891; *The Use of 'Inner' and 'Outer' in Psychology: Does the Metaphor Help or Hinder?*, 1892, assembled as proof of her theses on the bad use of figurative language in psychology and negative consequences thereof on reasoning, distributed at the International Congress of Experimental Psychology, in 1892; *A Selection of Passages from 'Mind' (Jan. 1876, to July, 1892), 'Nature' (1870, and 1888 to 1892), 'Natural Science' (1892)*, 1893, which focuses on the influence of terminology in theoretical and applied logic; *The Witness of Science to Linguistic Anarchy*, 1898, a collection of extracts from the journals *Nature*, *Science* and *Natural Science*.

Welby's monographic volumes, *What is Meaning?*, 1903, and *SignifiCS and Language*, 1911, have already been mentioned. They were preceded by the two aforementioned books of reflections, *Links and Clues* and *Grains of Sense*, respectively of 1881 and 1897, and a childhood diary of 1852, but the bulk of her writings lies unpublished in the Archives.

As we learn from her manuscripts in the Welby Collection at the York University Archives and Special Collections, other books were in the making such as *What is &*

What Might Be, 'a powerful witness to significs in education,' as Welby writes in a letter to Ogden (dated 20 September 1911, see Ch. 7). Welby worked tirelessly and wrote a massive quantity of papers which she had intended to publish in book form, often announcing her editorial projects in her correspondence. For example, in a letter to Giovanni Vailati of 28 December 1907, she wrote: 'I venture to send you with this a few typed Notes out of a mass of material from which I hope the first of a series of small volumes may, in the course of 1908, appear.' The existence of a consistent corpus of writings by Welby is testified by various sources, but most unfortunately a substantial part has gone missing, most likely never to be found in either libraries or archives (see Schmitz 1985b: xvi).

Welby's writings are published with different signatures: until the end of the 1880s she signed herself as 'Hon. Lady Victoria Welby-Gregory'; from 1890 onward as 'Hon. Lady Welby'; and from 1893 'Victoria Welby.' Other variants of her name include 'Victoria Stuart-Wortley' (before her marriage), 'Lady Welby,' 'Hon. Lady Welby-Gregory,' 'Victoria Welby-Gregory,' 'V. Lady Welby,' or very simply 'V. Welby.' She liked to use the pseudonyms 'Vita' and 'Vera Welldon' (which reproduces the initials of her real name). Also, she frequently signed with the initials, 'V.W-G' or 'V.W,' and sometimes even 'V. Welby and V.W.' (Victoria Welby and Vera Welldon). The expedient of anonymity also appealed to her and sometimes she signed mysteriously as 'An Outsider.' Concerning her signature with specific reference to *What is Meaning?*, Welby explained the following in a letter of 22 December 1903 to Peirce who was in the process of reviewing her book:

Before I say any more, may I confess that in signing my book 'V. Welby' I hoped to get rid as far as possible of the irrelevant associations of my unlucky title? I am called 'V. Lady Welby' merely to distinguish me from my son's wife, now Lady Welby; which is a custom of ours. Thus I have no right to be called Lady Victoria Welby. I explained this to Prof. Baldwin but like many others he forgot to correct the name. You will understand my desire to be known as simply as possible though I cannot altogether ignore the 'Hon.' conferred upon me as Maid of Honour to the late Queen. But the only honour I value is that of being treated by workers as a serious worker. (Hardwick 1977: 13)

As documented by her correspondence, the different intellectual trajectories followed by Welby from 1880 onward, which eventually converged in the unity of her signifi- cal perspective, may be characterized as shifting from a critical rereading of theological, ethical and religious issues to a critique of all forms of expression and knowledge, and reinterpretation of these. As a practising Anglican, she was as radically critical of ecclesiastical institutions when they appealed to the authority of orthodoxy and dogma as she was of institutions in general. Her reflections on the problem of interpreting the Sacred Scriptures found expression, as noted earlier, in *Links and Clues*, which she signed with the pseudonym 'Vita' (while the second 1883 edition was signed 'Hon. Lady Welby-Gregory'). Aspects of this volume are discussed in *Echoes of Larger Life*. The expression 'Links and Clues' prefigures Welby's decidedly transdisciplinary life-long research method, which consisted in the search for interconnections among the manifold faces of the signifying universe and of the signs that pervade it. Though hard criticism was not lacking, the predominant reaction to this book was sufficiently positive to occasion a second edition, which led to a significant amplification of her network of correspondents. Welby was encouraged to continue writing in the same style, that is,

with recourse to the language and expression of different discourse genres including aphorisms, short-stories, satires, fables, dialogues, paradoxes and parables.

Grains of Sense is the suggestive title of her book of reflections of 1897, 'Dedicated to the misunderstood.' In respect of the problems at the centre of her attention rather than mere chronology, this volume belongs to a different phase in Welby's intellectual life by comparison to *Links and Clues*. With *Grains of Sense*, her interests had shifted from the strictly religious sphere to issues connected with the scientific, anthropological, philosophical, pedagogic and linguistic spheres, viewed in the light of signification, that is, with a focus on meaning and expression value, in particular linguistic or verbal expression. *Grains of Sense* was preceded by publications dedicated to expression and interpretation, specifically 'Meaning and Metaphor' (1893) and 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' (1896). At that time, Welby was deciding between 'signification' and 'sensification' as the most adequate term to designate her particular approach to the theory of sign and meaning. The term 'signification' did not appear in her 1893 paper, whilst both 'signification' and 'sensification' did in her 1896 paper.

Grains of Sense is a topical volume responding to issues at the centre of discussion in science, philosophy, education, politics, economy, journalism, literature, rhetoric, logic and everyday discourse, put forward in public speeches, lectures, newspapers or articles published in scientific and philosophical journals. Welby was always ready to contribute to the public debate of her time, commenting and interpreting problems from the perspective of her special concern for meaning, language, and communication. In consonance with her 'critique of language,' she maintained that the adequate development of a 'linguistic conscience' for the correct use of terminology, figurative expression and language generally, was closely related to precision in the formulation of ideas and to the evolution of knowledge and behavior in all spheres – from the intellectual, including scientific research, to the spheres of everyday social praxis.

In the framework of her theory of meaning, or signification, Welby proposed an important triad distinguishing between 'sense,' 'meaning' and 'significance.' From this point of view, of particular interest are three short paragraphs (nos. 7–9) grouped together under the title 'Sign and sense' in which are identified various types of sense – 'word sense' or 'verbal sense,' 'pragmatic sense,' 'common sense,' 'ethic sense,' 'religious sense,' 'philosophical sense,' and anticipating today's biosemiotic perspective on signs and signifying processes, 'perceptual sense.' On the basis of the concept of 'perceptual sense,' Welby in *Grains of Sense* already signals a profound interconnection between the organic and the intellectual, the biological and the cultural dimensions of sense, underlining the action of organic intelligence in the properly human world of signs and language. Such considerations were developed in *What is Meaning?*, 1903, where sense is postulated as the condition for adaptation and experience. 'Sense in all "senses" of the word,' says Welby, 'is the fitting term for that which makes the value of "experience"' (1983 [1903]: 27). In its organic form, 'sense' is shared by all life-forms and refers to the perceptual sphere; with the advent of human life, sense also develops into 'meaning' or volitional, intentional, purposive, and rationally idealised sense; and beyond the latter, with reference to the value of experience in the human world, to ethical, pragmatic and ideological sense, also to unintentional sense – but related to both organic sense and meaning sense – the highest value of sense experience is identified in 'significance,' that is, in sense as it emerges in the relation between signs and

values, augmented in ongoing translative processes from one sign and sign system to another.

1.4. Her cultural context and language

Welby's conception of language, meaning and knowledge relates to a philosophical tradition deriving from Heraclitus and Parmenides, reviewed in the light of current debate on the contradiction between the idea of transformation and fluctuation of the existent, on the one hand, and fixity, on the other. Welby's research and language resonate with the intellectual innovations of the times, with progress in the sciences, in particular the natural sciences then heavily influenced by Charles Darwin and evolutionary theory.

The Origin of Species appeared in 1859, famously provoking diatribes among critics and defenders, between traditional scientists and theologians, on the one hand, and progressivists, on the other. Thomas H. Huxley (1825–1895), a critical supporter of Darwinian theory much appreciated by Welby, George J. Romanes (1848–1894) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) may be counted among the latter (see Ch. 2). They each corresponded with Welby. The Darwinian doctrines of organic variation and natural selection upset the very foundations of theology with its creationist theses and belief in the presence of God's design in nature. It was at last possible to appreciate the place of humanity in the natural order, subject to the same evolutionary laws regulating development through the entire living world.

Welby's use of organicist images is symptomatic of a cultural context that was undergoing profound changes in traditional values, in part ensuing from the influence of Darwinism. In terms of cultural history, the Victorian era was a time of transition comparable to both the Copernican and Baconian revolutions: progress was equally threatened by theological prejudicial dogma and by the tyranny of antiquated and deviating terminology. 'Intellectual nomenclature,' claims Welby in *Significs and Language*, 'ruled reality out of the universe and confidently took its place in all disquisition or discussion upon Man and Nature' (1985 [1911]: 2).

The philologist and anthropologist Friedrich Max Müller exerted a determining influence on Welby's shift in interest from the religious to the philosophical-anthropological sphere. However, her originality led to developments in a different direction from Müller's, as testified by her essays of the early 1890s: 'Is there a Break in Mental Evolution?', 'An Apparent Paradox in Mental Evolution,' and 'The Significance of Folk-Lore.' Welby took a critical stance against positivism as represented by the French philosopher and sociologist Auguste Comte (1798–1857) (whom she had been introduced to by Müller). This stance was important in the formulation of her own conception of expression, language, meaning, interpersonal relations, social interaction, and subjectivity. In the light of evolutionary theory interpreted from her own significant perspective, she criticized dominant ethnocentrism and challenged official interpretations of myths, religions, superstitions, rites and cults. Welby studied the formation processes of thought and knowledge in cultures alien to the European, unmasking the mainstream tendency in the ethnological and anthropological sciences to indiscriminately superimpose cognitive categories and classifications characteristic of Western thought. Her questioning attitude towards contemporaries such as James Frazer (1854–1941), Andrew Lang (1844–1912),

even Müller himself (though less directly), situated Welby in a tradition of thought that led to recent developments in twentieth century semiotics, cultural anthropology, ethno-linguistics, and philosophical anthropology, as well as to the research of such scholars as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945), Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) (likewise critical of Frazer).

In stylistic terms, Welby's language is rich in imagery (analogies, similes, metaphors, etc.), tending towards the suggestiveness of literariness even when couched in the scientific genre. Her discourse is open to dialogue with different spheres of experience, with different discourse genres as foreseen by her interpretive-translative method, indeed is the expression of ongoing dialogic translative processes. Welby weaved imagery from the organic world as well as from the world of mechanics, technology and the sciences at large into the language of signification. Similarly to Mikhail N. Bakhtin (1895–1975), she described verbal language as a continuously reproducing organism receiving a new imprint from individual genius, new associations and expressive force each time it is used.

Welby made direct use of figurative language in her writing, but also objectified it in her theory of language. She discussed issues relating to 'Expression by Figure' (Welby 1983 [1903]: 24), theorizing the generative-structural function of imagery in the development of knowledge (Welby 1893, 1896, also see Ch. 4). In Chapter VIII of *What is Meaning?*, she proposes a schema for the acquisition of writing and stylistic competencies evoking such writers as Walter H. Pater (1839–1894), Walter Bagehot (1826–1877), Pierre Loti (1850–1923), Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), Paul Bourget (1852–1935), Victor Hugo (1802–1885), John Ruskin (1819–1900) (1983 [1903]: 67–72).

Welby upheld the thesis of linguistic 'plasticity': language is plastic, flexible, endowed with a capacity for 'expressive ambiguity,' which renders it capable of adaptation and renewal to ever new expressive situations. She distinguished between ambiguity in a positive sense, indeed the condition for expressivity, and ambiguity understood negatively as the cause of linguistic and conceptual confusion, which is connected with the failure to develop an adequate 'linguistic conscience.' To define the relation between 'sign' and 'sense,' Welby evoked the image of the organism responding to a stimulus from its environment: signs in the human world acquire a given value, implication, reference as they respond to a given signifying context. In turn, they elicit further responses and engender new contexts. Analogies of the organismic type evidence 'plasticity' and 'expressive potential' as essential characteristics of language. Such qualities must be regenerated when lost through 'bad linguistic use,' and recovered in terms of linguistic theory when left aside by inadequate concepts of language. In Welby's view, the relation of reciprocal adaptability between word and context is analogous to that between the organism and its environment.

Welby's positions met the approval of the pragmatist philosopher Ferdinand C. S. Schiller (1864–1937) whom she met in Oxford in 1900, where he had been lecturing since 1897. Their correspondence began in 1900 and lasted until 1911. Schiller (1907) worked on the concept of 'humanistic pragmatism' and recognized the methodological necessity of the principle of linguistic plasticity. However, while accepting the foundational aspects of Welby's theory of meaning and communication, he was also one of her most ardent critics. For example, he rejected what he described as her principle of linguistic perfectibility (see Ch. 6).

In spite of oppositions, Welby and Schiller were united in their criticism of mainstream Oxonian philosophy, in particular of formal logic as developed by Francis H. Bradley (1846–1926), Harold H. Joachim, and Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923). Schiller (1912) was also critical of Bertrand Russell (1872–1970). Together, and in the light of the concept of thought-language theorized in terms of process, energy, activity, behavior, transformation, Schiller and Welby both critiqued the thesis of ‘pure thought’ fixed according to universal and immutable laws, just as they critiqued theories of meaning based on this thesis. The problematic of meaning was to be the object of public debate with the symposium *The Meaning of ‘Meaning’* which took place in Oxford, 1920. The results were published in the journal *Mind* in an article under the same title. Participants included Charles A. Strong (editor of the journal), Alfred Sidgwick and the main speakers Schiller, Russell and Joachim.

The appearance of hominids in the universe and the beginning of history were considered another step forward in evolutionary development from primordial life-forms, and a particularly significant one thanks to the rise of ‘language’ and ‘mother-sense,’ which in the verbal expressive form is Welby’s privileged object of analysis. With intuitions that anticipate today’s developments in communication, artificial intelligence, robotics, cybernetics, she identified one of the motors of evolutionary development in the human world in the capacity to transcend the limits of sense, enhanced by progress in the sciences. The following passage is from *What is Meaning?*:

[...] The physiologist and psychologist alike tell us that our organism is a plexus of energies intimately related to that ‘environment’ which we call the material or physical world, and, moreover, that it persists or survives in virtue of a process called adjustment; whence it follows that the unfit (that which is not adjusted, cannot adapt itself to its surroundings and adapt them to itself) is eliminated. This is the adjustment which is the condition of what is usually called experience. We are full ‘in touch’ (including all sense) with the world we live on, and therefore and thus we live and reproduce life. Now, as sense is the typical means of this adaptation, we may say that sense in all ‘senses’ of the word becomes the fitting term for that which makes the value of ‘experience’ in this life and on this planet.¹

1. [Words like ‘consciousness, sensation, feeling, mind, thought, will,’ wander and collide in the endless cross-currents of ‘meaning.’ Every psychologist deplors this and recommends his own usage. But there is no consensus and therefore no consistency or real advance. Meanwhile, surely ‘sensation’ – varying in degree and in kind – supplies us with the natural starting-point. Virtually it is already this. For we begin with a vague ‘sense’ which is a response to stimulus. This becomes gradually more conscious, rising to that level which we may call ‘feeling,’ and involving more and more definitely that which we call ‘mind’; a word which in its turn suggestively connotes in popular usage will, desire, intention, memory. Thus, as the first simplicity of Sense differentiates into ‘special sense,’ and we gain the widely varying response-types which we call touch (including smell and taste), hearing, and sight; so the first simplicity of ‘sense’ as the guarantee of sanity, the individuals’s right response to the stimuli of the physical world (resistance, temperature, etc.), differentiates into the special ‘senses’ in which we apprehend, analyse, act upon what we learn to call (1) fact, (2) truth, and at last reach, or at least recognise, as Reality. This is not a mere question of etymology, which indeed would be but a broken reed to lean upon. It is a question of unconsciously developing mental habit; of “instinct” growing into volitional maturity and *revealing itself in language*. This revelation is, of course, as yet vague and shifting. But when it is seriously investigated and properly interpreted: when our usage becomes orderly and progressive (as, except in this

But this 'sense' in its organic form we share with subhuman and even primitive forms of life. In Man it rises, by virtue of what may be compared to the integral unity of this and other planets of the 'solar system,' into the higher form which is expressed not only in phrases like the sense of a word or a man of sense, or common-sense, but (when the word is rightly used) by meaning, that is by volitional, intentional, purposive, rationally idealised sense. Man sees and deals with Meaning because he is a citizen of a greater Commonwealth than this secondary world, this mere planet; and realises as its 'meaning,' its relations with that which lies beyond and around it as well as within it. The whole animal 'kingdom' (if not also the plant order) shares the sense-world: the advent of the sense of meaning – the highest kind of sense – marks a new departure: it opens the distinctively human era.

Here again Science has been the revealer. She has shown us that all our 'energies' are due to the sun; that they must all be referred to what is 'beyond,' what literally 'transcends' the limits of our own world and of our means of communication and access. More than this. We cannot speak without sending a thrill through the universe; and 'all rotating bodies tend to turn themselves towards the pole star.'² And the periods of waxing and waning, characteristic of climatic (the 'essential' or 'primary') fever, 'are no other than the cosmical periods of the earth itself.' Of course it must not be supposed that even in what we have called our planetary experience, there is no hint of 'meaning' or of purpose. There is of course in a true sense a teleology, an unconscious working for 'end' throughout the living world. And Man is from the first conscious not merely of Sense as excited response, but also of what he calls intention, governing his activities – 'I mean to do, or to prevent this' – the voice of that rational action and inhibition which belongs to the highest centres of his brain.³

This at first coincides with a crude and grotesque form of that reference to what is 'above' him which has supervened with the attainment of the erect attitude. That which began with usefully aiming stone or stick or arrow at the flying bird in the air, and translated itself into terror at the supposed black beast of prey which shot out deadly flashes and roared and growled 'over his head' out of the cloud; into fancied outlines of men or animals drawn in stars upon the sky, or into explaining the stars as little holes in his roof through which he could see the light-world; that which developed into sun worship and 'heavenly myths,' into Walhalla or Olympus or Swerga, had always the same idea as its moving force: 'I belong to what is beyond the world I live upon; my world is bigger than this; that sun and moon are my lamps; all that I see in the sky concerns me.' Thus astrology was born. And throughout the long ascent, the invisible region under man's feet was part of the same idea: that of reference beyond the mere surface of this earth he lived upon – even in the assumption which, as already pointed out, still survives, to the confusion of thought, as the 'foundation of the world.' Some of us are so wedded to our primitive mental 'heavens' that we resent anything that looks like dissipating into nebulous immensities the comfortable roof hung

solitary case of language, all our developed energies passing under the control of intelligence and reason tend to be), then, we shall find many 'impossibilities' quite feasible, and many things now 'beyond words' clearly expressible (Welby 1983 [1903]: 267–268, n. vi)].

2. [Professor Perry on Tops (1983 [1903]: 28, n. 1)].
3. [The triadic form, into which ideas which belong to the category of positive, comparative, and superlative naturally and conveniently fall, easily becomes a snare. Even Wundt seems to have succumbed to its fascination (*Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 1901). Thus too much stress must not be laid upon triads which seem both to fit facts and to correspond with each other. Yet it may be worth noticing that the triad 'specific, generic, ordinal' found in *Outlines of Sociology* (Lester Ward, 1898), broadly answers to what is here called the planetary, the solar, and the cosmical, and thus to sense, meaning, and significance (1983 [1903]: 28–29, n. 3)].

with earth-kindled lamps and populated not only by cloud-cuckoos but by all manner of (reflected) animals and men, and furnished with a convenient psychological zodiac.

To such a mind, then, the attempt to show that the most deeply ingrained usages of language may have, as Dr. Tylor says, more significance than we suppose, seems fantastic, just as its 'heavens' in fact do to the rest of us. So does the idea that our appeal to the high, the wide, the deep, the great, though merely quantitative, is also indicative of a vague instinct that there is an actual less and more within the limits of experience. But the mind that recognises three types of experience, 1) answering to 'touch,' 'smell,' and 'hearing' and therefore practically confined to earth and its atmosphere, 2) answering to 'feeling' which transcends this (we *feel*, though we cannot touch, or hear, or see the heat of the sun), 3) answering to 'sight,' the only sense by which we respond to the sidereal universe – such a mind will not fall into this primitive error. It will understand that the response which is here compared to 'sight' is given to a significance which may be compared with, and in another sense constitute, the value of the mental and moral as of the physical cosmos. What we may in a true sense *see* (as e.g. we see Sirius) may yet be beyond all other sense.

Thus we reach what is here expressed by the term significance; a conception which in recent times has become translated into that which used to be known as the mystical element, as though it were an unconscious conversion of that element into modern modes of thought. For it is again science which, having warned us of our dependence upon sense for working knowledge, seeks in the observation of fact for that 'meaning' which, as bringing us truth, is to be the 'value' of her inquiries and experiments, and the interpreter of the messages of sensation. It is science which finally impresses upon us the duty and prerogatives of that scientific imagination which can dare all because it can and does control all, and which therefore points us beyond the sense of things, beyond even, the meaning of things, to their significance, their highest value for us.

It is indisputable that we live and perceive on the three levels or in the three spheres now suggested, though only in a narrow sense.⁴ No one would dispute that we touch, smell, hear, and see on the earth and in its atmosphere; that we do not touch, smell or hear in the solar world, but that we feel and see therein; that we do not even feel though we see in the sidereal universe. As sight is the only sense which literally transcends all the limits of the other senses and carries us out into the 'infinite' universe – we use vision by valid analogy as the main metaphor of thought. Probably it is our liability to visual illusion which has given the 'visionary' and the 'speculative' their meaning of the fanciful and the dreamful. Otherwise what we most need is of course more vision, more clear and distinct 'speculation.' Error arises from some degree of blindness, or of distorted vision, or of darkness or fog. Physical science has emphatically been an extension of the power of

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4. [Curiously enough, though we do speak of the meaning of a word, we never speak of a man of meaning, or of common meaning. To avoid possible confusion, the word 'intention' has been used, throughout these Studies, as the main sense of 'meaning.' But 'intent' would often, for some reasons, be preferable.

It may be desirable here to anticipate a probable objection. We may be once more told that words are quite indifferent; that every one is ready and able to consider and adopt or reject any idea, no matter what the terminology used; and that therefore the appeal to language must be futile or misleading, at least in practical life. The witness to the contrary I have found, however, to be overwhelming.

To cite one instance (taken at the moment and at random) we find the *Daily Graphic* saying in one of its pithy articles, 'It will probably be found that by... making a concession to popular sentiment in the matter of nomenclature the introduction of the metric system will be enormously facilitated' (22 January 1903) (1983 [1903]: 31, n. 1)].

true seeing, which in its turn was originally an extension of 'touch.' (Welby 1983 [1903]: 27–31)

Welby developed her evolutionary view of meaning, knowledge and communication in constant dialogue with progress in the sciences. She kept up to date on all new theories, researched extensively and was always ready to examine any literature she could access. In addition to biology and natural sciences generally, she also focused her attention on such disciplines as astronomy and cosmology (see Ch. 2, below). Relatedly to her meaning triad 'sense,' 'meaning,' and 'significance,' she also proposed a theory of consciousness in three grades: the 'planetary,' 'solar,' and 'cosmical' which, progressing from the 'direct' to the 'doubly indirect,' describe the expansion of perception, experience and knowledge, of expression value and psychic life generally through the interpretive-translative activity of signs. She introduced the concept of 'ex-citation,' that is, the capacity for response to something beyond mere adaptation (which may also be associated to the notion of 'exaptation' as used in biosemiotics [see Sebeok 1986b, 1991b]), as well as the distinction between the concepts of 'generation' and 'self-creation' or 'origination.' In the light of such concepts, human life is viewed as a dynamic response in the continuous flux of life and energy, where conceptions themselves are responses and interpretations received, passed on and developed in the larger flux. Again from *What is Meaning?*:

It has already been suggested, and may here be repeated, that our only fully developed articulate world is planetary, which is also satellitic. To adopt, therefore, within the lines already laid down, the comparison between the sense-world and the planetary, the meaning-world and the solar, the world of significance and the visible universe which includes both, let us see how it vindicates itself in working out.

All 'planetary' knowledge is directly acquired either through observation and experiment, or through processes inductive or deductive. We are in full 'touch' with the world we inhabit. 'Solar' knowledge, on the contrary, is one remove from this. We can indirectly explore both our sun and sister planets in a way impossible in the case of the suns which used to be called fixed stars, and the unsounded depths beyond even these. Thus 'cosmical' knowledge is in a sense doubly indirect, as though we needed a third instrument corresponding to the spectroscope to give us the spectra of the stars found recorded on the photographic plate attached to the telescope.

A system of thought may be a means of relation, of interpretation, of emancipation; it may absorb other systems by recognising their validity, and by perceiving its own inadequacy except from a specified point of view or in a specified sense. All systems here formulable are presumably planetary; the burden of proof that they are more falls on the thinker. This proof must depend on the predictive as well as on the harmonising and absorbent power of any system. [.]

Whatever our view of (the whole of) things knowable may be – whether monistic, dualistic, or pluralistic – whether we are materialist, realist, or idealist – we are compelled, at least, to speak of the mental and physical as though they were different spheres. And the absence of any recognised criterion of analogy, and therefore of metaphor, the confusion of the equative with the comparative, of both with the illustrative, and of this with the merely rhetorical, tends to confound what may be reflection with what at best may be refraction, or an image of no more value than the baby's picture of man or the 'signs' of a fabulous zodiac.

Thus, though it has to be said, first, that the three grades or levels of consciousness (and therefore of experience) here suggested as the human heritage are, on the one hand, 'grades' of the physical, and on the other 'grades' of the psychical, such a suggestion must be understood in the sense above indicated. And we may postpone the misused word spiritual

because 1) it assumes too much; and 2) it embodies obsolete conceptions of nature, though by no means these alone. With this proviso we may repeat that the planetary consciousness is for all practical purposes fully developed. Whether we are aware of it or no, this world is the measure of our ordinary experience and our ordinary ideas, conceptions, and theories. The 'struggle for existence' has secured this. The only reservation here necessary is caused by the extraordinary backwardness of our rational thought of the world, as betrayed, and fostered, by the falsities of civilised language. In ancient days man's thinking accurately followed and corresponded to his physical conceptions; it was everywhere consistent with the current view of the cosmos; with the accredited ideas of matter, of light, of heat, of life, etc. Now everywhere our thinking, as language shows us, is more or less false to the facts which, by the agency of scientific method, we know as we never before knew them.

The 'solar' answers to the scientific activities, made possible by the leisure and protection of civilisation, and stimulated by more and more complex demands upon brainwork. The astrophysicist has become the representative 'solarist'; but he is not content to stop there. He is always exploring and endeavouring to interpret the 'depths' and contents of cosmic space. Thus he also has a lesson for us – one of the upmost significance.

It is a fact curiously overlooked, that whereas Christianity has been condemned on the score of being geocentric, and we are always being reminded how completely the Copernican astronomy discredits the notion of this little earth becoming the centre of Divine attention, modern psychology has taken its place, and works throughout on the assumption that 'mind' does originate on this planet. What if this be the reason for the comparative barrenness of its results as yet? What if the assumption – merely for the sake of argument – that 'mind' is essentially derivative, and that its conditions answer to those of light and gravitation and to those of the world on which it is found, should give us a clue hitherto wanting, and go far to explain what seems now simple aberration in the long story of human 'belief' in spirit or in revelation? What if here, as elsewhere, what we need is translation in the widest sense – the power to master the many dialects of thought, and interpret men to each other by learning their thought-tongues? (Welby 1983 [1903]: 94–97)

[...] In Significs we are not, therefore, claiming to add one more to the historical systems or methods of thought already existing. Rather does it aim at and indeed imply the assimilation and translation of all modes of arriving at truth – to be a Way which is the interpretation and co-ordination of all ways. (Welby 1983 [1903]: 99)

Of course man must always interpret the Cosmos in terms of his own sense-experience. No other is available. He has no choice but to 'project' his own sense-scheme on to his surroundings. And he cannot directly know, he can only infer what transcends that sense-experience; beginning with perception he conceives, constructs, concludes, 'creates' his world in rational order, which implies its analysis. But having done this the post-Copernican principle begins to tell. The sense-scheme itself is presumably derived like the world on which it is found.

Physiology warns us that even the term 'motor' is dangerous as implying 'spontaneous origination of forces.' 'A centre is an organ of return of action, and the type of all motor action is a reflex act.'⁵ This principle is recognised by all leading physiological workers, e.g. by Hitzig, Munk, Bastian, Foster. All action is literally ex-cited – called from beyond; all physiological phenomena are generated, not self-created. The presumption, then, is that

5. [Dr. A. Waller, 'On the Functional Attributes of the Cerebral Cortex,' *Brain*, Parts lix and lx: 345 (1983 [1903]: 101, n. 1)].

we do not originate and then 'project' our highest conceptions; we receive and pass them on, though it may be in woefully childish dialects.

We have to credit the sun with the constituents of the earth. But we no longer suppose that these have been bestowed on the sun by the earth. When we say that given gases are in the sun, we are only giving back intellectually what we have received materially. The cosmos and our sun in particular endows us with all our 'gases,' our liquids, our solids, and all our energies.

Once more the presumption is all against the geocentric view that our little satellite is the mental centre of the universe; according to the post-Copernican order the human world cannot be centred on itself. Man is heliotropic, he is beyond that cosmotropic, moving round a moving centre on a way beyond his ken. The primitive mind, much closer than we are to its mother-life in the protozoon, may well have been organically 'conscious' of its ultra-earthly origin – its nervous system restlessly thrilling with survivals of primordial pulses which have trembled into life upon our cooling planet. The promise and potency of all mind as well as life have lain within the swathes of cosmic cloud, the nebulous embryos of a million worlds. Man is evolved through zoophytes from the interaction of the atomic forces in a nebula. As G.H. Lewes says, 'A stream of molecular energy flows through the organism from the great cosmic source, and returns to the ocean whence it came. For the organism is but an unit in the great sum of things. The continuity of Existence admits no break. Our life is a moment in the larger life.'⁶ How then can we seriously suppose that what we call 'mind' or 'intelligence' is so absolutely independent of 'life' that there is no greater mind to be its cosmos or even its special sun? Yet the same writer can say that 'we are the centres to which the intelligible universe converges, from which it radiates,' and insist that 'the human point of view is in all respects absolute and final for us.'⁷ So, with more excuse, said the ancient cosmologists of their tiny world. But science has at last exploded that theory; and as we are in any case confined to analogy, we are bound to keep as long as we can to those furnished not only by astronomy, but also by biology, and especially by that plant-life which so wonderfully grasps and embraces, so to speak, the radiant energy of the sun, and transfigures it into leaf and flower and fruit. John Fiske may well say that here we reach something deeper than poetry. (Welby 1983 [1903]: 101–103)

Furthermore, returning to the question of figurative expression, Welby made recurrent use of a repertoire of images from optics and astronomy, with particular reference to vision and sight supported by such refined instruments as the telescope:

Two things must, of course, be borne in mind. One, that when we use analogically the physiological processes of vision, we are bound to take the true ones so far as they are known. Thus we have no right to speak of the eye as though it were adjusted to the near, and needed to strain with painful effort to discern the far (as we so often do when contrasting philosophy with science or practical life), but rather as 'focussed to infinity'; while what requires muscular effort is the vision of – the tangible. Another, that not merely do we look through our sense-window at a vast star-peopled universe as real as our own world – a universe of which the telescope reveals further depths but no limits – but also that we can devise a mechanical eye (the sensitive plate) which shall 'see' and record a further world of suns and nebulae beyond even the power of the telescope to reveal to the human eye.⁸ That is a triumph of indirect evidence. And after all, as Professor Tait says, 'it is

6. ['Problems of Life and Mind,' vol. ii: 463 (1875) (1983 [1903]: 102, n. 1)].

7. [Ibidem: 16 (1983 [1903]: 103, n. 1)].

8. [The invention of the telescope is to me the most beautiful ever made. Familiarity both in making and in using has only increased my admiration. With the exception of the microphone

to sight that we are mainly indebted for our knowledge of external things. All our other senses together, except under very special conditions, do not furnish us with a tithe of the information we gain by a single glance.⁹ (Welby 1983 [1903]: 103–104)

An important aspect of Welby's work was her plan to develop an adequate theoretical-linguistic apparatus in a significant key to review and re-evaluate the history of the development of the human species and account for the development of human behaviour, beliefs, and expression. A determining condition for the evolution of sensual perception, experience and expression in the human world is the ongoing development of the capacity to signify. Proceeding in this direction, Welby's studies on problems of language and meaning pushed well beyond the limits of a philological-historical approach to semantics as ideated, for example, by Michel Bréal (1832–1915). While confronting her own position with others (see Ch. 3), Welby focused on language and meaning as part of the broader context of signifying processes beyond the verbal. Accordingly, she did not limit her studies to the strictly linguistic or verbal sphere, characteristic of semantics, or to approaches tagged today as 'speech act theory' or 'text theory.' With her studies on the relation between signs and life, signs and evolution, Welby anticipated contemporary developments in biosemiotics (see, for example, Thomas A. Sebeok [1920–2001] and his 'global semiotics' or 'semiotics of life'). Welby studied the organic in light of the inorganic, human signs in light of nonhuman signs, verbal signs in light of nonverbal signs, the life of signs in light of the signs of life.

In Welby's view the bad use of language implied the bad use of logic, incoherence and confusion in reasoning which deviated evolutionary development (see Ch. 4). Consequently, she invested the 'critique of language' not only with the task of diagnosing the maladies of language, but also with the therapeutic power of recovering and reinvigorating linguistic expressivity. Coherently with her significant perspective, she theorized the need for regeneration on an expressive, logical and behavioural level, but interconnectedly with the ethical level as foreseen by the architectonics of her thought system. She elected children as a model for humanity, being critics *par excellence* thanks to their enthusiasm, curiosity and natural sense for exploration, experimentation, and interrogation (expressed in their continual hows?, whats?, and whys?) (see Ch. 4). With abundant examples from literary writing, from the aesthetic domain at large, as well as from the scientific, Welby contrasted the order of discourse and its monologic constrictions to the provocation of questions, criticism, the plurality of different voices and viewpoints, the capacity for creativity, invention and innovation.

of the late Professor Hughes, which enabled one to hear otherwise inaudible sounds, sight is the only sense that we have been able to enormously increase in range (Professor W.H. Perkin's Presidential Address, Brit. Assoc., 1900) (1983 [1903]: 103)].

9. ['Light,' *Encyc. Brit.*, 9th edit. (1983 [1903]: 104)].

1.5. The spreading of her ideas and significs

There's some that will welcome Significs,
 Since that will ban puzzle and trick;
 But there's more that will favour the Sniffics,
 The sign of the skulls that are thick.

The pretender fights shy of Significs,
 Which shows up his plausible score;
 The worker despises the Sniffics,
 For that is the pride of the bore.
 (V. Welby, Box 37, file 10, WCYA)

That Welby and her significs were not completely forgotten during the twentieth century is due to the fact that her name comes up in relation to other scholars, more than to the intrinsic value of her studies which are not necessarily familiar to researchers, at least not officially. For example, she is known to Vailati, van Eeden, Russell, and Peirce scholars because of her correspondence. And, in fact, as anticipated above, though the corpus of her letter exchanges is still mostly unpublished, with exceptions as in the case of her correspondence with Peirce, small collections are available here and there (see Vailati 1971; van Eeden-Welby 1954; for Welby's exchanges with Russell in German translation, see Schmitz 1995; for excerpts in Italian translation, see Petrilli 1998a; in English see Ch. 3 this volume).

Included in Russell's autobiography is a letter of 20 July 1904 to 'Goldie' (alias Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, 1862–1932), in which he mentions Welby:

I have never read Lady Welby's writings, but she sent me some remarks on my book, from which I judged that she is interested in a good many questions that interest me. I doubt very much, all the same, how much she understood my book. I know too little of her to know whether I should understand her or not. (Russell 1967: 195)

The book Russell was referring to is *The Principles of Mathematics*, 1903, analysed by Welby and reviewed by Peirce in 1903 in relation to Welby's own monograph, *What is Meaning?* In spite of his perplexities, Russell's correspondence with Welby lasted from 1904 to 1910. The first letter is dated 1 February 1904: as Welby recounted to Peirce, she had approached Russell with her considerations on his *Principles*. Russell responded as follows:

... Since I wrote my book, I have come to think the questions connected with meaning even more important than I then thought them: the logical nature of description seems to me now about the most fundamental and about the most difficult of all philosophical questions. ...

I agree entirely with what you say about language and making it do its work better. For definitely mathematical purposes, the symbolism which has been developed out of Peano gives an ideal of precision, but it will only express mathematical ideas. A similar work ought to be done for other ideas: but I feel that a technical language, without unphilosophical associations, is almost indispensable, e.g. verbs without tense are necessary to a right philosophy of time ... (Russell to Welby 1903–1905, in Cust 1931: 128)

Welby was also in contact with French philosophers such as André Lalande (1867–1963) and Louis Couturat (1868–1914), as well as with the Germans such as the sociologist Tönnies: all envisaged an international language (an idea to which Welby did not fully subscribe), and shared an interest in the critique of language with special reference to philosophical and psychological terminology (the ‘Welby Prize’ awarded to Tönnies was dedicated to such issues, see 2.8, below). Welby’s approach to the critique of language may be compared to that of Fritz Mauthner (1849–1923), author of *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* in three volumes (published between 1901–1902 and reedited in 1912) and of the philosophical dictionary *Wörterbuch der Philosophie. Neue Beiträge zur einer Kritik der Sprache* (1910–1911, reedited in 1923). Important also is the connection between Welby’s significs and the Signific Movement in the Netherlands, which it originated through the mediation of van Eeden (see Ch. 7).

The thesis that Welby significantly influenced her contemporaries and cultural environment is feasible if we keep account of the extension and theoretical consistency of her epistolary exchanges. However, despite explicit traces of her ideas in the writings of others, she remained mostly unacknowledged. Scholars like F. W. H. Myers (1903), Oliver Lodge (1903), Samuel Alexander (1909), and Conwy Lloyd Morgan (1912)¹⁰ referred to her triad or three levels of consciousness – the planetary, solar, and cosmic (see Welby 1983 [1903]: 90–96; and Schmitz 1985b: cviii–cxi). In his book *Cities in Evolution* (1915), Patrick Geddes uses Welby’s meaning triad ‘sense,’ ‘meaning’ and ‘significance’ without recognizing his source, except privately in his correspondence.¹¹

10. Excerpt from a letter by Welby to Sir Oliver Lodge:

The rest of your Paper (*Hibbert Journal*, July, 1903) is virtually an application of the thesis of my book. There are two conceptions of the universe, both as mental and as physical. One is in fact Ptolemaic; the other is post-Copernican. Certainly I do not conceive ‘life and mind’ as independent of matter and unlimited in individual duration. I would relate life and mind more definitely to motion; and I would suggest that our present ideas of time are more archaic than we think and are responsible for some at least of the controversy which you describe. (in Cust 1931: 95)

Excerpt from a letter by Welby to Ferdinand C. Schiller:

As you say, the triad has a familiar form, but I am interested in your reversal. [...] I cannot help wishing (judging from his letters to me) that Myers had begun a littler higher up. I used to inflict on him an early and crude form of the ‘cosmic’ triad and also translation. But he seemed still to think in planetese (instead of in planets). (Cust 1931: 105–106)

Excerpt from a letter by Schiller to Welby:

I heard Professor Lloyd Morgan’s discourse at the Psychical Society, and he used, you will be interested to hear, some of your phraseology to indicate the various levels of psychic process: instinct, perception and conception = ‘sense,’ ‘meaning’ and ‘significance.’ I sat next to him at dinner afterwards and taxed him with it, whereupon he owned up. (Cust 1931: 216)

11. As Patrick Geddes writes to Welby:

Hence, to clear up your logic and see what meaning is, I want you to look at each signific point (word, element) through the synthetiscope. *Per contra*, to straighten out my philosophy, you want me to tackle it afresh through the signifiscope! Isn’t that it? Note, I beg, that for the two tasks there is in my mind now only one instrument – only we look in at opposite ends! You see, in short, that I am gradually creeping after you (though your ‘self’ in ‘time’ eludes me still!)

P. S. – Will it reassure you a little that (while gymfriscopes must remain for a time

In contrast, the Italian scholar Alessandro Levi (1912) publicly acknowledged Welby in his inaugural lesson delivered at the University of Ferrara on 5 November 1911.¹² In his groundbreaking study on Welby, Schmitz (1985b) devotes an entire chapter divided into ten sections to Welby's influence on as many contemporaries. In order of appearance these include: Lalande, Tönnies, Stout, Baldwin, Peirce, Russell, Schiller, Ogden and the novelist H. G. Wells with whom too she exchanged letters from 1897 to 1910. According to Max Fisch (1986), Welby influenced the orientation of Peirce's studies during the last decade of his life, from the time of his Lowell and Harvard Lectures of 1903 through to his death in 1914. On the relation between Welby's signifiacs and Wells's novels, which seems to have escaped the attention of his critics, see Schmitz 1985b: clxxxiv–clxxxix. And if we extend our gaze beyond her direct contacts, the hypothesis of her indirect influence on such personalities as Wittgenstein is also feasible and certainly interesting to explore (see Nolan 1990; and Ch. 8, this volume).

The 'rediscovery' of signifiacs today is largely (though not exclusively) a consequence of Welby's correspondence with Peirce. The 1977 collection edited by Hardwick (see Ch. 3) was a particularly important editorial event, and reinforced the fact that if Welby was not entirely forgotten in semiotic circles throughout the twentieth century this was largely due to her relations with Peirce (see Sebeok 1976; Walther 1974, 1983; Weiner 1962). Through Welby's mediation, Peirce was introduced to English scholars including Russell, Schiller, Stout, Baldwin, and Ogden. In relatively recent times, from approximately the 1970s onwards, renewed interest in Peirce's research and in American pragmatism generally has, in turn, contributed to the rediscovery of signifiacs. From this point of view, the volume by Horace S. Thayer, *Meaning and Action. A Critical History of Pragmatism*, of 1968, has special merits for its reconstruction of the influence exerted by Welby over Ogden, Schiller, Peirce and Russell, for its description of the relation between Vailati's semantic analysis and signifiacs, and attribution to Welby of the massive interest in England for questions of meaning during the years between the publication of *What is Meaning?*, in 1903, and *Signifiacs and Language*, in 1911 (see Schmitz 1985b: xv). From this perspective another excellent volume specifically on the early history of pragmatics in Europe and America between 1780 and 1930 must now also be noted, a monograph by Brigitte Nerlich and David D. Clarke entitled *Language, Action, and Context*, 1996.

Charles K. Ogden and Ivor A. Richards included an excerpt from letter exchanges between Welby and Peirce in an Appendix to their book of 1923, *The Meaning of Meaning*, renowned as an epochal study on language and meaning, which contributed to Peirce's official introduction to the scholarly reading public in England. A selection from the correspondence between Welby and Ogden, edited and commented by myself, was published in *Semiotica*, in 1995 (see Ch. 7, this volume). Even if indirectly, *The Meaning of Meaning* recalls the work of Bréal, author of *Essai de sémantique*, 1897, on one hand,

at least of esoteric interest!) I have been guilty of putting the sequence of 'sense, meaning, significance' into my penny popular guide to the *Outlook Tower*? In fact as my current explanation of the 'outlook' altogether? (Cust 1931: 272–273)

12. Where in his comment on the need to examine the precise meaning of words and ideas, he signals Welby's own research with specific reference to her 1911 monograph, *Signifiacs and Language* (see Levi 1912: 19).

and is continued under certain aspects in the research of Charles Morris, on the other. An English translation of Bréal's book by Victoria Welby's daughter was published in 1900, with a Preface and an Appendix by John Percival Postgate (1853–1926), who also wrote the introduction to the first edition of Ogden and Richards's 1923 volume. Morris author of such books as *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, 1938, *Signs, Language and Behavior*, 1946, and *Signification and Significance*, 1964, may be placed in the same tradition of thought as Peirce.

Welby's name also appears in relation to studies on meaning in the direction of General Semantics (in particular for the ethical aspects of language). Representatives like Stuart Chase, Alfred Korzybski (1950) (for a detailed critique of Korzybski's semantics, see Schaff 1960), and Charles S. Hayakawa (1954) make explicit references to Welby (see Neuberg 1962). By contrast with Korzybski who does not interpret general semantics as deriving from signifiacs (he claims to have outlined his own system in 1926, before discovering Welby's research), Hayakawa describes *The Meaning of Meaning* by Ogden and Richards as a continuation of Welby's signifiacs, and general semantics as originating from signifiacs, on the one hand, and from *Principia Mathematica* (published from 1910 onwards) by Whitehead and Russell, on the other (see Schmitz 1985b: xiii).

Further references to Welby's work, even if fleeting, are not lacking: for example, Charles Morris cites *What is Meaning?* in *Signs, Language and Behavior* (1946); Colin Cherry reminds scholars of semantics about signifiacs in his book of 1957 on human communication; *What is Meaning?* is listed by the Polish scholar Adam Schaff in his 1960 study on semantics, *Wstęp do semantyki*; Frank Palmer mentions Welby in *Semantics*, 1976; Eschbach includes Welby's works in his 1974 bibliography of semiotic studies; her name appears in *Semiotica. I fondamenti della semiotica cognitiva*, 1979, an anthology of Peirce's writings in Italian translation with excerpts from Peirce's correspondence to Welby on the classification of signs and his existential graphs, now part of the larger volume collecting Peirce's writings in Italian translation, edited by Massimo A. Bonfantini, *Opere*, 2003.¹³

1.6. The archives, her unpublished materials and re-editions of her works

Welby wrote over a period of approximately sixty years including her child's travel diary of 1852, her unpublished poetry, and her published and unpublished scientific writings. These materials have been mostly organized in two different archives: 1) the Welby Collection at the York University Archives and Special Collections (Scott Library), York University (North York, Ontario, Canada), which preserves the bulk of her unpublished writings, articles and essaylets (in some cases privately published), and her correspondence with over 450 people, which is mostly unpublished; and 2) the Lady Welby Library, University of London Library, Senate House, which includes approxi-

13. For re-editions and translations of Victoria Welby's writings, see the section below; for an update – without claims to exhaustiveness – concerning publications on Welby or somehow relating to her, see Reference section, 'Writings on Welby, the Signific Movement and current developments,' this volume.

mately 1,000 of the original 3,000–4,000 volumes (counting books and journals) from her private library, often closely annotated by Welby in handwriting on the page margins. We also have news of scientific papers by Welby through her correspondence, such as her unpublished essay ‘Mental Biology’ (now in Ch. 2, this volume), amply commented and discussed in *Echoes of Larger Life*. Most of her private writings, including diaries and letters to her family are missing. Other materials at the archives count the biographical volume *Wanderers* by her daughter and the two volumes of correspondence *Echoes of Larger Life* and *Other Dimensions* (see above). Writings by different authors are also present in Welby’s archives, collected, studied and annotated by herself, testifying to the great variety and comprehensiveness of her interests. (For a detailed description of the Lady Welby Library at London University, see Baker 1990: 279–287; and of the Welby Collection at the York University Archives, see Bowsfield 1990: 275–278).

A catalogue entitled, *List of Books in the Lady Welby Library, Presented by Sir Charles Welby*, describes the books Welby had in her possession, being books she herself had annotated and catalogued according to the following main subject areas: Religion, Philosophy, Physiography, Ethnology, Anthropology and Folklore, History, Biography, Sociology, Education, General Science and Physics, Mathematics, Astronomy, Biology, Medecine, Physiology and Hygiene, Botany and Zoology, Art, Philology, Literature. In addition to these volumes from Welby’s library, thus catalogued and distributed according to subject throughout the London University general library, the Lady Welby Library counts 25 boxes, *Uncatalogued Pamphlets*, numbered from 1 to 31 (Box numbers 5, 7, 22, 23, 26, and 28 are not related to Welby), presenting materials that have not been catalogued: these include writings by others in the form of essays, articles, abstracts, pamphlets, extracts from journals, newspaper cuttings, sermons, lessons, conferences, poems, narrative, mostly sent to Welby by the authors themselves. The subject areas covered include: language theory, etymology, philology, literature, history, history of the Church, topography, geography, travel literature, religion, philosophy, psychology (human, animal, general and experimental), the occult sciences, medicine, logic, ethics, aesthetics, jurisprudence, political economy, social problems, the social condition of women, education, mathematics, and much more. Newspapers and journals consulted by Welby, to which she also contributed her own writings, include: *Quarterly Review*, *National Review*, *Parent’s Review*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *Mind*, *The Monist*, *The British Quarterly*, *Fortnightly Review*, *The New Review*, *Critical Review*, *Awakened India*, *East & West*, *Lux Mundi*. Another four unnumbered boxes (A, B, C, D) collect copies of Welby’s own publications.

In the Welby Collection at the York University Archives documents are distributed among 42 boxes, some of which are available on microfilm. Almost half of them, from Box 1 to 21, contain Welby’s correspondence for the years 1861 to 1912 (the two volumes edited by her daughter, *Echoes of Larger Life*, 1929, and *Other Dimensions*, 1931, cover the years 1879–1891 and 1898–1911, respectively). The remaining half of the boxes are numbered from 22 to 42 and ordered according to the following Subject Files: *Biology*, *Education*, *Ethics*, *Eugenics*, *I and Self*, *Imagery*, *Language and Expression*, *Life*, *Logic*, *Mother-sense*, *Matter and Motion*, *Number Theory*, *Philosophy*, *Poetry*, *Art*, *Music*, *Primal sense*, *Psychology*, *Significs*, *Sociology*, *Time*, *Translation*. These documents are written in various discourse genres: in addition to a significant quantity of typescript studies ready for publication in the form of articles and books, they present

critical annotations, extracts from different sources, philosophical reflections, notes, quotations, abstracts, speeches, sermons, aphorisms, parables, lessons, work plans, titles for essays and books to write, interviews, critical comments by Welby on publications by others and vice versa, etc. This collection includes a large file containing Welby's poetry, also worthy of publication. Furthermore, studies are included relative to Francis Galton's research on eugenics, also to the 1896 'Welby Prize,' as well as to Italian philosopher and mathematician Giovanni Vailati's research and writings. Other items include a catalogue of books originally from Welby's private library (and now in the London University Library), book reviews, translations by Welby and copies of some of her publications. The constant characteristic of this multiform intellectual laboratory is the unity of Welby's significal perspective.

A selection of unpublished papers on mother-sense, imagery, ambiguity, subjectivity, eugenics, biology, time, education, translation and significs has been included in the present volume: these papers were mostly written between 1903 and 1912 and in many cases had been edited for publication. At the time of her death, Welby was still planning to publish a series of volumes, including *What is & What Might Be* described in her correspondence with Ogden as her 'last book,' 'the crowning volume,' 'the more important volume of the Signific series,' promising important developments from a significal viewpoint for education (Welby to Ogden, 20 September 1911, WCYA Box 11, now Ch. 7, this volume, see also Petrilli 1995a). Other projects in the making have emerged from the archives: in a letter to Schiller dated 15 March 1901, Welby mentions another book she was working on entitled *Significs: Its Method, Its Applications, Its Products*. The file *Significs-Ambiguity* (WCYA, Box 30, File 44, for other projects from this same file, see Ch. 4) includes a provisional 'Table of Contents' for a book in two parts, the first of which was subdivided into five chapters, sent to the editor of *The Mathematical Gazette*, William J. Greenstreet, as Welby's supervisor for this particular project. The typewritten page begins with a series of annotations followed by the book plan:

W. Greenstreet's Programme, January 1912 [in handwriting]

Sketch of provisional Preface for the new book. State clearly in what respect it differs from those already published (Encyc. Brit. Article, &c.).

Send to Mr. Greenstreet materials for selection for each successive chapter according to provisional Table of Contents.

Query. How to contrive that only hitherto-unused-material be sent to him?

Immediately after these notes follows the scheme for a book which Welby never published, a Table of Contents covering issues that she had researched extensively over the years as testified by her writings in the archives. This particular manuscript is dated January 1912, exactly the month Welby fell sick, never to recover, dying soon after, in March that same year:

Contents

Part I

-
- I. Significs provisionally defined,
sign, sense, signification, significance, meaning, interpretation, &c*
 - II. The Need for Significs
 - III. Analogy, Metaphor and Imagery
 - IV. The Power, actual and potential, of Expression
 - V. The Method of Significs.

Part II

Applied Significs

-
- I. Translation (Vailati, &c)
 - II. Philosophy
 - III. Science
 - IV. Education

*Its relations to new subjects and questions: e.g. to Eugenics.

A book mentioned by Welby in a letter to Ogden of 11 November 1911 would seem to correspond to this plan: 'I am very hard at work starting the new book with the editing advice of Mr. Greenstreet. It will be emphatically a book of reference on the subject. I should like to give you an idea of the mass of virtual appeals from all sides for what I am doing my best to supply until worthier workers arise. But cannot hope to retain full powers for hard work much longer' (WCYA, Box 11). Jacob Israël de Haan (1881–1924), a Dutch Jew, poet and giurist, examined Welby's manuscripts as one of her followers during a visit to Harrow with van Eeden a few months after her death (see Ch. 7, this volume). According to his report in an article (in Dutch) of 1915, 'Nieuwe rechtstaal-wijsbegeerte' (p. 458), the proposed title for this book was *Handbook of Significs* (see Schmitz 1985b: lxxv and n. 114).

Other editorial projects are described in the Welby Collection at the York University Archives. A file entitled 'Personalalia ("Projects of Draft Schemes of Books")' (Box 28, Subject File 29) presents a series of brief typewritten notes, dated between 1896 and 1910, drafts of book plans, and suggested titles of essays which Welby intended to write herself or have others write. The meaning of the term 'Personalalia' is explained in a handwritten note as follows: "'Personalalia," i.e., I. Personal Psychology and Point of View; II. Projects, or Draft-Schemes of Books, etc. Put into Chronological Order, January 1907.'

Miscellaneous Earlier Notes, dated and undated, November 1906

Heads of my subjects and proposed sections of book on

- 1) I and self and the need of new definitions of conscious identity and new distinctions within it.
- 2) The approach to this and all similar problems from the idea of motion and the dynamic, instead of Matter and the static.

- 3) Time as distinctly derived from Space as Room + motion, Change and succession.
- 4) The consistent use from this point of view of the inevitable analogy between 'body' and 'mind'; which at present ignores the primacy of function and the implication of a mental brain.
- 5) The tendency to triadism. What does it indicate? A more primitive method of numeration than that now accepted?

Heads of possible second book

(*'Notes on Applied Significs and various others,'* November 1906)

Introduction:

Development and illustrations of ideas suggested in *What is Meaning?* Answers to critical objections. Examples of the application of Significs 1) to theoretical, 2) to practical problems.

Sections on

- 1) I and self and the need of new experimental definitions of personal identity and new distinctions within it already (in English) idiomatically but inconsistently made.
- 2) On the substitution of the dynamic for the static mode of expressing this and all similar theses.
- 3) On Time as an idea strictly derived from Space + Motion (change and succession). Experience as the real meaning of much that is now called temporal.
- 4) On the consistent use of the inevitable analogy between 'body' and 'mind'; involving the disuse of some of its inherited forms and the adoption of others only now become scientifically permissible.
- 5) Inquiry into the main and the secondary sense of terms like Mind, Spirit, etc. (in English usage) as revealing or suggesting the mental attitude and its [illegible] and growth.
- 6) On the tendency to triadism in human thought; its causes, its advantages, its dangers.
- 7) Short miscellaneous Notes, psychological and social. (E.g. the germs of the telepathic idea: the difference between the impulses of the isolated individual and the unit of a human 1) group, 2) crowd, 3) nation and finally race. The mental infection of mental as aggregation: fanatical sects, panic, corporate 'courage.' The dishonesty of the honest man in some 'corporation' or committee or 'board.' Efficiency in community and in isolation. The necessity of learning to subject consciousness to any test or form of experience desired and to exchange 'points of view' at will. Also of learning to read animal experience better than we do – having begun this by studying the Child)

Parables. Aphorisms.

The Unborn Church which when born shall draw all men unto it, drawing out of them by an unfailling attraction all that is most human and best in them; a Community set on a hill and in the full light; not 'believed' in but recognized and trusted as the divinely natural ideal. (Box 28, Subject File 29)

Immediately after, the same file presents the following typewritten draft of what would seem another book plan, on a single page and incomplete (the immediately subsequent page is missing from the file, at least as it was sent to me):

Significs

Very inadequate, December 1906 (date of typing)

[Handwritten annotation on top of the page].

1. Method
2. Applications

Educational
 Psychological
 Philosophical
 Linguistic and practical

3. Products of Method

- Suggested advance in outlook or mode of perception; and in use of physical analogies: the 'binocular' and the heliotropic: the 'three grades of consciousness and experience.' The metaphor of curve as primary and of straight line as secondary; those of motion before those of matter, of function before structure; of biological ascent through the spinal to the cortical, etc. (Also the reversal of the 'inner' and 'outer' mind).
4. Significs as a critique of meaning and therefore of analogy and imagery supplies the principle of philosophical equation: i.e.
 5. Translation: transformation, transmutation, transfiguration (the ideally figurative); and careful distinction between these.
 6. Possible results of fresh perspective in thought (outcome of the Signific method): of 'indirect' inquiry: of 'refraction' added to 'reflection.' The scientific use of the indirect as method of observation, translated into thought.
 7. Fresh applications of Significs (in the light of what has now been brought forward) to the question of the primitive mind. Its dependence upon Sense: its inexorable logic, the urgency of the reflex order of psychological response which is the legacy of the early life-form. The true human query; Is there a break? The apparent paradox, etc. Evidence for the view there suggested.
 8. The moment of human arrival at the idea of the Three; the first odd; the indivisible; that is, we can no longer divide as in the case of Two. Different forms ancient and modern, of apprehending this and dealing with it. The enormous and largely neglected or misunderstood influence of this unique...

Other files in the Welby Collection present diagrams, photographs, and Welby's literary writings – mainly unpublished reflections of a philosophical and scientific order in verse, ready for publication, as in the case of texts contained in Box 37, file 10, 'Poems of Victoria Welby: *Thoughts in Rhythm*.' As mentioned in the Introduction to this volume, Welby's poems recall the *wisdom poetry* of Charles Morris (see Morris 1966, 1976; Sebeok 1981), and both recall the poetry of Walt Whitman (1819–1892).

Archives relating to other authors also preserve writings by Welby or on Welby and her significs. These include: the Giovanni Vailati archives, University of Milan, which presents the correspondence between Vailati and Welby; the Tönnies archives at the Schleswig-Holsteinischen Landesbibliothek in Kiel, Germany (see Zander 1980): Welby's letters to Tönnies are lacking, but there are letters which testify to his contribution to the spread of significs in Germany and France through his correspondence with Otto Neurath, Rudolph Carnap, Harald Höffding, André Lalande, Rudolph Eucken, Wilhelm Dilthey and others; the archives at the Frederik van Eeden Museum, Amsterdam University Library (see van Eeden-Welby 1954). (For a general description of archives connected with Welby and her significs, see Schmitz 1985b: xvi–xxii; Petrilli 1998a; and Appendices).

Welby's work has been remembered in its own right with two important editorial events after a prolonged period of relative silence: the new edition of *What is Meaning*, published in 1983, edited with a Preface by Achim Eschbach for the book series *Foun-*

dations of Semiotics, John Benjamins; and *Significs and Language*, 1985, edited and introduced by H. Walter Schmitz. The latter includes Welby's 1911 book by the same title, her essays 'Meaning and Metaphor,' 1893, and 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation,' 1896, a series of previously unpublished 'essaylets,' and a series of short texts written between 1907 and 1908 from the Welby Collection at the York Archives. These materials focus on two important subject areas in Welby's research: 1) the concept of 'mother-sense' or 'primal sense' with the essaylet 'Primal Sense and Significs' (originally 'Mother-sense and Significs,' see Welby 1985a: cclxiv, n. 1), dated 15 April 1907; a *post scriptum* of 18 August 1907; another text of 30 June 1908, in which Welby explains why she replaced the expression 'mother-sense' with 'primal sense'; an excerpt from a letter dated 2 October 1907 from Schiller to Welby with critical comments on 'Primal Sense and Significs' in its original version; and, lastly, Welby's reply dated 20 October 1907 by her daughter (see Ch. 6, this volume). The second subject area concerns: 2) the influence exerted upon language and expression in general by social context with the text 'The Social Value of Expression,' dated 1908. This important collection of Welby's writings opens with an introductory essay by Schmitz entitled 'Victoria Welby's Significs: The Origin of the Signific Movement' (pp. ix–ccxxv), a real and proper monograph (circa two hundred pages) which describes materials available in the archives, reconstructs the history of significs, focuses on its theoretical concerns, and also presents aspects of Welby's biography. The volume is complete with a bibliography of writings by Welby and of the secondary literature on Welby and her significs, as well as of writings somehow inspired by her (see also the bibliographies included in Schmitz 1990c and Petrilli 1998a). Schmitz has authored numerous papers on Welby and her significs, or relating to this area of study; furthermore, he has also edited the volumes *Essays on Significs*, 1990, and with Erik (Albertus Frederik) Heijerman, *Significs, Mathematics and Semiotics: The Significs Movement in the Netherlands*, 1991, which collects the Proceedings of an International Conference held in Bonn in 1986.

Essays on Significs is a collective volume published on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Welby's birth, which develops an editorial project dedicated to key concepts in significs, originally conceived by George F. Stout and John W. Slaughter, the editors, and approved by Welby. Contributions were scheduled from Höffding with a paper entitled, 'Identity and Analogy,' Giovanni Vailati and Mario Calderoni with 'Pragmatism and Meaning,' Charles S. Peirce with 'Assurance from Reasoning.' Further contributions were scheduled from Ferdinand Tönnies, William W. Carlile, Philip Jourdain, Alfred Sidgwick, John P. Postgate as well as from the editors. Stout planned to write the introduction. Though most essays had been collected at the time, publication was repeatedly postponed until the project was definitively abandoned with Welby's death in 1912 (see Hardwick 1977a: 176–177). The 1990 edition of *Essays on Significs* includes essays, here listed in alphabetical order, by Sylvain Auroux, P. M. Baker, Hartwell Bowsfield, Paul Chipcase, Gérard Deledalle, Simone Delesalle, W. Terrence Gordon, Erik Heijerman, David Hughes, Johann G. Juchem, Rita Nolan, Susan Petrilli, Augusto Ponzio, Timothy J. Reiss, H. Walter Schmitz (for further information on the history of this project, see Schmitz 1985b: lxx, cxli–cxliv).

Some of Welby's writings are now available in Italian translation by myself, in the volumes *Significato, metafora, interpretazione*, 1985, *Senso, significato, significatività*, 2007, and *Come interpretare, comprendere, comunicare*, 2009. These include her impor-

tant essays of 1893 and 1896, her encyclopedic entry ‘Significs,’ 1911, and a selection of excerpts from the books *Grains of Sense*, 1897, *What is Meaning?* 1903, and *Significs and Language*, 1911. Some of these translations have been anticipated in the journals *Idee. Rivista di Filosofia*, directed by Mario Signore, and *Athanor. Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura*, directed by Augusto Ponzio (see Welby 1990, 1998, 2002, 2005). An interview held by myself with H. Walter Schmitz on ‘Victoria Lady Welby and Significs’ is available in *The Semiotic Web 1987* (see Petrilli 1988b), thanks to Thomas A. Sebeok who had always promoted my work on Victoria Welby and her significs. This interview is also available in Italian translation in the volume *Significs, semiotica, significazione* (see Petrilli 1988a: 79–93). My research and writing in this area has been ongoing for approximately 30 years now and, in addition to my translations into Italian, has resulted in my Italian monograph, *Su Victoria Welby. Significs e filosofia del linguaggio*, published in 1998, and now the present volume. I have also published numerous essays, in English or Italian, as chapters in collective volumes, including ‘Women in Semiotics,’ 1999, co-authored with Thomas A. Sebeok, and others in journals such as *Semiotica. Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies* and *TTR. Traduction Terminologie Rédaction* (see Petrilli 1996a,b, 1997a,b, 1999a, 2001d, 2003a,b,c,d, 2004a,d, 2005a,d, 2006a,b,c, 2007a,b,c, 2009a). Other writings by myself include: the dictionary entries ‘Significs,’ and ‘Welby, Victoria Lady Welby,’ commissioned by Paul Cobley for *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics and Linguistics*, 2001 (and, also, Cobley ed., *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics*, 2009); the entry ‘Welby, Victoria Alexandrina, Lady Welby (1837–1912),’ commissioned by the *Oxford New Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004; the encyclopedia entry ‘Significs,’ in *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, 2005, commissioned by Marcel Danesi; and the entry ‘Victoria Lady Welby,’ in *Enciclopedia filosofica*, 2006, promoted by Augusto Ponzio. Beyond writings dedicated specifically to Welby and her significs, her work is cited throughout much of my writing, as in, for example, the essays collected by initiative of John Deely in a monographic issue of *The American Journal of Semiotics*, entitled *Sign Crossroads in Global Perspective*, 2008.¹⁴

14. Readers can consult the bibliographies appended at the end of this volume for a more complete list of writings not only by Victoria Welby, but also on Welby and significs or somehow related to this area of study.

The texts

Correspondence from the archives

1.7. A selection from her unpublished correspondence in alphabetical order (1887–1911)

This selection of letters from the unpublished correspondence in the Welby Collection, York University Archives and Special Collections, Toronto, Canada (WCYA), includes excerpts from Welby's correspondence with the following authors, presented in alphabetical order: Edwin Arnold, Andrew C. Bradley, Francis H. Bradley, the brothers Henry and William James, Benjamin Jowett, George F. Stout, with the addition of a few exchanges with the latter's wife, Ella K. Stout. Instead, the correspondence with the following personalities is distributed in the chapters indicated: Michel Bréal, André Lalande, Bertrand Russell, Chapter 3; Giovanni Vailati and Mario Calderoni, Chapter 4; Ferdinand S. C. Schiller, Chapter 6; Charles K. Ogden, Chapter 7. This selection is related to the issues I have highlighted and discussed in this volume. The materials presented were either collected by myself during a brief visit to the York University Archives in 1990, or kindly sent to me subsequently by qualified personnel at the Archives, whom I take the opportunity to thank once again for their precious assistance. Much more material worthy of publication for both theoretical and historical reasons is available in the archives. For the complete list of correspondents, see Appendix 3, this volume.

The dates indicating the duration of each collection correspond to the date of the first and last letter in the files, however materials in the archives are not always complete. They consist of the original handwritten letters, drafts of the originals, or typewritten copies. Often typewritten copies are available, while handwritten originals are missing. In some cases, several typewritten copies of the same letter are available, with variations (photocopying had not yet been invented). Typewritten copies of letter texts are not always full transcriptions of the original or of the draft of the original, nor are omissions always signaled. Paragraphs sometimes run into each other. Opening addresses and closing courtesy formulae are often lacking. They have not been included in the present selection even when available. Extracts of longer letters are sometimes included in the files with the complete version. A type of shorthand is recurrently used that consists in transcribing words partially or leaving out vowels (e.g. 'Phil. Dict.' for 'Philosophical Dictionary,' 'wh' for 'which,' 'questn' for 'question,' etc.): this has been avoided in the present edition to render texts more legible.

My own cuts and interventions in the letter texts (whether the handwritten originals or typewritten copies) are placed between square brackets.

*Between Victoria Welby and Edwin Arnold (1887–1889)**‘Death – and Afterwards’¹⁵

(Notes written at Prof. Tyndall’s request on an article by Edwin Arnold with the above title, in the XIXth Century, 1885).

That which has been ‘born’ must ‘die.’ The two are one: birth and death one event which ‘happens’ to a being, but which is cleft in twain by a little fissure we call life...

Why is life a problem at all? Why is there no categorical explanation (of our consciousness of Divine life) necessarily accepted by every sound mind of sane intelligence? Is it not because a scientifically exhaustive answer cannot be given in the terms of time and space as we now realise them?

When instead of masters they become servants, when instead of blank prison-walls they become open doors and pathways, shall we not enter a new mental world, though one firmly linked in continuity with the present? We need to translate the facts of physical nature into these of moral, mental and spiritual nature.

We need to repudiate with abhorrence the whole machinery of magic and sorcery and *unnatural* prodigy which we have confounded with that which is most natural, most healthy or holy – most sound and whole; that which is to our mind and conscience what the Brain is to our physical structure – its director and its interpreter.

Most truly Mr Arnold says that the highest must belong to the lowest in an unbroken chain. And we are often rebuked by finding the highest type of beauty and fitness in the most despised or ‘lowest’ of microscopic organisms or even particles.

On the other hand, the visible is not necessarily ‘gross’ except in the sense of coarse-grained, *large* in scale; our whole region of sense-perception may represent but one fibre of the tissue of consciousness. Let us try to realise that the current phraseologies only mislead when supposed to embrace *actual fact becoming accessible first to conception, then to consciousness and experience*.

The general tendency of observed order seems to suggest that we have a ‘planetary’ consciousness, or one which naturally starts from this earth as a mental centre; that since the Copernican era began we have been gradually developing a ‘solar’ or ‘systematic’ consciousness, and are already beginning to refer many verified facts to a mental sun as a centre; and that a complete generalization, or satisfying answer to the problems which as yet baffle us, need a ‘cosmical’ consciousness, of which indeed the fore-gleams may be discerned in the very questions we ask, in the very doubts suggested to us, in the very paradoxes of which Nature is full.

* [The correspondence between Victoria Welby and Edwin Arnold (1832–1904) is stored in Box 1, WCYA. This consistent corpus of mostly handwritten letters covers the years between 9 September 1887 and March 1889, of which just a few exchanges are reported here. Some letters are typewritten and bear editorial comments, though only one, dated 30 September 1887, from Arnold to Welby, was included by Mrs. Henry (Nina) Cust, in her 1929 volume of Welby’s correspondence, *Echoes of Larger Life*. The letters here presented revolve around Welby’s comments on Arnold’s article ‘Death and Afterwards,’ written at the request of John Tyndall, and which Arnold wished to include in the reprint of his article. Arnold wrote poems which reflected his experience in India, the most renowned being, ‘The Light of Asia, or The Great Renunciation’ (1879)].

15. [Comments written by Welby on Edwin Arnold’s text ‘Death – and Afterwards,’ 1885, as requested by Prof. John Tyndall, and enclosed in the file containing the correspondence between Welby and Arnold. See also notes 16 and 17 below. Arnold effectively published Welby’s notes in the 1887 reprint of his text].

Or we may consider the same order as the cellular, the functional, and the organic consciousness. A nucleated cell might be: (1) conscious of its own nucleus and of the cell-world only; (2) conscious of the ‘heart’ or ‘lung’ to which it belongs; (3) conscious of the complete Living Organism which is the explanation of the two first, and their actual *raison d’être*. Such a consciousness in the three grades would be strictly related and strictly natural throughout. But of course the second and third would successively appear, and indeed in a true sense would *be* ‘super’ natural (that is, extra-normal) to the first, as long as this first consciousness (the planetary or cellular) was supposed to include and to supply terms for the whole accessible sphere of fact. Many other similar illustrations will occur to us. ‘Cellular’ consciousness of the individual ‘I’ may be compared to the first ‘dimension’ in space – one line only; or to the lowest level in the triad of the physical (or mechanical), the chemical, and the vital order, as given by Clifford, Littré, and all the host of scientists. Or it might be illustrated by the ‘gaseous’ as compared to the liquid and then the solid condition of matter (whatever *that* may be) – or perhaps to the three responses to light and heat – first surface reflection, then absorption, then radiation. But of course all this takes us into the dangerous region of analogy; – dangerous surely for the very reason that the general consciousness is so embryonic; needing therefore rigorous test.

Let us at least recognise the utter futility of discussion or controversy which treats the average or commonly-accepted notions of root-questions at issue as really adequate or representative. No wonder that we can’t make head or tail of this or that, when in the nature of things there are none to make! But it does not follow that because the vertebrate order cannot be described in terms of the protozoic, that we should deliberately relapse into ‘agnostic’ bits of jelly, and denounce bone, muscle or nerve as ‘metaphysic’ or ‘mysticism’ – two of the worst of names to hang a dog by.

Let us faithfully and patiently cultivate the dawning ‘Copernican’ consciousness. Assuredly we shall thus find all our ideals transformed by being ‘lifted up’ into the real. And we may be sure that if our notions are rectified and enlarged and deepened, language will soon begin to follow, and their practically fruitful application to problems of conduct, social and individual, will become possible in a sense hitherto despaired of by most of us.

*Victoria Welby to Edwin Arnold*¹⁶

9 September 1887

Professor Tyndall has just given me your letter¹⁷ with its very kind expressions about a rough note of mine upon your brilliant Article, made at his desire and as I thought for his own eye alone. . . You

16. [This letter with variants is included in *Echoes of Larger Life*. The bionote on Arnold reads as follows: ‘Poet and journalist, author of *The Light of Asia*, etc. The book in question, *Death and Afterwards*, had a considerable success, and he was soon writing: “. . . You will be pleased to hear that the publishers have sold 2000 copies, so that your noble ideas, which I consider the golden border to my ‘coat of frieze,’ have now gone far and wide”’ (Cust 1929: 185)].

17. [Here Welby is referring to a letter from Arnold to John Tyndall, dated 5 September 1887: ‘But I beg permission to retain the notes you have conveyed to me, which strike me as immensely suggestive, and reveal a mind of very high and wide insight, with great power of lucid expression. I should like to be allowed to print those notes when I re-publish the Article; but I will not, of course, do this without sanction; and should not allude to their origin in any but the most indirect way. As however the rest which you are taking is sacred to all who feel the gratitude and respect for you which I feel, I must avoid entangling you in any further correspondence. I will therefore beg leave after a fortnight’s interval to take silence for a consent – on the part of the writer of the notes – to any employment of them anonymously as the ground for a few supplementary and illustrative paragraphs’].

are more than welcome to make any use of my little suggestions you like, as long as the writer remains unknown.

... I feel more than ever how entirely wide off the mark, for want of some such light as this, most of our controversies as to 'personality' (and the persistence of that force which we know as 'identity') really are. Such expressions as 'immortality' as we understand and use them do not merely fail to cover the ground. They are but half-lights – like the half of a man cloven in two – unless completed by corresponding terms like 'in-natality.' We think of eternal as something which begins and does not end: but the fallacy of this becomes evident if we try to think conversely of something which ends though it does not begin. . .

Edwin Arnold to Victoria Welby

30 Sept 1887

I have been long risking the appearance of an ingratitude which was impossible, by deferring my acknowledgment of your most kind note and welcome enclosure, until I could send you the little Reprint in its public form. Before many days have elapsed I shall have the pleasure of doing this; and you will find your notes reproduced in the pages of which they are the chief embellishment, precisely as you sent them to me.¹⁸ I am greatly struck by more than one passage which they contain; and doubt if ever before, in a few strong and simple words, the underlying 'supernaturalism' of our daily life has been better emphasised. I allude especially to your remarks upon the ultimate basis of physical things in the play and interplay of forces and measured motions.

Believe me that I esteem it an honour to have encountered an intellect so powerful and delicate at the same time; and to have obtained your aid in my little excursus. [...]

(In answer to a remonstrance from V.W. as to the strong expressions he had used, he writes 'You must permit me to be respectful and grateful... to my teachers... I feel certain that the light of your large thoughts will spread far and do real good.')

18. [See Welby 1887a, but the publication by Arnold first appeared in 1885. In the 1887 reprint, Welby's comments, as announced, are included anonymously, and listed in her bibliography as follows: 'Remarks on "Death – and Afterwards." Taken from Letters to Professor John Tyndall and Edwin Arnold.' In Edwin Arnold, *Death – and Afterwards*. Reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review* of August 1885. With a supplement, pp. 41–49, 62. London: Trübner & Co.

The following excerpt dated no more precisely than November 1887, without indication of the addressee, is included in the correspondence between Welby and Arnold: 'The history of my connection with this little book is as follows: – During this summer (1887) while in Switzerland, Professor Tyndall brought me Mr Arnold's original article (which I had not seen since it first appeared) and asked me to give him my thoughts upon it, as he was going to write himself to Mr Arnold and wished to know before doing so, in what light it struck me. I answered that I feared I could not do this; but I would try to jot down some points which had long been in my mind on the same subject. I was too unwell for some time to do this; but at last I noted down in a rough form the first Paper which has been now printed, and sent it to the Professor, as I supposed for his own eye only. Hearing no more, I supposed it was forgotten and forgot it myself, when one day the Professor with many kind expressions brought me a letter to him from Mr Arnold expressing a strong wish to print the Note with his own Reprint; the Professor having sent it to him anonymously without my knowledge. I therefore sent Mr Arnold a revised copy of it, and he has reproduced it as well as another of mine at the end of his own Article'.

Victoria Welby to Edwin Arnold

1 October 1887

The sympathetic warmth of your words only deepens my reverently thankful sense that the truths of which such things are spoken are the heritage of us all, shortly to be entered upon and practically utilised, and in no sense ultimately referable to the most defective ‘individual’ source through which in this case they are suggested.

My wonder, therefore, that words like yours should so often be used of thoughts which come through me gives way to the joy of realising that such spontaneous recognition in many different directions witnesses to the universality of these clues, and encourages the hope of an approaching expansion and intension (if I may use that word) of our consciousness, and thus our knowledge and our faculty, which shall give the answer to some at least of the heart-wringing and mind-baffling questions which are pressing in upon us with clamorous persistence, unstilled by the vain protest that they are unanswerable, and unsatisfied by the half-answers which nowhere rim them round. I shall gladly look forward to the Reprint you have kindly promised me. . .

Edwin Arnold to Victoria Welby

3 January and 7 February 1888¹⁹

. . . You will be pleased to hear that the publishers have sold all the 2,000 copies, so that your noble ideas, which I consider the golden border to my ‘coat of frieze’ have now gone far and wide.

. . . ‘Metaphysical’ views ought not to be coloured by personal circumstances; and yet how constantly they are! How I should like to inscribe on the tombstone of the saddest woman that ever died those lines from ‘The Gentle Shepherdess’: –

Doe not feare to sette thy feet
Naked in the River, Sweete!
Doe not think that newt or tode
Will pinch thy fleshe where thou hast trode.
Whenne the waters bubble high
Doe not pant, nor sobbe, nor crie;
Doe not shrink to travell through
Not one wave shall injure you!

Victoria Welby to Edwin Arnold

6 March 1888

. . . I wanted to be allowed one little protest against one line of the verses you sent me the other day:–

‘Better drink the honeyed cup of Hope, though it at last deceive.’

Now that seems to me the collapse of all that makes life worth living. A Hope that deceives ought to be known by a different name from the Hope that is the issue and outcome of Truth. But probably the writer does not realise something better than Hope; any more than the inveterately geocentric thinker can realise something worthier than a ‘basis’ for a world; something more potent to support a solid sphere, than any fixed foundation it could have.

We take in the *Spectator*, and I was going to cut out the three articles to read with the book itself, which I bought at once and am just beginning. I wonder whether you have sent Dr. Martineau your ‘Death and Afterwards’? I was waiting to do so till I had read the book he told me he was

19. [See note 15, above].

writing. He is a wonderful old man; although great as his thought is, it bears the marks it seems to me, of belonging to the generation which is just passing away.

I fancy we are just nearing the crest of a thought-wave which may land us on a very unexpected shore.

I have just lately been looking carefully into the principles of binocular vision, and find therein what seem such curious reflections of the present stage (as one between two others) of spiritual faculty, that I am trying to make a rough and I fear crude 'Note' about it, which if it stands competent (specialist) criticism I will venture to send. But that will not be at present.

Meanwhile in another direction, I am greatly interested in the turn things are taking with reference to Mission-work in India. I have long had a strong, as it were instinctive feeling, that one of the deepest obstacles to the progress of Christian Thought in India was the impression in Eastern Minds that we do not understand our own religion, and therefore can teach Orientals only what we can assimilate in what is to them our alien Western mind.

If we could show a little of that teachableness we inculcate on others, and try if there are not aspects of the CHRIST-character and elements in the Divine Nature and features in the spiritual order which only the best oriental minds can teach us. [...]

Edwin Arnold to Victoria Welby

3 May 1888

I never turn a page of your MSS without sidelights of all imaginable attractiveness and brilliancy starting up. Your thoughts and theories are like the beams of a revolving electric lamp: they flash such rays into the dark! A hundred times I long to stay the hand of the engineer, and to focus a passing point or region. Notably so, when you speak of 'seeing problems in the solid.' Notably again, when you touch on 'the Fountains of the Must.' Your great theory illustrates itself in my feelings as I follow your noble and profound speculations. I am a 'skin-cell,' full of sensory potentialities: always touching, feeling, trying, seeing, imagining. I long for your 'brain-cell' gift of harmonizing, binocularizing! If only poets and prophetesses could work with one pen.

I will not attempt to discuss your splendid passages of meditation and suggestion. To do so with such scant leisure as I possess just now, would be intellectual irreverence...

Victoria Welby to Edwin Arnold

3 July 1888

I do hope you or someone as capable, will give some answer to the Article on Buddhism by the Bishop of Colombo in this month's *XIXth*.

It may be my fault, but it seems to be another instance of the failure to enter into the oriental 'mental region' which is as characteristic of the western mind in general, as the eastern's failure to understand why we should always be in what to them is a fever fuss of restlessness, with a mania for literalising.

Sir William's Paper on 'Our Missionaries' is very interesting; but its tone again surely betrays a very 'outside' view of the religious condition in India. One passage I have ventured to comment upon as it is rather a typical expression of the alternatives to which one is supposed to be confined. I should much like to be allowed to send it to Sir William and ask him if he had found that 'Christianity' was being taught in India from that – circumference (if the phrase is permissible) of view.

I must take this opportunity of telling you that I saw Dr. Mercier (the distinguished psychologist and alienist and pupil of Dr. Hughlings Jackson) in London; and he told me that the trend of recent

discovery and inference on the higher nervous centres bore out my general position to a greater extent than I had dared to hope; so that I might even have been bolder.

That verdict, added to those of biologists and philosophical thinkers of various schools, has greatly encouraged me. But of course I should remodel the Paper entirely by the help of the various criticisms and suggestions so kindly sent me. I don't know whether you know that after all, my interview with Sir J. Lubbock never came off, being prevented by a series of accidents! But he wrote me a kind little note of general approval. And now I am studying his books. [...]

*Between Victoria Welby and Andrew C. Bradley (1899–1900)**

Victoria Welby to Andrew C. Bradley

17 May 1899

Mr. E. Nettleship told me the other day he thought you might like to hear from me on the subject of his brother of Balliol. Unfortunately I knew nothing at all of the real direction of his thoughts until his Memoirs were published, when to my amazement I found in the first volume among his 'Thoughts' & letters some of the very same ideas which had been mine for many years, which I had found great difficulty in making anyone understand. These in Mr. Nettleship's mind had the warrant of a scholar's knowledge which, alas, I lack. My object in writing now is to ask you whether there is any chance of your being in the neighbourhood of Oban during the summer? If so, it might be possible to arrange a meeting, as we shall be in Glen Creran. I should much value the opportunity. To save trouble, I venture to enclose an addressed envelope.

Andrew C. Bradley to Victoria Welby

19 May 1899

I am much interested by your note and am much obliged to you for it. I am afraid there is little chance of my having the pleasure of meeting you this summer, as in all probability I shall go abroad as soon as I am able to and shall afterwards be in the South of England. But I hope I may some day have the pleasure though my own pursuits have withdrawn me for a long time now so much from the thought on which my friends used to talk to me that I fear you would not find me a very intelligent listener.

Victoria Welby to Andrew C. Bradley

16 April 1900

You may perhaps remember a short correspondence which we had last May respecting passages in the 'Remains' of R. L. Nettleship closely concerning ideas & writings of my own.

I saw Mr. Herbert Paul the other day & he suggested my again writing to you with a view to arranging if possible a meeting. I am anxious to hear of some one of experience & literary power who could so to speak edit some of my Papers for me. I could then utilize these as suggestions for some young fresh mind. (This has already been done with practical results). Of course it is the *subject* (the development & organization of Expression) and not my share in the work upon it which is valuable & fruitful: I can only hope to show how much (for the next generation) may

* [The correspondence between Welby and Andrew C. Bradley is incomplete. It is available in Box 2, WCYA, with files containing the correspondence with Francis H. Bradley. Just a few exchanges have been included in the present selection].

be expected by inquiries into the very principles of Significance and by new conceptions of the place and work of Definition.

I shall probably be in Oxford for a few days in May: if so, is there any one there interested in Mr. Nettleship's line of thought to whom you could and would kindly refer me? But beyond that may I ask if I could have the pleasure of receiving you here in the course of the summer? I am to be at Invercreran again in June & July but shall be back here before the first of August [...]

27 April 1900

[...] I will only venture to repeat what I am often obliged to say, that while my own main interests can only in the broadest sense be called philosophical, my subject, that of expression (in whatever form) and its significance, is precisely that which cannot without mischievous results be ignored or neglected by literary workers in any field, or indeed by workers in any field of human activity.

How different even would have been the course of the war if our officers had been trained to detect and appraise the subtle or fleeting signs on the significance of which their safety and success depended! I will not pursue this line of thought but only mention that after R. L. Nettleship, Stevenson would have been pre-eminently the man to whom I should have gone for understanding sympathy. This however refers only of course to the subject of what I should like called sens-ifics. Mr. Nettleship did practically apply its principles to philosophy; but it is significant that he only did this in private notes or letters, since the subject and its value were alike unrecognised. And yet on that subject and our mastery of it, all else absolutely depends! No wonder that explorers are amazed at the natural 'Sherlock Holmes' type which they find in the wilderness: possessing an acuteness and delicacy of perception and inference of which we are sadly in need in the intellectual world. Even the animals possess powers of reading the phenomena of change which if recovered by man in translated form (as in other cases) would 'solve' much now 'insoluble.' [...]

*Between Victoria Welby and Francis H. Bradley (1887–1903)**

Victoria Welby to Francis H. Bradley

17 January 1887

Judging by the tenour of your *Principles of Logic* I feel that I am only carrying out your own wish when I venture to trouble you with the enclosed papers: 1) a rough informal 'Summary' of the chapter called 'The Final Essence of Reasoning'; 2) a note upon the same; and 3) that which the note refers to – an attempted outline of what seems to be a profound and significant law both of mental growth and structure: one which, if as widely applicable as I suppose and rightly worked out, ought to interpret and help to co-ordinate many things now unintelligible or apparently disconnected, bringing us, we may hope, within sight of the end (among reasonable and conscientious men) of many an interminable and hitherto inconclusive controversy.

I ought to mention that I have frequently been urged to publish a thought which has already been recognised as fruitfully suggestive and well worth serious attention by thinkers of all shades of 'view': but my sense of a disqualifying lack of training and culture makes me very unwilling to risk in any degree discrediting a really pregnant and helpful suggestion by a crude and inadequate presentation.

I must not mislead you into supposing that I have been able to follow out the trains of reasoning in your book. I could only by means of 'woman-wit' seem to see certain of your more striking points and discern – or think I discerned – your general drift. And now if (in view of the important

* [All letters have been included except for a few brief notes dated 23 May 1888 (F. H. Bradley to Welby), 8 June 1893 (F. H. Bradley to Welby), 12 June 1893 (Welby to F. H. Bradley), and 28 May 1903 (F. H. Bradley to Welby)].

issues involved) you would be good enough to tell me frankly whether you see any serious flaw in my application of your principle, and whether you can suggest or make any needful correction, I should be sincerely grateful.

I have been struck by various examples of the working of the ‘threefold law’ which I have seemed to find indicated or implied in such writers as Jevons, Huxley, Clifford, Herbert Spencer, and even Schopenhauer (little as I know of their works): and I feel that if we can really trace its action in the tissue of the logical process itself, we shall have one more reason – and an emphatic one – for thinking that in some form it holds good throughout the realm of order known to us or conceivable by us.

The Paper I venture to enclose might perhaps form the nucleus of an Essay for publication (after private subjection to all available criticism); but I need not say that it necessarily gives but an imperfect view of the subject at best, since for obvious reasons I have endeavoured carefully to avoid unnecessary assumptions, and thus, e.g. have not dwelt at all on the religious aspects of the question, fundamental as, to me, these are [see section 3.12, this volume].

I ought perhaps to explain that the first part (as you may, indeed, observe) corresponds to some extent with the definition given by Comte of a supposed ‘threefold law’ which I paraphrased for private use from a translated quotation some time ago, as it seemed to me that it only needed the light thrown upon it by the larger thought, in order to run true to nature in every sense and win a common acknowledgment; and that thus interpreted it might help to show the power of this law to act as a link between apparently incompatible theories.

I must not trespass further on your time and attention, and will only repeat that the conviction of your own desire to be of service in this direction is what gives me courage to trouble you thus, although a stranger with no claim on your notice [...]

Francis H. Bradley to Victoria Welby

8 February 1887²⁰

[...] With this I am sending you back the papers you so kindly lent me. I am sorry that for various reasons I have been unable to give my attention to them before.

I have read them with much interest, both the original paper and the remarks on part of my book [*Principles of Logic*]. As to the latter I think you have fully entered into my meaning as to the unit of the two processes. I also share your view as to the one-sidedness of mere thinking. Just as at the beginning of your life there is no separation between feeling, thinking, and acting, so at the end, if we could reach the end, doubtless these would be re-united in a fuller way of life. Had I been writing with a different object, I should have laid still greater stress on the fact that even in a process like analysis, the central unity is only latent, and I should have gone on to argue that the demands of thought itself can only be satisfied by going beyond itself. But I must hope for another opportunity.

I quite agree with you that the stage of mere truth-seeking is transcended more or less in all our lives. But as to the degree and the possibility of doing this completely and the ways of doing this, I must admit that my opinions are in an unsettled condition.

And that is why I find it difficult or rather impossible to criticise your paper. If I dissented in principle I could easily say so or if I had definite views I could compare your sketch with them. As it is I am very much in sympathy with your general point of view and too uncertain as to details to feel myself able to judge. I certainly think your conclusions true in the main and also ‘very necessary for the time’ and I cannot doubt that by developing them and publishing them you would be doing good service.

20. [Also in Cust 1929: 167–168].

The philosopher with whom, as far as I know, you have conclusions most in common is Hegel. I say this naturally because if I were not so largely indebted to him, I should probably not agree with your views to anything like the extent to which I do. Hegel had no doubt too great a bias in favour of thought and tried too much to make a logical law, or what he considered such, the main principle of the universe. But that is but one feature of Hegel and unfortunately the one most dwelt on. To see the world and man as a whole that makes 'de' differences as mere means to its fuller unity; to show that all abstractions and onesidednesses live only in and through this concrete living whole, this was his inspiring principle. I think if you were prepared to get through his rather repulsive exterior (as I infer you have not yet) you would be gratified to see how much you could endorse (indeed what in my book has pleased you is really Hegel's), though I am far from saying that what you would find would satisfy you or meet the wants which our paper is directed to satisfy.

I have thought it right to say this about Hegel because it is proper that your attention should be called to it. But I do not mean to say for one moment either that what you say has been said before as you say it, or that your views are not thoroughly original in the best sense, that is as coming from your own reflections on your own personal experience. I am convinced that they are so and that with the freshness and force with which you would set them out, their publication would be likely to be of service to any who read them. As to how many would I can't judge at all but enough certainly I should say to make it worth your while to write. But on this point, that is the number of readers, I feel that the opinion of others will be worth more than mine.

Thanking you once more for the pleasure which reading your paper has given me, and trusting that you will appreciate the reason which makes me shrink from detailed criticism on such a wide principle where my own views are in confusion [...]

Victoria Welby to Francis H. Bradley

11 February 1887

I must thank you most sincerely for the trouble you have taken.

Your recognition of the general validity of the principle in conjunction with that of others who are without your bias in favour of Hegel's theory, is a great encouragement to me.

My real difficulty is how to set forth the principle I desire to see admitted and utilised, in such wise as to show plainly that whatever points of contact it may have with definite or specific philosophical theories or systems, it embraces and includes the larger truth within them all. My attention was called (some time after the reality and range of this law had dawned upon my mind) to the enclosed summary of Hegel's position as to 'truth.' That and Prof. Caird's little book is all about him which I have seen.

I should not like to attempt even an elementary study of his writings without also studying Spinoza, Kant, Descartes, etc. for fear of creating some partiality of view. I think I am better on my own ground of frankly untrained 'intuition.' I see that Caird at the end of his essay defines Hegel as 'at best only the last writer who has made a vitally important addition to the proof that those ideas which are at the root of poetry and religion are also principles of science.' But he points out that here again the truth 'has to die that it may live,' and in the process must needs be so far transformed as to be unrecognisable except by one who has touched the essential product which is to remain after complete dissolution of form and structure. Hegel's formula being at most one of many possible applications of the more general law, one could scarcely I suppose even broadly speaking illustrate or interpret it in analogy with natural fact or order such as the three dimensions of space or H. Spencer's 'matter, motion, force,' or the three states of matter, or more in detail the three functions of a root, or the three sources and actions of heat: or compare it with three probable layers of consciousness, corresponding to bark, wood, and pith, to rind, pulp, core, to shell, albumen, yolk, and possibly distinguishable as planetary, (solar-) systematic,

and cosmical. And I should like to know whether his idea of the ‘opposite’ or the ‘contradictory’ corresponds to contrasted ends or directions, or to lines at right angles to each other. I am told that we have already seen the wedding of mathematics and logic registered by Boole and Jevons: may we not in the ‘third volume’ of the tale of life (is even this a homely echo of the triad-loving instinct?) find other unions possible without losing distinctness of sphere and character?

I am very glad to find that your thought is yet plastic; for it seems the necessary condition of our day, if the plague of ‘isms’ & mutual labelling and protest is to abate.

I must not presume on your kind attention, but venture to enclose one or two notes and quotations and another way of suggesting the law which I am told should be embodied in the paper when expanded.

Though any further criticism would be gratefully welcomed, I hope you will on *no* account think an answer necessary. [...] (Enclosed: Clifford, Hegel on Truth, Huxley, Ganot on Heat, Littré)

Francis H. Bradley to Victoria Welby

23 February 1887

[...] I ought to have replied to your letter sooner. I certainly should not venture to recommend the study of Hegel to anyone who was not prepared to be lost in it for some time. I doubt if it is of much use reading about him. It’s only by seeing him actually at work that one appreciates his greatness and his defects. However though the difficulty of reading him is usually much exaggerated it is impossible to deny that he is very difficult and often unnecessarily so.

My difficulty with respect to any criticism on the law of triplicity in any form is that attempting to say anything about it I run up against questions which at present I can not answer, nor clearly define to myself in all respects. And further my difficulties are probably in great part only *my* difficulties and have nothing, if I could see it, to do with the question. Hence I must advance very indirectly and I feel it impossible to criticize the law in general at present.

However I trust that you will not feel that I really have any doubt about there being a great deal of truth and of important and even necessary truth in it, and I feel confident that by proceeding as you propose you are likely to do good service. [...]

Francis H. Bradley to Victoria Welby

22 May 1887

[...] I am returning you your paper with this. I have read it, and also your papers on the Secret of Life and the Evolution of Heliology with much pleasure. I must ask you to excuse my sending you any detailed criticism on them. There are a number of metaphysical difficulties in my way which are not in yours and which, so far as I can judge, need not be in yours. I must struggle on by an indirect route, and I fear can do nothing at present which would be of any use to you.

However I feel no doubt at all that it is well worth while for you to try to get your views into shape for publication. I am sure that they would help many persons towards a larger way of looking at things, even though not many copies were sold and the book did not seem to succeed. So that I trust you may see your way to go forward with so good a work. [...]

Victoria Welby to Francis H. Bradley

8 November 1894

I am afraid you will hardly remember me, as it is some years since I had the pleasure of seeing or hearing from you. But Professor S. Alexander has repeatedly urged my sending to you a paper

called 'Logic & Significance' wherein I have tried to collect the evidence in modern English logic both of the absence & the need of more explicit treatment of the subject of 'Meaning'; with an investigation of the ideas which the various terms supposed to be its synonyms convey or express. For the last year however my work has had to be laid aside & I have been obliged to forego all fresh correspondence. And the last two months have been wholly occupied with the drawing up of another summary of evidence – in psychology & philology – of the lack of attention given to Interpretation & its processes.

I have read your *Appearance & Reality* with the greatest interest & admiration of its force & originality; but cannot of course claim to have followed all its subtle & complex chains of argument. But I hope to read it again, as it is of special importance to me from the point of view I am trying to suggest. Meanwhile I now venture to forward the paper, in which you will find some characteristic notes by Sir F. Pollock. Please forgive anything of mine which looks like criticism; my object is to obtain as much correction as I can before even attempting to embark on publication in 'Mind' or elsewhere.

The subject on which I originally wrote to you has had to be put on one side until these preliminary questions had been dealt with. I cannot help thinking that when they are, some 'solutions' may prove more accessible than they now are & some barriers might vanish into 'thin air,' while 'impassable gulfs' turned out to be mere ruts or groves of our own making, however useful from some points of view these might be [...]

I ought perhaps to add that Professor H. Sidgwick has kindly submitted the paper to the Cambridge Logicians for me & to Mr. Bosanquet. I enclose an additional short paper also, on the so-called synonyms of Meaning.

Victoria Welby to Francis H. Bradley

[Illegible] 1894²¹

Forgive me for writing once more, but I must in thanking you for words which greatly encourage me, explain that I never dreamt of looking on these typed papers as anything but selected material and evidence, with comments only intended for criticism by the few thinkers and teachers to whom I might have the privilege of submitting them. The paper I sent you, 'Logic of Significance,' loses half its 'significance' without its Psychological (and Philological) companion, now being finished.²² And I am sure that it will be necessary to do the same thing, however tentatively and briefly, under the heads of philosophy and science. For while the typical philosopher and metaphysician has hitherto invariably claimed questions like 'What is Meaning' as his own, the typical man of science has hitherto assumed that in *his* world at all events there was no confusion, because no 'metaphysical' puzzle or lack of consensus, and therefore no need of such a question; and that science was the true refuge and the true paradise of all who desired that uniform congruity, consistency, and precision which in his eyes is the sure sign of clear and coherent thinking and of touch with actual fact. But the philosopher now sees that the question of meaning and its interpretation must pass through the fire of psychological if not physiological analysis before he can sift it to the bottom in *all* its aspects: and the man of science is beginning to realize forcibly the extent to which his own work is hampered and its recognition retarded by the present chaos even of scientific terminology.

21. [Of the two typewritten copies of this letter (the original is lacking), one is dated May 1887 and the other 1894].

22. [Reference is to the texts assembled by Welby in her essay 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation,' published in two parts in the journal *Mind*, in 1896].

Also it will be absolutely necessary to indicate something of the degree to which this state of things tells upon all literature (and especially journalism) and through that upon all education and all conduct.

Finally I hope to see the subject of ambiguity taken up on a much broader than the merely linguistic basis. We outsiders need to learn the ‘ambiguity’ of organic impulse and activity and of muscular movement: to see this illustrated e.g. by the blunders of infancy, and utilised e.g. by the conjuror, but also conquered by the athlete and acrobat, and by all which we call in handicraft and art ‘exquisite skill.’

But not only that. We need to learn that ambiguity is found everywhere when the narrowest technical limits are overpassed, and is indeed the first stimulant of mental ascent. The very amoeba either ‘learns’ the ambiguity of sensation and acts upon its lesson, or suffers for the refusal and is eliminated. So throughout the animal ascent in scale. Only, in its lowest form survival and development prove that it *is* successfully met and triumphantly overcome. The animal if not the plant, becomes so to speak an expert in the art of interpretation, which issues, or results in adaptation (Biologists all now put it thus). Experience is no less ambiguous on the higher than it was on the lower plane; but as the organic world learns more and more perfectly to deal with that ambiguity, so in the highest of all its forms, I hope we may yet learn to meet and overcome it. This however will certainly *not* be attained by reversion to lower because more mechanical and therefore less intellectual methods; certainly not by reducing language to the level of an arithmetical notation. For once more it is not merely or solely in word or phrase that we must face the fact of ambiguity. It is ingrained in the very spring of our thought. What you and other thinkers plead – that you use ambiguous words hoping that context will define them and believing we shall always have to do it – is surely true of most of the ideas which linguistic symbols are intended to convey. Ideas have always more or less inherent ambiguity, and the more complex of the more living and powerful they are, the more of this we shall find. Context of course is one means of meeting it. But I hope that more than this may be looked for – and worked for.

If I find that I can do it as it ought to be done, I may still write for publication: but I had far rather appeal only to the inner circle of teacher and thinkers and leave further treatment to more competent hands. Think for instance of the terrible disqualification which total ignorance of Latin and Greek is! I don’t want my ignorance to discredit and perhaps bring ridicule on so vital an inquiry as this and deter others from taking it up.

Meanwhile I feel sure of your sympathy in this preparatory work and must thank you again for your words.

Francis H. Bradley to Victoria Welby

11 November 1894

[...] Many thanks for your letter & for the papers (3) which I return by this post. [...] I have perhaps not given enough attention to be quite clear what you are aiming at. The question you raise as to the meaning of ‘Meaning’ is surely the whole question as to what ideas & truth are in their relation to the mind and to things. You can hardly expect logicians to agree as to that, & the difficulty comes, I should say, to but a very slight extent from words.

On the other hand I think you are quite right in believing that the question about ‘Meaning’ would have important results if answered. Only I think you would find that it involved all that I mentioned above.

I doubt the use of setting out at length the divergencies of writers. What would be of interest would be to find out how many differences there are on the whole, what they are & how connected. From that you could go on. I do not see much or any advantage in a large number of extracts. And *are* the divergent senses so very many after all? Why not have enumerated them?

I think also that you seem to demand a verbal accuracy which is not practicable in actual writing. However opinions on this point are likely to differ. I am myself perhaps too sceptical on this point. But it's the idea & not the mere words that are muddled & its with the ideas one must I think begin.

I fear this is a discouraging letter. I do not mean it to be so & if I had been able to give more time to your papers I think I should have appreciated them better [...]

Victoria Welby to Francis H. Bradley

15 November 1894

I am loath to trouble you again even with thanks, feeling much sympathy with the over-worked. But you will understand my desire that you should not remain under a misapprehension of my aim & hopes mainly no doubt due to my clumsiness & crudeness, but also partly I think owing to the very hiatus to which I hope to draw attention of all who teach. So may I just say first that I entirely feel with you that words used confusingly generally mean muddled ideas, though in many cases such an explanation is grotesquely inappropriate. Then I certainly do not demand any degree of verbal accuracy which is not easily practicable *when its importance is realised*. Then, though it is just because I see the profound ultimate issues of the question of the meaning of Meaning, that I long at any cost to raise it in, as it were, a fresh context I also see that it must be first raised on the simplest & most elementary grounds available. Among these of course come the elements of Logic as of Grammar.

I will add no more but venture to enclose a copy of a letter which I think tells its own tale. It is only one example out of many of the extent to which this inquiry is admitted to be needed & to be likely to have valuable results [...]. If sometime when less pressed, you could let me have one line to say that I had now removed or met some part of your objections I should take it as a real kindness & help.

Francis H. Bradley to Victoria Welby

16 November 1894

[...] You could not have a better authority than Prof. Adamson but I quite agree with what he says. I cannot now recall precisely what I wrote but that was about what I meant.

The paper is 'the groundwork &c' but taken as it is it does not seem to me to be more. Why not make it more? Why not extract these various senses of meaning supporting yourself by as many extracts as you think necessary? That's what I meant to say and that, I take it, is what Prof. Adamson means.

But as to reforming terminology, I am very sceptical. I myself constantly use words which I know are ambiguous hoping that the context will define them and I believe we all must do this and will always have to do it. Still I dare say I am wrong.

As to the fundamental clearance of the enquiry – how could I ('especially' I feel inclined to add), doubt that? Begin on this line and there is logically no stopping. I am fully aware of it.

What I mean to say is this. You can, without going very far, make an interesting paper by putting together the ambiguities in common use. You can also go as far as you please, that I do not think you will get on at all by collecting more extracts – at least I doubt it. But I am a very bad judge for others.

Is an idea what it means and, if not, what is the difference? Is what it means and what it 'stands for' the same or do these differ from one another and from the existence of the idea itself – and how? These in my opinion are not questions of language and terminology at all.

I am sorry I can spare no more time. I have no doubt you can make an interesting and valuable paper out of your material. [...]

Victoria Welby to Francis H. Bradley

26 May 1903

[...] I have gone far since our short intercourse of 16 years ago. And my course has been an inquiry – as penetrative as my poor equipment could make it – into the nature of that ‘meaning’ which we assume so lightly and apply so vaguely, and which never seems yet to have been treated as a complex conception to be carefully studied instead of a simple primary condition to be taken for granted. Now I am not the right person of course to do this as it ought to be done. But the very fact of the necessary crudeness of my treatment may have an incidental advantage: or it may be that some rushing in is necessary in this case in order to induce the angels to tread at all – to recognise that there is anything to tread!

And really books like e.g. Myers’ *Human Personality* seem to give additional point to the question, what is that which we so lightly and readily assume, infer, endow experience and its world with? In ‘personality’ or ‘self’ are we ‘intending to convey’ a tradition which may still be valid or may be obsolete, or is there a sense in which it is an involuntary assumption – a sense of the existence of an inscrutable identity? Or again and supremely, has the idea a significance for thought and action as yet imperfectly apprehended by most of us, partly because it can only be expressed in really antiquated and falsifying language?

‘For whether there is progress or not, at all events there is change; and the changed minds of each generation will require a difference in what has to satisfy their intellect.’ Yes: and notably in its modes of expression. But we must see that such change leads ‘onwards’ and ‘upwards’ not ‘backwards’ or ‘downwards’ – as long as we use these dimensional metaphors at all.

I venture then to send you a copy of my book [*What is Meaning?*] and need hardly say that if you do me the honour to look at it any comment that occurs to you would have great value for me.

Between Victoria Welby and Henry James (1892–1911)

*Henry James to Victoria Welby*²³

23 June 1911

I take it most kindly of you first to have caused my name to figure with honour on the title-page of *Significs*²⁴ and then to have sent me that so deeply suggestive and interesting volume, which I have read with earnest attention and rich profit.

You have so many ideas, and you launch and start so many, that mere recognition of your freighted vessel seems but a poor form and yet any overhauling of the cargo a formidable job. I must content myself with assuring you, all responsively, that nothing in the world appeals to me more than the question of expression or leaves me more dismally wonder-struck than the neglect and dishonour in which it languishes – at the same time that as a would-be artist I am oppressed

23. [Also in Cust 1931: 341–342].

24. [Henry James is referring here to the title page of Welby’s book of 1911, *Significs and Language*, where she quotes the following passage from his little volume, *The Question of Our Speech*: ‘All life therefore comes back to the question of our speech, the medium through which we communicate with each other. . . The more it suggests and expresses the more we live by it – the more it promotes and enhances life. Its quality, its authenticity, its security, are hence supremely important for the general multifold opportunity, for the dignity and integrity of our existence’].

with the difficulties (distraught and half-paralysed by a sense of them) with which all 'ideal' and extensions of the matters bristle: and the sweep of *your* extensions is sublime.

The Universe so seems to me to strain its expression itself to breaking that I ask myself how such a cockle-boat of a compromise as Art can pretend to live in such a sea. For *there* is the hitch – that one somehow feels (at least I in my feebleness do) that expression is, at the most insurmountably, a compromise. Hasn't it, in the interest of finite form, to *keep* compromising, ever; for the sake of certain effects that *quand même*, our poor, human, limping, fallacious *associational* values? That is, I mean, in the said – so very ambiguous after all – world of art; which isn't the greatest of all things, I seem to make out, but only the second greatest! Poetry strains expressions to the cracking point. I mean the greatest *has* done so, with Dante and Shakespeare it cracks and splits perpetually, and yet we *like* it so tortured and suffering. Doesn't that mean that its very weaknesses (with the great waves and winds of reality beating upon it – upon *them*), may have a beauty, or a value for life, or a power for interest, that would make of the adequate or infinite reflector – comparatively – a great splendid *sterile* victory?

However I mustn't venture on too deep waters – further than thus to show you how brilliantly you attract pursuit there. I feel the matter but as an intensely ingenious prosier who adores the medium – it's impossible to adore it more – but for whom that precious property resembles rather a vast box of relics and heirlooms and old wondrous stamped ducats and doubloons than – what shall I say? a bank-book of blank cheques signed for me with whatever solvency!

I return to England, however, a month hence and it's a pleasure to me to think that I may then have more news of you from Mrs. Clifford and perhaps even enjoy the opportunity of seeing you.

*Victoria Welby to Henry James*²⁵

5 July 1911

[...] It is difficult to thank you enough for such a letter. I am sure you will remember that to me apart from the few giants to whom no restriction of means apply – since they can paint heaven with the mud of earth and sing a heavenly melody with catgut and a bow – all our best speech means fighting an artificial and recently constructed obstacle. You confess to 'adoring' the 'medium.' Well, I would have it cleared of imposed and often gratuitous confusion. For I too am a user, however stumbling, of the Way which passes through truth to life expressive. Language should be as a very Logos, a universe articulate, to us. Our utterance should be as that of one whose voice beats and trembles with the larks and the fountains and shimmers with the stars; but also with the solemn roar of ocean, cataract, gale, and even with the aching moan of the sufferer, the whisper of his breathing, the longing of his eyes, and again with the homely rhythms of activity and rest.

All this in its simple way the child would naturally see – the marvellous true child to whom nothing is inexpressive. Hence his unwelcome because unanswerable questions. In harmony with him, you say that nothing in the world appeals to you more than expression, or leaves you more dismally wonder-struck than the neglect and dishonour in which we allow it to languish. And then you go on in inspiring words to say that the universe seems to strain its own expression to breaking point, so that we fall back upon the notion of compromise. But is not that falling back a failing, too? 'Speak for yourselves!' the universe might cry. To me it does so cry. The essence of poetry in the deepest and widest sense means to me that its expression can never be a strain to breaking point: surely that is *our* grievous fault? It pours its treasure forth in the child's eyes; and it shares with them the hint of boundless and transparent heavens.

Of course I confess that all this may seem to smack of bombast. But what is one to do? It is horrid to be compelled to denounce the needless desecration of the only expressive temple that we have. Of course I am saying this unworthily. But it is no question of personal levels of power.

25. [Also in Cust 1931: 342–343].

The question is, not of some immaculate monstrosity of triumph which would rather replace than release the true humanity of language. All creators – and speakers and writers ought above all to create and reflect creation – have one and all unconsciously shown us that they belonged to the true order of significians. But how often they have only found either silencers or sceptics!

I hope anyhow that you will let me urge that it is not sublimity but clarity, penetrative and interpretative, that I chiefly hope for. Expression seems to me no rigid rock or even tree-trunk to crack and split, but boundlessly vital and organic, on a level higher than the vegetal.

When we begin really to educate children – to *educ*e the aspiring treasures of our race – we shall discover and exploit a formant power. At present we only *induce* second-hand habits of thought and speech which of course have a value of their own. But meanwhile I am thankful to have had no education in the conventional sense. I was taught by going over the world and through many hardships and dangers. Can you wonder at the sense of reality and of the unreality and poverty of conventional speech, which this has given me? Can you wonder indeed that on undeveloped significance I lay a stress which seems exaggerated? Our toleration of its lack, our content with a dulled sense of penetration, our paralysis before problems of life as it were urging us to solve them, will be impossible for a generation which from the first has had the human eye for the true significance of human experience. The complexities of trained experience ought not to baffle us as they do. Those of binocular vision do not baffle our eyes! We are in short below an attainable, really a normal, level.

I hope the defects of this attempt at an answer will not to you obscure the points which I have striven, though most inadequately, to bring out.

Between Victoria Welby and William James (1905–1908)

Victoria Welby to William James

22 May 1905

[...] Will you excuse the liberty I take in addressing you as if we had already met? But ever since your brother said to me some years ago, alas, ‘You ought to know my brother; of all men he would understand what you are trying to say’ I have been hoping that somehow this would come about. For I have of course read everything I could find or hear of, that you have written. But I have always for one reason or another been defeated; and now I venture to make an earnest appeal to you to come and see me.

One thing I promise; it shall not tire or ‘take out of’ you; you see my way of seeing things naturally makes for the restful and the healing; I speak out of the race-motherhood and however imperfectly, the things of mother-sense.

There also I venture to think, lies the ultimate secret of your own crusade.

All this I fear sounds highly presumptuous; but indeed that sound is misleading, for I would disavow pretention of every kind and wish to be reckoned as the humblest of ‘privates’ in the army of pioneering workers. I see with you a ‘curious unrest,’ an ‘interest in new suggestions, however vague,’ but also with you, signs of the ‘imminent upheaval of more real conceptions and more fruitful methods.’ Once more then I beg you to make it possible for us to meet before you leave England.

I would gladly offer to do this at Oxford or in London, but in the first place I cannot make things clear briefly when away from my references and also every attempt to move about now means physical suffering which entirely defeats any profitable work.

To give you some idea of the position I take I venture to enclose a reprint of my second little contribution to the Eugenic discussion by the Sociological Society. The first one is included in the published papers.

William James to Victoria Welby

26 May 1905

[...] You are extremely friendly, and I should like above all things to make your acquaintance, although I am ashamed to say that long as I have known [...], so to speak, of your writings, I have not even yet attained to reading them. I am a slow reader and the pile of books deferred grows higher and higher.

I am hastening back to America, being far from well. I may have to sail on the 2nd, which will give me only two days in England, and make it impossible for me to get to Harrow. If I stay, as I hope to, till the 9th, I shall communicate with you in time to make an appointment for a call upon you at Harrow. [...]

*Victoria Welby to William James*²⁶

4 April 1908

[...] My long illness has put me for the time somewhat out of touch with university and other events, so I have only just now heard from Mr. Schiller that you are to be in Oxford after Easter to give some lectures there. I hope you will kindly remember that you owe me a visit? I should be sorry indeed to miss a second opportunity as I have long hoped for the pleasure of receiving you here. And the subject I want to have some talk about with you ought (apart from the failures of its present advocate) to be of special interest to the pragmatist; while in that character I am sure you will admit its claim that there is no human being whom it does not nearly concern.

I am glad to be able to say that it has now received the honour of recognition as implied in its embodiment (in brief summary of course) in an article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for which I was asked in spite of the rule that only subjects generally recognised are there included. I was limited to 1,500 words but found it impossible to compress my statement within 3,500 which the editor now says is exactly what he wanted; a great relief to my mind! [...]

William James to Victoria Welby

9 May 1908

[...] This is in reply to yours of April 4th received in America before I sailed. You don't know what a dolt I am about all matters of nomenclature, or how unconvertable to anything rational. Nevertheless I deplore the fact that the chief reason why philosophic discussion is so nugatory is that the disputants understand words quite differently and often oppositely.

I may possibly have to return to America very soon after my lectures here are finished. If so, I shall, probably get no time for Harrow. But if not, I shall certainly come to see you. But the date will now have to be left uncertain, since my brother claims us at Rye, and if I find that I am able to spend the summer in Europe most of our time will be upon the Continent. [...]

Victoria Welby to William James

10 May 1908

[...] Indeed, I am really an *aboriginal* pragmatist, for, many years ago – long before the name came into use – I was seeing more and more clearly that 'intellectualism' was now feeding upon husks and turning upon itself, engendering nothing but fresh and abortive controversy; and also that words like 'make' (on the use of which much argument about truth turns) were terrible traps for the unwary. That has led to my plea for the recovery of what I am calling (for want of a better

26. [Also in Cust 1929: 246–247].

term) the Primal sense, the inborn and generative alertness to danger and profit in mind which answers to that wariness which has enabled the race to survive the formidable dangers of early life: that ‘fittest’ in unerring response which has been ‘selected.’

Victoria Welby to William James

11 May 1908

[...] Then I shall still hope for the pleasure of seeing you here. Please don’t disappoint me! And remember me to your brother and remind him how he told me years ago that we ought to meet. I have never forgotten his enthusiasm about you, tho’ probably he has forgotten me. I am afraid I can’t agree about the doltiness or doltitude – which? – that you plead! And it is certain that I am a primitive pragmatist, since for the years past I have been clear that ‘intellectualism,’ great though its true work is, was now mainly turning upon itself, engendering nothing but fresh and abortive controversy kept alive by linguistic confusions from which no thinker or writer seems to be free. And these we carefully teach each generation in childhood! One leading term of that kind is ‘make,’ on which much argument about ‘truth’ seems to turn. Forgive me for this little outbreak which indeed requires explanation.

Victoria Welby to William James

24 May 1908

We greatly need the distinction between 1) rigid and plastic, 2) static and dynamic ‘Truth.’ Things are just as real, and their account in symbol just as *true* (or untrue) in the one case as in the other. But we couple life and lie! Having lost or failed to gain the sense of the supremacy of motion over its product matter, and of the solidity attained by intensely rapid, minute, confined motion (of some ‘third’ element, apparently ‘ether’?), we make a ruling fetish of stuff, although in English we couple it with *nonsense*. Much of what we call truth is essentially unreal. And we confound truth and fact, truth and reality. In truth, truth from having been ‘what a man trows,’ has now become moral honesty, honour, scruple, trustworthiness, faithfulness. Most of the ‘pragmatic’ controversy is vitiated by the almost universal neglect of this point of view.

*Between Victoria Welby and Benjamin Jowett (1891–1893)**

Victoria Welby to Benjamin Jowett

25 March 1891

On the strength of a mutual friendship with Lady Airie, I am venturing to write without a formal introduction, to ask if I may quote the enclosed passages from your Introduction to the *Cratylus*. My reason for troubling you thus is that I am told you are preparing another edition of your *Plato*, and I am not sure whether you would wish to anything here said to be omitted or modified, in consequence of the advance in linguistic knowledge.

Though conscious of great unfitness for any such enterprise, I have been urged to write a paper suggesting the need of a line of (psychological) linguistic enquiry hitherto greatly neglected, and it was Dr Sayce who recommended my quoting part of your very pregnant and predictive utterance.

* [The corpus of letter exchanges between Benjamin Jowett only consists of four letters from Jowett in illegible and fading handwriting, and three letters from Welby reported in this collection. The letters by Jowett are dated 25 May (year is lacking), the remaining letters are from the years 1880, 1891, and 1892].

But I felt that if you are re-editing the whole work, it would not be right to use any of it without your sanction. Of course it can be entirely omitted if you wish, though with keen regret on my part!

To save trouble I enclose an addressed envelope.

Victoria Welby to Benjamin Jowett

27 October 1892

I ventured before the publication of the new edition of your *Dialogues of Plato* to write & ask whether I might safely quote from your Introduction to the *Cratylus* some passages about Language which were very valuable to me. You kindly told me that I might. The idea of publishing my paper was however given up for the time. I have now given the new edition to my daughter and once more venture to write, this time to express a deeper & warmer gratitude than before. I only wish that your essays upon Language & Significance would be at once printed separately. I have been sorely tempted to ask if they might not be privately printed & circulated. They are indeed a gift to me. My paper under the title 'Meaning and Metaphor' will probably appear in the *Monist* an American Quarterly, in the spring; & at this end I have ventured to quote you at some length. Perhaps I may be permitted the honour of forwarding a copy of this. Meanwhile I venture to enclose two little printed memos bearing on the question. Pray however do not let them trouble you: that would be an ill return for what I owe you.

Victoria Welby to Benjamin Jowett

3 June 1893

Before writing you my thanks for your very kind reception of me last Monday, I waited until I could enclose the curious instance of a quotation reversed in meaning of which I told you. One certainly would not have expected it of Mr. Mark Pattison! Probably seeing it written will remind you that you know the quotation well, & I notice that it is coming into a wider use – always with the fatally reversed Meaning. Is not this a parable in its way? I believe Mr. Huxley is now with you, & if so it might interest him. Please remember me to him: he was very kind to me on a certain occasion & also arranged for me some years ago an interview with Herbert Spencer which has had many consequences for me. I have a long letter from our dear mutual friend Lady Airlie today; she is so kindly glad I have been to Balliol & tells me she is going to Carlsbad. With renewed thanks for your kind welcome which will always be a much cherished spot in my memory [...]

I cannot resist enclosing another curious instance of misquotation which I sent through a friend to the *Athaeneum* before the cases found were nearly so numerous as they are now. The only person I can find that has noticed this curiously persistent error is Mr. Bowen in his *Modern Philosophy* & he points out as I had ventured to do, that it perverts Locke's meaning (p. 11–13).

*Between Victoria Welby and George F. Stout and his wife Ella Stout (1894–1911)**

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

25 July 1894

[...] I greatly enjoyed reading your little book & I intended long ago to write to you about it. In the way of criticism I have little to say. It is not likely that many readers will catch your leading idea except in a partial & fragmentary way. But in the case of some the grains will no doubt grow & develop either into your own original thought or into something better.

I am at present writing about meaning in psychology. The acquisition of meaning I treat as a fundamental process more primitive than association & reproduction. I do not know how far I have taken hints from you. But I think that you approve what I say.

I have not so far heard of competitors for the Welby Prize. But I am not likely to do so until the time for sending in the essays arrives. [...]

4 May 1895

[...] I have in my hands a paper of yours on 'Psychology and Significance.' The point which you attempt to bring out appears to me to be of fundamental importance, and I am keenly conscious of having neglected it myself, though I do not think I am so bad an offender as some others [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

9 May 1895

[...] I will now try to explain more clearly how matters stand as regards the inquiry I hope to see started. In the first place, the paper you have (which please keep) is as you say simply notes and material for a possible article, which in its turn might eventually expand into a book. This paper however is only one of a series of similar documents of which the first, as I told you, deals with elementary Logic: and it seems to me of great importance that the *logical* aspect of the subject should always be taken first.

The third section – the philosophical – is just finished and I hope in the course of the summer to finish another on the scientific witness. There ought also to be one on Economics, Aesthetics and 'Pedagogics' (the latter being especially important, as the best hope of the dawn of a new era in the Signifying power of language lies in Education), one on Ethics, and lastly one on General Literature.

However, all this may be left for the present; and if you thought well I would endeavour to write an article which would direct attention to the subject both in its logical and its psychological aspects. Subject to your approval I should propose to begin with the addition made in Professor Keynes's new edition of his *Formal Logic*. Then I should touch upon your own *Thought and Language* and upon the 'Aristotelian' Symposium on the subject. Then I should try to give briefly the gist of what I have so far found bearing on the subject both in logic and psychology, pointing out also the growing tendency among philologists and grammarians to recognise the importance of the question, though not from the point of view which I would suggest. But of course I would gladly endeavour to carry out any alternative suggestion you were kind enough to make. It is true that I am so much hindered by health – and also of course by want of training – in the work of sifting and classifying my rather voluminous papers, that I should be most glad to hear of some one who could assist in the work and practically edit them. But I fear that it would be difficult to

* [This selection is from a large corpus of correspondence, including drafts and notes, consisting mainly of Welby's letters to George F. Stout, and a few from his wife Ella Stout who took care of his correspondence].

explain exactly what is needed unless we could meet; and in any case it would not be possible before the autumn to arrange for such assistance.

I venture to enclose two little notes. One is a passage from the philosophical section illustrative of the wide variety of ideas expressed by the 'meaning-term' which we are so apt to use differently: another is part of a letter to Mr. Shadworth Hodgson on an article which he had sent me. Do not trouble to return these.

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

10 May 1895

[...] It is probable that you may criticise points in my article on 'Thought and Language' which I have now given up or which I should express otherwise. However, I can communicate with you about this when your article is in my hands.

Are you not a little too hard on Mr. Shadworth Hodgson? You collect his metaphorical expressions from various parts of his book, in which they are used to illustrate different points. But the incompatibility can only create confusion when the incompatible figures relate not merely to the same thing, but to the same thing in the same aspect. When you infer that consciousness is by implication a Substance because it embraces all Being, you are surely attempting to make a parable walk on all-fours. The meaning simply is that all existence is objective to consciousness; viz. that objective relation to consciousness is a relation which applies to all existence. No existence can stand outside it, and therefore it *embraces* all existence [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

12 May 1895

[...] of course I quite agree that metaphors may vary as much as the aspect of anything which they are intended to illustrate. I have referred again to Mr. Shadworth Hodgson's article and I am confirmed in the impression that he therein deals only with consciousness in two aspects – as Knowing and as an Existent. The question therefore is whether or no these really justify the extreme discrepancy of such figures as [...] a stream, a point of view, a panorama, and a ground or field. It may well be that they do and that I am mistaken: even so my object is gained in so far as I have evoked the decision. Mr. Shadworth Hodgson himself quite understands that *he* is not attacked for following almost universal usage, and expressly writes to say that he wishes the case used among others for testing that. [...]

I should be the last to complain of Consciousness (or Mind or Thought) embracing all being or existence, since I always want to see the psychical described as the Outer and the physical as the Inner, if these terms are to be used at all to illustrate the broad distinction between 'mind' and 'body' or 'mind' and 'matter.' But my reason for this is the physiological analogy, and is 'another story.' And I can't help thinking we should gain by the mutual consent of psychologists henceforward to abandon the usage altogether. But that I suppose is rather Utopian! [...]

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

15 May 1895

I saw Mr. Sully on Saturday, and he mentioned your proposal for a conference. Professor Sidgwick and Dr. Ward were also present; and we all agreed that before any such meeting, it would be well to have a text for discussion; and that therefore an article clearly and definitely expressing your views would be an indispensable preliminary to any such meeting.

I should be very glad to have your criticism of my 'Thought and Language' article. I shall be surprised if it is as hostile as my own. Have no compunction about the matter.

I dare say that your strictures on Mr. Hodgson's language are justified. I scarcely know why I attempted to defend him. Metaphors are mischievous things; I think that if they are used at all they ought to be put in brackets, so as to make it easy to omit them on a first reading. After we have once caught an author's meaning in its plain and direct expression, it may become interesting to know what kind of mental pictures are floating in his mind.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

17 May 1895

[...] I wish your excellent suggestion about the use of metaphors (in important discussion) could be carried out! I see you contended in the Aristotelian Symposium that words don't call up mental images as a rule. I should have been very positively of that opinion a few years ago, but since I have tried, so to speak, slowing down my attending processes in retrospection, I have been struck by the analogy of 'a hundred photographs of a smile.' If one may be allowed a little reckless metaphor, does not the mental shuttle weave too quick for the working or natural memory, so that it all telescopes into an apparently 'imageless' result which we call 'understanding the meaning'? The effect of some drugs may partly illustrate this: as when a patient 'dreams' of a year's experiences in 5 minutes & takes hours to recount the remembered details.

I have no doubt it is best in any case that any conference should be postponed until there is something more definite to lay before it. Something is gained by its having been discussed at Cambridge. I will do my best meanwhile to make a start & will report progress as soon as I can. I wonder if 'Sense, Meaning and Interpretation' would be a good title for the article?

23 July 1895

[...] There is one point against the use of 'inner' for mental and 'outer' for physical which as usual I forgot to urge when we discussed it, although it seems to me a fatal one. The whole point – or sense – of such terms as 'inside' and 'outside' is surely that they cannot 'in-vade' (or ex-vade?) each other. Put the external *within* and it must become internal, and conversely. (Here I want some day to ask how 'without' came to be used for 'lacking': but 'that is another story'). Now no one can deny that much which is non-mental and thus classed as 'external' is to be found inside skin and inside skull. Thus the contrast which is the only excuse for the metaphor is destroyed at once. 'Some outside is inside' would hardly do either for premiss or conclusion? Of course this suggestion has no reference to the 'sense' article and needs no answer. But it was so 'like me' to forget one of the very points which seemed to me the strongest that I felt I must mention it [...]

Since writing the above I have been reading J. Watson on the 'Absolute' etc. in the *Philosophical Review* in which he gives as a 'nonsensical question' why 'that which is outside' should be 'inside' (a given somewhat) (p. 366). [...]

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

27 January 1896

[...] Have you received the final proof of my book (up to slip 120) including the chapter 'Pleasure and Pain'? Whether you have or not, I should like now to see your notes on bodily and mental pleasure. I am very curious to know what you will say on this subject. I know that my own point of view is open to innumerable objections which cannot be met in advance, though I am compelled to believe that they will all turn out invalid.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

4 February 1896

[...] I feel that if you really care to know how I look on the 'pleasure-pain' question, I must inflict a private letter on you. And anything I thus say will need psychological translation. I begin by questioning the validity of the antithesis itself, in any sense I have yet seen taken. Certainly it is not one within my experience. I am very intimate with the pain we so well call 'harrowing' in many forms and cannot conceive life without it. *For me it belongs to instead of impeding life.* (Hence I cannot exclude it from my conception of heaven, while a GOD who does not suffer is not divine to me). I can therefore tell after a fashion what I understand by pain: but I know nothing about 'pleasure' except as an incidental concomitant of certain forms of activity. It never figures in my mind as smooth and prosperous progress towards attainment. It is for me nearly allied with amusement or rather with the 'pay' which is mere overflow and belongs to the 'happy thought' and 'by the way' order of ideas.

On the other hand the awareness of strong-running satisfied or 'unimpeded' life is often strangely bound up with an agony of shrinking. One almost longs for obstruction, for something to stay or slowen the rush, the appalling motor force of life. But there comes in what I understand by life – which has more than one sense. This is 'another story' and must wait till I can, if ever, deal with my 'triad' idea. Thus you see that while pain is with me a clear and definite experience, pleasure is by no means its true contrast, and may even fall within it (the popular craving for 'sickening horrors' seems to point to this). To me Pain is primary, pleasure secondary, and Pain covers a world of distinction, whereas pleasure is relatively simple. Therefore, *I* can't translate my experience into any accepted psychological doctrine on the subject. It may of course be after all a sensal question. In any generally received sense, the concept pleasure-pain may be just what you describe; or rather these words may be the best we have to describe furtherance-hindrance of life process etc. Only then you must give me another word for *what real sufferers suffer*: and if any antithesis to this, one quite different to 'pleasure.'

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

28 April 1896

[...] I have been long intending to write a reply to your communication on – Pleasure and Pain. I was greatly impressed by it; and I am quite willing to admit that here, as elsewhere, the subtlety to nature is infinitely beyond my powers of analysis. I may find occasion to go into the subject again at some length. At present I would only suggest that a pain which can be called 'precious' cannot be merely a pain. The pain of bereavement, for instance, may be 'precious,' but it can only be so where it brings home to us what is precious in the lives of those we have lost. I feel deeply that technical phraseology applied to such problems as these must appear to have something coarse and almost brutal about it. It is repellent because it is abstract, and because it appears to mechanically dissect the living reality.

I am glad you like the book. Your notes were of real service. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

3 May 1896

[...] thank you again for your words on my little 'Note on Pain.' I felt sure that the view I tried so lamely to express would appeal to you. But I find I must have been very *unclear* on one point. When I said 'The mer[illegible] sense "This is precious" brings a pang, the air seems full of threat,' I meant that whatever became to us a 'thing of price' thus brought a pang with it – the dread of losing it. But of course I know that the psychologist is not as such concerned directly with a view

of Pain given in a letter to a mourner. Yet indirectly, such witness, you will allow, does concern him: and the point of the extract lies, as you will have seen, at the end. Anyhow I did not mean to apply in the passage quoted the word ‘precious’ to pain itself, although I suppose that those who consider that pain in certain forms stimulates instead of hindering life – that ‘strenuousness through and by pain is primal,’ that awareness begins with a flash of pain which induces ‘effort’ [...] would reckon pain as in a sense ‘precious.’ And I own to sympathy with the view that life owes much to pain which seems to me true both in the ‘highest’ & ‘lowest’ sense.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

23 July 1896

[...] Le me congratulate – Aberdeen first, and as I hope you too – I had been looking out but had not yet seen the announcement. However I am quite in every way ‘behind the times’ just now as I look at nothing but the exquisite lights and shadows on the hills and pine forests, and flower studded fields and only use my brain and hand in the vain attempt to record their exploits of everchanging beauty.

Why do we trouble with ink printing or other? Let us forget all but Nature’s alphabet of loveliness, and *her* ambiguity will lead to no confusion or dispute, and is but the note of her boundless resource, her inexhaustible fund of variety! [...]

[...] I shall try [...] to get Dr. Ward to meet Mr. F. Galton [...] at end of September. Mr. Galton will I am sure like it [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

4 September 1896

[...] I thought that you and Dr. Titchener were in communication, so I did not write. He reports that he has obtained the consent of Professor Külpe, who only required a reassurance easy to give (I don’t know what). There is now therefore only the French ‘fauteuil’ to fill up! If M. Fouillée will find the right man & get him to join that will be best: but failing that I wonder whether the Editor of the *Revue Philosophique* would be a good person to consult? I think as you say that we may count on Professor Sully. I hope we shall secure the Frenchman in time for the issue of the advertisement in the October number.

I have been haranguing a Welby cousin, Inspector of Schools in India, on the subject & he says he knows of probable candidates there. Also I have made a difficult conversion: it was very instructive to have to meet one ‘fatal’ objection after another & at last satisfy the objector on all points; for he is a man of original mind & a strong sense of humour, who has many opportunities of influence. Meanwhile I am rather hampered in health ecc. (my ‘agraphia’ for instance is tiresome: my hand wants to write all the wrong words!) but am hoping soon to begin a course of ‘sensifics’ for my little grandson, which whatever else it may do, will certainly make him laugh (sometimes the best way of teaching?). Then I will keep notes of success & failure in the experiment [...]

Many thanks for letting me see the enclosed letter [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

18 September 1896

[...] I am greatly encouraged so far by the result of my opening lessons with Dickie in Sensifics. We are now doing ‘Talking Crambo’ & then mean gradually to do less & less, through ‘Dumb Crambo’ to mere change of facial expression or voice intonation all which ought to begin a training in the art of ‘Interpretation.’ Then we shall try various modes of Translation. All this makes a series

of fascinating games, so that a good teacher (which I am not) ought to find no difficulty in enlisting a child's interest. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

16 July 1897

I wonder if you ever got my letter and little book? [*Grains of Sense*]. I need hardly tell you how much I should value a word of criticism upon it from you. So far, it has been buried under the Jubilee so that there are only short notices, mostly in provincial papers. I enclose you an example of these which is more favourable than I dared to expect.

But what I most want to ask you is whether you have seen that remarkable article of M. Michel Bréal in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, 'La Sémantique, une Science Nouvelle'? He preaches part of my gospel with emphasis & scolds his brother philologists severely for tithing their mint and anise & neglecting weightier matters in language. I am grateful to him for saying that language is a voluntary function & that we ought to set to work & direct & control it & not be misled by the false metaphors which represent it as an independent organism. I can't help wishing he had been the French (Prize) Member!

I wonder if you have heard anything of the competition? I have seen no one in the philosophical world except Prof. Alexander & have been too unwell for any work; but we are just preparing to migrate for 2 months to Scotland where I hope to get up some strength [...]

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

25 July 1897

[...] I greatly enjoyed reading your little book [...]. It is not likely that many readers will catch your leading idea except in a partial & fragmentary way. But in the case of some the 'grains' will no doubt grow and develop either into your own original thought or into something better.

I am at presently writing about 'meaning' in psychology. The acquisition of meaning I treat as a fundamental process more primitive than association and reproduction. I do not know how far I have taken hints from you. But I think that you approve what I say [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

28 July 1897

I am very proud of your approval & like to think it is given rather to the subject I want considered than to my treatment of it. Also I am very glad to hear you are writing up on it. I suppose you will point out that 'meaning' (primarily) implies 'intention' and therefore an 'intelligent agent' of some kind. (I have often been told that to postulate 'Meaning' in the universe is to be teleological in the mystical sense). Thus don't we want some other word, referring only to the percept & the perceiver himself, for that which is indicated, conveyed or suggested by percepts? Should it be sense? or Signification?

I suppose Meaning was the primitive idea? By analogy with his own activities man assumed that water was always poured, stones flung, fire kindled, etc. by somebody. So he was always pushed, or hit, or pinched by somebody – intentionally. Then he evolved the 'sense of sense': and this 'sense' was something that belonged to the objects or movements themselves; and next he began to arrive at the suspicion that he himself endowed all percepts with *import* (?): that Sign & Signification were *his* gift to nature; so that his own words became the pre-eminently significant – signs par excellence – though all on the side of intention. [...] The non-teleological mind will deny meaning, i.e. intention, to the cosmos but can't deny signification (though he might repudiate

Significance) without adopting the idiot's standpoint & ceasing to interpret or translate percept at all. Please forgive this fearful rigmarole: I don't know whether it conveys any sense!

Anyhow let us teach *every* child Sense and its conditions: from the psychological, philosophical, scientific & most of all practical standpoint & we shall give him the best of all starts. And he must be told with emphasis that whatever else he does he is bound to leave language better than he found it. Imagine 20 millions of men all growing up imbued with this idea & determined to work together for it! [...]

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

26 August 1898

[...] I have now communicated with all the adjudicators²⁷ of the Welby Prize. Their decision is in favour of the German Essay I recently wrote to you about. It turns out to be written by no less a person than Dr. Ferdinand Tönnies. I am sorry that you cannot read German; but an English translation will be published in *Mind* [...]. You have succeeded in catching a big fish with your bait. The Essay is very good and distinctly original. It strictly covers the problem proposed in the advertisement: in every way it fully deserves the prize [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

3 September 1898

[...] I was sorry not to be able to thank you myself for your kind letter about the Prize but Miss Meyer I think told you of our anxiety about my husband, who has had a trying attack of low fever, due partly I think to the unusual atmospheric conditions.

Although I cannot help lamenting that I can never see my Prize Essay except in translation, I am most glad to hear that so distinguished a scholar and thinker as Dr. Tönnies has thought the subject worthy of the highest powers – which indeed it is!

I shall look forward to the translation in *Mind*. Will there be any chance of your entrusting the task to Miss Meyer? She is proving herself an able translator I am told, and she would have a special advantage in being familiar with the aims of the Prize-giver as well as with Logic and Psychology. But of course you may have other views. I am this day sending to Dr. Tönnies a letter of credit for the amount I owe him: and I suppose you will kindly announce in *Mind* that the Prize is adjudicated and bestowed. I venture to enclose a little Pamphlet which was circulated at the Zoological Congress the other day and will be circulated at the British Association meeting – if a substitute can be found for the burnt-out Colton Hall!

My scientific friends are good enough to say that it is a useful piece of work: and are amused at the retort which it furnished to the 'unscientific' philosopher. But of course its pretensions are of the smallest.

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

21 February 1899

[...] I was very much grieved to see the announcement of Sir William's death. He stands out in my mind as a typical representative of all that is best in the English gentleman of the old school, full of frankness, manliness and kindness. I was especially touched by the delicate and thoughtful sympathy which he showed in your philosophical pursuits just because they were yours, though they could have little independent interest for him. His kindness and courtesy to myself left a very

27. [These include Titchener, Sully, Külpe and Boirac].

strong impression on my mind and I know that other philosophical visitors at Denton Manor feel as I do [...]

The 'Welby Prize' Essay is being translated by Mrs. Bosanquet. I hope to publish it in the July no. of *Mind*. It is an excellent paper and I have no doubt that it will attract much attention.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

17 May 1899

[...] I must tell you of the great interest and thankfulness with which I have read your *Manual* (vol. 1). I cannot but feel that a real step in advance has been taken in your analysis of primary 'meaning' and the acquirement of 'meaning.' But shall you think me exigent if I say that I still look forward to your warning the student reader that by 'it means' you mean (i.e. intend to say) 'it signifies' rather than means; and are dealing with signification rather than significance? I know that you consider that these are both important distinctions.

7 June 1899

I have at last been able to get through the proofs of the Prize Essay carefully once, but have been too unwell (and alas too blind) to do more at present. I hope however soon to be able to go through it several times; & feel sure that I shall only be the more struck with its ability. Surely it ought to do something towards giving us a really fresh start.

It is curious too to see how the idea of overcoming apparently insuperable obstacles to 'entente cordiale' by means of permanent conference seems to be in the air. On the other hand, I see many signs of an impending educational revolution: & of this I confess I have more hopes than of any amount of 'Academy.'

As soon as I can complete my study of the essay, I hope to write at length to Professor Tönnies. May I ask whether the original German manuscript becomes my property? If so, I should be very glad to receive it when done with, as I think I told you what an exceedingly able lady (niece of the great Rudolph Clausius) is now my grand daughter's governess. She could, I think, help me if she could read the manuscript in German, with my answer. I am greatly hoping that a discussion in *Mind* may ensue, for such a paper can hardly fail to arouse unusual interest. I am indeed most thankful for such a successful issue of our plan. [...]

George F. Stout to Victoria Welby

17 November 1900

[...] There are two points on which I think your article on Significs requires modification. First of all, in your definition you limit Significs so as to refer it only to the meaning of forms of study, and you add an opinion or doctrine, which, however true it may be, ought not to come into the definition, viz. the doctrine that meaning, or sense, etc. constitutes the primary and ultimate value of every form of study. Perhaps you might say: 'A proposed method. . . , aiming at the concentration of intellectual activities, or what is at present and indifferently called meaning or sense, etc.' One other point is that the references at the end ought to be more definite, at least in the case of those who have expressly dealt with the doctrine of meaning. For instance, the title of Tönnies' essay and the place where it is to be found should be given, and the same is the case I think with Eucken & Bréal. [...]

I think it would be good if you gave short definitions of 'sensal' and 'translation' as the word is to be understood in Significs. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout (Postcard)

19 November 1900

Many thanks. I will do as directed at once (quite seeing your point) and forward result to Prof. Baldwin and to you. I had been rather led astray by the occurrence in the slip-proof of phrases like 'it is not possible' to do this and that, and we 'must' keep within certain bounds, and lastly 'we recommend' a distinction which 'would go some way towards settling disputes,' etc. Surely these *are* opinions?

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

23 November 1900

[...] I now at last send you my 'Notes on the Welby Prize Essay' (is that too long a title) and Dr. Tönnies' very generous comment on them. I send you the typed copy as the original is only in pencil and difficult at first to read; but I can of course send you that. May I add my little paragraph of acknowledgment in small type at the end of his? I think Dr. Tönnies has accomplished a real feat in writing his paper so clearly and forcibly in English.

I also send the new definitions which have gone to Prof. Baldwin: one of *Significs*, and of *Sensal* and one of the wider sense of *Translation*, with examples of the widest use we yet have. I shall *long* to hear whether all these commend themselves to you.

Dr. Tönnies definitely engages to come over next October to our projected Conference and hopes to persuade Prof. Eucken to come also. He asks whether they may count on the offer of hospitality. But I suppose there would be no difficulty about that on so small a scale? Prof. Postgate writes in great enthusiasm to propose that we should 'start the century with the foundation of a Society to encourage the systematic study of meaning.' Well, would we start it better? The worst of it is that I should probably be the first person to be 'found out' and my poor little errors ruthlessly exposed [...]. Have any other foreigners been sounded yet about coming over in October? I hear the subject is really 'taking hold' in France. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

6 January 1902

[...] I used to say that space and time were only my 'offices'; never my home: now I should only say it of the second or of the first in the narrowest (planetary) sense.

As to the point, etc. we say, 'Do you see my point? or my line?' Why do we never say, 'Do you see my surface or my cube?' Why are we here one-dimensional? Of course I see points, etc. in our or say in the geographer's sense (of headland). But geometrically I only see a dot, an edge or a skin – all as sharp as you like – that is with my bodily eyes. With my mental, 'conceptual' eyes only, I see the geometer's 'point' for it has no 'extension.' I can't help hoping that, though you could not adopt my view of space and time, you will allow that it is worth advancing? If, however, you really think it is mere nonsense you will say so.

I can't say what a boon your kind patience and interest here was and how much I enjoyed our talks. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

6 May 1902

I would have written to tell you how great a success on my side Mr. Jenkinson's visit was, but I waited until I could take the book to a publisher. It is now in Messrs. Macmillan's hands, and

Mr. A. Macmillan says that he told the friend who is 'reading' it for him that you had seen it and thought it should be published, so I don't think there is much doubt of their taking it, especially as he said 'in a case like this we don't care about the selling'! Of course he meant that it could not expect to be popular.

I have been reading your Essay again with great admiration. I was only tempted to query one thing from the 'Signific' point of view and that was the indifferent use of fancy and imagination. I can't imagine a scientific fancy – or an imaginative – Fair! But of course you are in the best of company [...] Would not an unimaginative philosophy (or psychology) be as fatal as a fanciful one? [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

31 August 1903

[...] I now send you all the materials yet ready. We found that most of them needed to be re-copied and corrected. A few more will follow tomorrow or next day. We have left a margin for any notes you are good enough to make.

I had an interesting visit the other day from Prof. Vailati and his friend Dr. Calderoni who speaks English like a native and did some interpreting. It was very encouraging to see the genuine enthusiasm of both for it came out a good deal as they compared notes and made mutual comments in Italian which to some little extent I could follow.

I have been much stirred by various books lately, realising more clearly than ever the two strains in almost all serious writing now. That is, the strain of unconscious inconsistency arising from the misfits of language and idea, and on the other hand from the neglect of the psychological witness of language and the strain of involuntary response to the stimulus of the 'future'; that is, of the greater developments of experience as yet potential. A good example of the two strains is found in C. Booth's final volume, also in Dr. Maudsley's *L & M in Conduct* which I am now studying & which will I think suggest more 'marginal remarks'!

I send all the Lester Ward notes together. A. stands for Aphorism. I have reserved the letter extracts marked by Prof. Geddes as I think they are too personal for inclusion. I am in one awkward difficulty since reading Lester Ward. He claims that there is an almost universal confusion in the use of 'static' & 'dynamic' to express that which is 'at rest' or 'quiescent' & that which is in movement, and insists that 'static' should only be used for movements which repeat themselves in unchanged form while 'dynamic' should always be used for movements which produce as well as undergo change and development. This being so, what then is to be the term for what has hitherto generally been called the 'static' or the fixed and immovable? However I must not say more of this at present & have probably expressed myself wrongly as I cannot wait now to quote the passages in question.

Meanwhile I feel you are doing me a great honour and a kindness for which I am deeply grateful [...]

I nearly forgot to say that I enclose 2 little diagrams to ask whether you think it would be wise to insert a few with explanations? [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

3 October 1903

[...] I have taken advantage of a quiet time at Denton to restudy carefully your little Note on Self. I find it especially helpful [...]. So far, though it helps to clear, and exposes weak points, it does not seem to undermine my suggestion that in the most interesting of reflexive relations we have something more complex than any others. The transference of meaning surely does not enable

Self to cover the whole ground. If it did the ethical use of unselfishness would be impossible or at least inexcusable. The negation of the primary human prerogative could not have ethical value.

I clearly see of course that if we eliminate the ‘properties’ or ‘qualities’ of anything, nothing remains. But in the ‘I-sayer’ we have a unique case: ownership *expressed*. In all other cases the use of ‘My’ is to indicate what is not, in every sense or wholly, ‘Me.’ (The case is of course even worse in their language, e.g. French; where we have ‘mon moi’).

It seems to me that while on one side it would be instructive to restore the older usage ‘hissself’ (as herself) and theirselves, it would also be instructive to write, as in French, *same* for *self*. We should see more clearly the difference. For sometimes we do mean Itsame or Isame, Me same, and sometimes we mean a somewhat which ‘I’ can deny or destroy just as ‘I’ can destroy my eye or my body. The personal relation seems to me conveniently expressed by *I and self*; and the distinction justifies the ethical usage. But surely it is impossible for Me to act upon Mesame; we have here transcended the ‘reflexive relation’ and got back to that which creates or makes use of it.

I have put down a few more notes on this line suggested by your statement and now enclose them. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

15 November 1903

[...] I have had one of the great surprises of my life, in finding that Mr. B. Russell from the standpoint of Pure Mathematics is in his new book dealing with ideas mostly corresponding with primitive ones which I have for long held but found almost impossible to express intelligibly. I am reading the book a third time and making a series of special Indexes of it.

Then comes the enclosed Notice, coupling the importance of the question I raise in *What is Meaning?* with that of the questions Mr. Russell deals with!

Dr. Peirce’s letter is even stronger in endorsement than the review (in which he says he felt hampered by the conditions) [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

23 June 1904

[...] this morning taking up Bergson’s book which a mass of other reading had pushed aside, I found that with consummate ability he was drawing out the very points I was trying to express! Of course in such a case it is not fair by quotation to isolate a paragraph from a continuous argument. Still I can’t resist enclosing you one extract before I get any further in the book. For this is the very first time that I have come across anyone who saw the matter in the same light that I did. And Bergson is unaware or at least takes no notice of the fact of the entirely borrowed vocabulary of time. I shall go on to his treatment of ‘Les deux aspects du moi’ with double interest now.

Also enclosed 2 passages from Le Dantec as he seems to take part of my position about language. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

17 July 1904

[...] I have been studying the current *Mind* (as usual) with edification and came upon an unexpected find in the shape of Mr. Jenkinson’s excellent and kind review of *What is Meaning?* I had given up hope of such a notice, fearing that my presentation of the subject put it out of your court [now section 8.6 this volume].

Mr. Schiller has indeed roused up the Bradleyan lion, who finds out and makes the most, of course, of the weak places in *Humanism* although it seems a pity that such a critic should repeat what he condemns as 'extravagance and vulgarity' in a writer, by the very use of those terms in so personal a reference. Apart from this I fear we all feel that Mr. Schiller really does himself injustice sometimes in this matter of taste; and I have often had hard work to defend him.

I suppose Mr. Bradley is justified in saying that Will implies something other than will. But then what is there that doesn't? The truth surely is (p. 326) that an irrational and unintelligent will is not human at all. It is animal, it has an automatic trend, it is very near the mechanical 'must needs.' And it is true that nobody would resent more promptly than Mr. Schiller a remark that Pragmatism because practical was not a rational theory. He really holds that the most rational thing is to be practical, while I imagine Mr. Bradley holds that the most practical thing is to be rational. Also it seems true that pragmatism tends to exalt 'bare doing' with, one may add, bare results. The analysis of Fidget on one side and Hustle on the other with a general study of Fuss would be useful here! I suppose that in this controversy one side is tempted to say Do, no matter what, how, or why; and the other, Be, and do not anyway by any means or for any reason.

As to the Infinite I am afraid I am tempted to make short work with its usual irrelevant and inapplicable use. It seems to me to reek with confusion. Where Prof. Mackenzie (after criticising older views of 'infinity') finds in Wordsworth 'this note of infinity' (p. 361) I should rather find Allness; and intensity of Quality at the heart of the All.

We certainly think to 'scale heaven by a confusion of tongues' (p. 372). For as usual even after showing up the fatal consequences of using such prefixes as In- and Ab- for the supreme Positive, the writer speaks of the Perfect *or* Infinite as though it mattered not which we used. As to our reaching the idea of GOD as the Perfect through the sense of our own perfection, that seems to me almost a grotesque anthropomorphism, a rank deifying of a mere magnified projection. What really gives us the true idea of GOD is to see Him as what we would be but here and now are not: to see Him thus by the very force of contrast. True that this *implies* our potential 'perfection.' As I am never tired of repeating, the pessimist by his desperate discontent is our best because involuntary witness to the reality and the pressure of the idea which prompts it.

As to Mr. Wells, the value of his paper (apart from its biographical interest) is to me its strong 'significal' bent. He makes short work with the negatives treated as positives (practically worshipped as well as entitized – may I have this last word?). I am entirely with him about the *omnis*. But then I always see quantity as irrelevant to qualify except in so far as quality emerges from it; and the latter as the dominant note of reality. That I suppose is the woman's instinct; but it also tends to be that of the thinkers whom we call the 'greatest' even thus expressing quality by quantity.

Again, his reminder that we think only in two dimensions is an old idea of mine and so of course is his valuation of 'insight,' though he does not as I have done suggest 'insense.' One wonders what Mr. Bradley thinks of it all!

Your 'Primary and Secondary Qualities' is to me enormously suggestive; for as far as I succeed in following it (and if I fail it is entirely my fault not yours) it gives me just what I want in two directions: one that of identifying all sense-experience and all the 'facts' with which it deals, with *Sign* ('that which points beyond itself') and the other, that of deriving all our time ideas from space + motion. The world becomes the Significant. Signness becomes the ultimate 'predicate' and 'postulate' both of sense and of fact. Reality is that of which both are the sign; and the question always is, How far sign and how far merely symbol? Will you not tell us? I think I shall have to make a separate study of your paper; it 'means' – signifies – so much to me. But how to get through what I want to do? [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

25 November 1904

[...] I think you would like to see the enclosed document which came a few weeks ago as a letter to me. It seems to me of very great interest and I cannot help wishing that it could appear in *Mind*. You will see at the end that Mr. Peirce suggests its being included in a second edition of my book! [...] I sent a copy of it to Mr. Russell and enclose you a copy of his answer, which I have also forwarded to Mr. Peirce, as I am delighted to be the means of conveying to the one, the other's readiness for his criticisms. Who knows but that a similar rapprochement might be effected in the case of Prof. Cook Wilson! I feel quite like a 'Hague Commission'! You spoke once of the wild biologists among whom you feared to be devoured: but these mathematicians are if possible still fiercer; and it is something to have conveyed even one message of peace between them. [...] One curious point has been that while he [Prof. Cook Wilson] was writing about Oneness, Twoness, and Threeness, Mr. Peirce should independently write about Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness.

I have largely written my paper on 'Time a derivative' and among other things have taken advantage of your Aristotelian paper on the 'Qualities' which impresses me very much [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

28 May 1905

[...] I think you may like to know that I have a letter from Prof. James who is at Paris saying that he is so far from well that he has to give up his European engagements and hurry back to America. He says he may have to start on June 2nd, but if he finds he can stay in London till the 9th he will make a point of coming down here to see me. His letter is warm and kind and I hope we may meet.

One of the hundred things which I forgot or there wasn't 'time' to bring forward while you were here, was an article by Mr. Edward Dixon in *Mind* of October 1902 'On the Notion of Order.' I notice that Mr. Russell ignores his treatment of the subject. I wish I had asked you what you thought of the Dixon view! Meanwhile he has one – for me – pregnant phrase: '[...] in theory, "passing in review" does not take time.'

There is also in the same number some remarkable passages in Mr. Bradley's 'Definition of Will,' '[...] the self feels itself realised': and 'the self, beside thus feeling, must also perceive itself and so be self-conscious of itself [...]' (p. 438).

What would be said to us if we thus used any other term, especially a term symbolizing a conception of this cardinal importance?

I have just heard from Mr. Sargent (with whom I have corresponded!) the man who has been reorganizing education in South Africa and is much alive on that subject. He has just reached England and proposes to come and see me, whereat I am glad. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

5 June 1905

[...] I have just heard from Prof. Vailati who says, 'Je suis bien honoré par la proposition que me fait Prof. Stout, par votre moyen. Veuillez bien lui écrire que je m'occuperais bien volontiers de rédiger un article de sujet logique pour la Revue. Est-ce que celui conviendrait de le recevoir vers la fin d'Aout?'

Perhaps you may now communicate with him direct (address Istituto Tecnico, Firenze). I have had a very kind letter from Dr. J. Stoney and think it may interest you to see copies of two of his letters to me, one of which is biographical. Don't trouble to return, better destroy them. He is I am sure much gratified at finding his work appreciated by you.

I have also had a very nice letter from Mr. Hobhouse who wants to have a long talk about the notes on his book which I ventured to send him. He is so much run down that he has had to go away for some weeks but proposes to come over on his return.

I have been half killed by the heat since you left and in order to breathe had to take refuge with the electric fan. But today there is a sudden change and I am going away for a few days. I shall always be glad to remember that the weather while you were here was so perfect; and the memory of our talks abides with me. I am subject to such profound discouragement that in heartening me up you do a charitable work! (By the way I wonder who Lady Grove is? She has a remarkable and incisely expressed article in the June XIXth.

Hoping that the Diablerets [Switzerland] will be all you can wish for and be good for you all [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

28 July 1905

[...] Dr. Vailati [...] tells me he is sending me more numbers of *Leonardo* with, amongst others, a paper by Dr. Calderoni on 'The Sense of Nonsense'; which sounds rather in my line!...

Mr. Macdonald's services are proving invaluable to me. He has so completely recast my paper on time that its own mother doesn't know it. Meanwhile I have found a remarkable witness to a part of my view in an essay 'La genèse de l'idée du temps' by Guyau, with a warm endorsement by A. Fouillée, which I had never heard of. So now I shall have to correspond with M. Fouillée!

As it was really your doing that I had at last the courage to write to M. Henri Bergson and enclose my translation of his 'Introduction' or rather of the conclusion of that, I think I ought to enclose you now a copy of his really astonishing answer. If I get more such letters from minds of that calibre I am afraid I shall get a terrible attack of swelled head! Happily Mr. Macdonald is quite capable of dealing with that disease. Seriously however I am thankful indeed for such a witness from a complete stranger, and shall look forward with keen hope to the further letter which M. Bergson promises and to his annotations. What do you think about the publication of the whole article, and where should it be? [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

15 October 1905

[...] I have been much interested in the paper on Things and Sensations which you so kindly sent me. When I received the very interesting *Mind* for October, I sat down at once and wrote you the rough draft of a letter which now, alas!, seems to have disappeared entirely. As these things only come 'when they choose' and never come again, this renewed attempt will I fear be very pointless.

The subject of 'Things' has been occupying me a good deal lately and I have been guilty of some Doggerel which insisted on being written (though versifying is always against the grain with me!) and is now inflicted on you. That ferocious critic Prof. Cook Wilson says that parts (like those of the Curate's egg?) remind him of Goethe and Browning! So you see I shall expect you to go one better – or worse?

The first 'thing' I have to thank you for is the predication (?) of two distinct existences which interpenetrate each other so that there can be no question of apartness. Then I am grateful for an 'immediate experience' which radiates a halo (only *are* halves radiated? a corona?) of implications. But now are there not two interpenetrating yet distinct experiences both immediate, i.e. the phylogenic (genetic?) and the ontogenic (genetic?) – the racial and the individual? I agree that the independent not-self is known from the beginning but I should make it a question of Mother-sense. *Without this*, the great linkage of the race (vertical and lateral) which ramifies throughout all life

would be missing, and we should as you say be merely fragments in which case you would never have written your article!

But the immediate experience of all conscious life and indeed all sentient life (and where are the limits of this?) is a Beyond for our fleeting individual experience: and itself again points to a Presumable Beyond of its own. Yes, experience is that which essentially 'points beyond' itself. To what? Surely to an other, a further a greater or fuller form or status or type of Experience [...] Must this be nonsense, as it may sound?

Two more remarks: 1) The passivity of which you speak in the last page must I suppose share the fate of *Rest* which has been deprived of the dignity of being 'equal and opposite' to Motion and has become a mere phase of motion or even a mere fiction; 2) I am sad at *your* still using that horrid image of an 'inner being' and 'inner states.' For 'inner' is as purely spatial as 'outer'; and yet it is only the 'outer' which we thus assume to be 'in space.' You will say I am rabid about this. Well I am a little! But you *have* admitted that we have here a bad linguistic habit: and to my great delight, Mr. Hoernle of whom you spoke with much appreciation, speaks in this *Mind* (p. 454) of 'meaningless spatial metaphors about knowledge being "in" us and reality "outside"' which is very near me: he also protests against falsifying an issue 'by misleading analogies,' and again insists that 'the whole of our so-called "inner" experience is not in space, and the laws of geometry are in no way applicable to it' – as they are to all internals and externals, ins and outs!

I have much more I should like to say about other parts of *Mind* and about Carveth Read's Metaphysics of Nature which, so far as I have got, I find absorbingly interesting, though full of these inherited ineptitudes of imagery! I have also now got through Gomperz' 5 vols. (as well as De Vries' *Mutations*) with very great profit. How real and living he makes the Greek thinkers; and how dry and dead, in comparison, the other histories of thought mostly seem! I feel I have at last made friends with the Great Thinkers! [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

7 November 1906

[...] I have been severely ill and since recovery have been much hampered in endeavours to overtake correspondence and other work; else I should have written before to tell you that at last, urged by a remarkable notice of Mr. Greenstreet's in the W. G. of a work on Analogy and another on Education, I wrote to him. I wish I had done this, as you suggested, years ago! But somehow the special occasion never seemed to arise: and I shrink from bothering people about nothing in particular.

However now we have started a friendship in good earnest, and I hope he will come and stay here during part of the Xmas holiday. For he is going to put 'chunks' of my work on Significs in the W. G. and asks if I mind being plagiarised. Mind? Why I only wish everybody would do it, so long as they improve upon the plagiarised material!

I know I may count on your congratulatory sympathy in the real onward start my campaign is now making. Dr. Lionel Tayler (who has already the ear of the public) has given up his practice and moved to Willesden Green in order to write with the help of my material a book to be called I think *The Study of Significs*. There are also developments in other directions with which I won't trouble you now.

[...] Mr. Macdonald is now making a complete survey and classification of all my papers and 'evidences.' Mr. Greenstreet alludes to some tragedy in his life. May I know what this is? He says my writing has helped him. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

18 February 1907

[...] Herewith I return the *Time* article. What do you think ought to be its title? I have not hit upon one that seemed satisfactory. Some seemed too vague and others too cheeky and so on. You will know best what fits.

I hope it is really improved and a little shorter in spite of the Rutgers Marshall addition, as I have excised several passages [see section 4.11, this volume].

I am feeling much tempted to write to Mr. Hoernle but think I will let him off for the present. If I live and keep any wits, it ought to be much easier before long to make myself understood; for Mr. Macdonald is doing splendid work. He ought to be engaged as Critical Editor-General! He is getting the work into such lucid order that I am myself surprised to find how one part explains another and how far the whole makes a coherent system. His preliminary report is a masterpiece though he was in bed with influenza!

One thing I have set my heart upon and that is on you and Mrs. Stout and Alan coming here some time before the autumn for a real visit. There are so many reasons why I am anxious for this, though first comes the great pleasure it would give me [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

22 April 1907

[...] I am sorry I did not discover Morrison on Simmel's 'Schopenhauer and Nietzsche' in the current *Mind* till just now. There is much in it that finds me; and I note, top of p. 294, one of those many unnoticed paradoxes whereby, so to speak, *Nature* is drawing, demanding our attention to our own ethical ignorances and oversights.

Then I forgot a passage in the *Journal of Philosophy*, ecc. (Vol. 1, No. 20) condemning the barbarous practice of 'viewing paintings and photographs with two eyes'! Also telling us of an instrument called the *binocular Verant*, which is an excellent image among the many waiting for adoption!

Further, a very interesting notice of Kozłowski (*Revue Philosophique*, February 1904) on a deep 'contradiction' between intuitive and discursive thought, science and philosophy, between the asymptotic and periodical principles of change. Thus here again we are calling in question the 'basal' conception of logic and mathematics. And the question always recurs: will you have them in stale language or fresh? In secondhand or firsthand speech? In images that obstruct, and must now be ignored, or in images that really illustrate and validly suggest?

Victoria Welby to Mrs. Ella K. Stout

15 January 1908

[...] [Dr. Stout] will (I hope!) be interested to hear that I am engaged in answering a closely written letter from Mr. C. S. Peirce (an answer to one I wrote him about his article in the *Hibbert*) which covers 20 quarto pages! He is verily I think what Prof. James and the readers of the *Monist* consider him, the most original (and eccentric) genius in America.

[...] I am always hoping to write – or get written for me – a more adequate essay on Significs than has yet been possible. But it would have to be crammed with examples which will bring me I fear many enemies among those who would prefer to let sleeping dogs lie. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

7 December 1909

[...] Prof. Alexander has been here and we have settled that I should write from the significal point of view a paper for the Aristotelians next autumn, if life and wits last so long. I am proposing as a subject (already partly sketched out) 'Mental Experience in biological terms' pointing out that the latter should at least represent the advanced guard in biological knowledge. The bother is that it is difficult either to leave out or to include vital chemistry. The whole question is urgent both for Significs and Science, as I only wish someone more competent than I can be, would make manifest. Still there are hopes.

In the Translators' Note, in 'Eucken's Problem of Life,' there is a generous recognition of services wholly due to the significal standpoint and method.

One more hopeful sign is that the new Professor of Theology and Tutor at Balliol is coming here for a week (on Thursday) in order to go thoroughly into the applications of Significs on that side.

Meanwhile the cold is nipping. May you all have a joyful Christmas [...]

I feel the loss of Professor Vailati very much. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

12 April 1910, 5.30 a.m. (revised 10 January 1912)

I should like to put down some points with reference to your very useful challenge about the Primal Sense.

In the first place (whether I put it adequately or not) I have the *trend* of all present psychology, physiology and anthropology with me. I could give you a volume of indirectly witnessing excerpts as to this and have had some conversations in the same line with experts.

The truth is, if I may so speak and in a broad sense, that your own life and work reveal for me, not that primal sense is abortive in you, but that it has a formidable and despotic rival in an extraordinary development of the rational and conceptual brain. It is an accepted fact in the economy of things in the human world that any such immense preponderance inevitably entails some corresponding suppression, except possibly in those rarest cases of commanding 'genius' which have so far been reckoned in some sense superhuman.

But now I would take other ground. In my view, which I find increasingly though indirectly confirmed by the present study of the origin and nature of Sex, we have hardly begun in philosophical discussion to use the hints which the difference between Man and Woman (who are more than male and female or masculine and feminine) analogically furnished. The man is devoid of three crucial experiences, which in me have translated themselves (like others which are shared by men) into the mental sphere.

The first is the special form which adolescence in the girl physically takes.

The second is what, after conception (note here the thinker's use of 'conceptual') we call in noble expression the Quickening.

The third is that of 'labour' and of giving birth (normally followed by the suckling).

The last (giving birth) is peculiarly educative when, as in a case known to me, a highly elaborated nervous system and unusually active brain combine with an exceptionally unyielding framework; the penalty apparently of 'civilisation' and now probably obviated by active games and gymnastics, as originally by hard labour. This caused serious danger and such agony as could hardly be surpassed; and would in an ordinary instance have left permanently crippling traces. In this one it made for a deepening of Consciousness.

All three *constitute a link with the whole vital world* which the man lacks; and this factor it is I believe which has in mothers, actual or potential, preserved a primal sense which man also has, but from a different experience and in a different form.

The woman herself only has it in working form so far as she can shake off, not the natural conditions of life (which there is now a tendency to shirk) but the numbing and planing effect of high civilisation and conventional education – rather *induction*.

But very few of us do shake it off. *These few become the mental fertilisers of men*. They have nothing to do with logical gestation. That is typically the man's function. The Sexual order tends to reverse itself in mind. I have written some rather vague papers about this. I can only give the bare suggestion. But it is well worth following up; and I don't wish unduly to press the difference between man and woman. Motherhood (in a wide sense) came before fatherhood which was so to speak extruded in favour of rising types of organic form which entailed sexual separation. I doubt whether we yet fully understand the potential fatherhood now lapsed; the Memory 'in my third sense' that *we* have delegated to *you*, and the forces which were the chief agents (in primitive form) in dividing and differentiating the sexes. I am putting this of course dramatically, but it is substantially true.

My attempts at bringing forward matters which, if I am right, in the main belong to the very springs of human nature, are of course lamentably inadequate. My greatest desire and my motif both in private conversation and correspondence and in reluctant publication is solely the hope of inducing abler treatment of my topics.

There is only one thing I can say with entire confidence. Those who seriously enter into the matter will find that the study to be called Significs is profoundly significant as to our very constitution, regarded as combining 'body and mind' in the supreme human union and developing through the primal sense and the creative and discursive intellect.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

19 April 1910

[...] Take the two cases of Root and Foundation, both admirably useful metaphors involving valid analogy and applications. We must send down reversed branches radiating into seeking twigs which shall gather nourishment from the teeming earth. They will also steady us and give us a stable support for upward growth. Foundation again is necessary for safe building. We may find it on a plateau of rock upon which we erect an edifice. But on what is our foundation founded? On some seething, explosive crater? We must go to the centre of the earth to find out. But arrived there, we cannot stop. Descent turns into ascent to an opposite surface; and for an ultimate *base* we must continue to rise till we reach our sun, when the same process recommences.

Thus we learn that all foundation and basis is secondary and provisional; that ultimate foundation does not exist. Instead, we have balance and gravitation, attraction and repulsion and all the cosmic conditions which, being those of our world and our life, might be enough for us as the mines and storehouses which our minds can translate.

At present our minds insist (through a false education) on expressing themselves through exploded or outgrown and misfitting theories. True that our present ones are also always in the melting pot and we must beware of petrifying them as alas, we have petrified the pre-scientific guesses. But we need not even thus, be gratuitously antiquated: we need not use 'root' and 'basis' and all such mere survivals in sense as false as if we called the moon a shilling in the sky!

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

20 April 1910

[...] I am always amazed at the wonders you and others like you mentally accomplish and convey, in surmounting the manufactured obstacles or the inherited misfits which as yet through our helplessness or neglect, language presents. This is a perpetual but unended *tour de force*. It is

almost like the feats of the conjuror who persuades us that the illusion produced by his actions is fact. Only you go one better for you give us no shams but realities: but to do it you have to go a long way round or acquire an expressive apparatus wherewith you surmount difficulties (in your hearers or readers) which ought not to exist. And after all, our ‘opponents’ don’t fully understand us, or, if they do, *don’t understand themselves*. Why should they? The wonder is that there is understanding enough for controversy.

It is rare indeed that there is enough for a solution acceptable to both ‘parties’ whose thoughts, if fully and adequately expressed would always be contributory factors even if destructively critical.

All candid minds would automatically recognise waste or rubbish when revealed; and uncandid minds would be silenced. But language must become ready and unfailing servant and perfect instrument for the pooling of human thought. At present we allow it to neutralise contributive power by confusing the issue or vitiating the argument through toxic secretions which remain undetected. Thus we are condemned through usages once vital but now obstructive survivals to remain semi-paralysed in the highest of all functions (that of expression) or else to be pathologically exuberant from lack of the more delicate forms of restraint or control which accepted phraseology refuses to supply or supplies in forms which arouse impatience at what appears to be carping or even ignorant innovation or restriction.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

21 April 1910

[...] There is of course great need that in order to render an idea or supposition or actual experience, a phrase or term should expand and contract, generalise and specialise at desire. Our mental sphere is or ought to be always growing in reach and span, and always richly developing in content. Enrichment and precision must balance each other just as they do on the one hand in the world of invented mechanism and on the other in the word of what we call ‘art’ – rather, creative beauty.

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

18 August 1910

[...] it is of you I think and to you I turn when my need is greatest and my impulses to make my exceptional experiences and their result on thought practically fruitful most urgent. I have many warnings now that though I may live on I cannot reckon – even at 5 am. – on the continuance of present powers, such as they are, of thought and work. With the help of those who really see my point and admit my premises I am bound to gather up forces and utilise material collected during so many years of steady work in order to make the position of Significs secure. Of course as I have often said I am under no illusion as to immediate result. [...] But I think it is time the work entered a second stage and became more definite.

The school world, the most important, is also the most difficult of the fortresses to storm. The idea that the boy and the girl are innately silly or stupid or else a virtually blank sheet to be written over still prevails, carried on from the nursery where either the child is snubbed into silence or praised for shallow pertness which is worse. Yet I find there is an uneasy suspicion that something is wrong somewhere. And that there ought to be a much higher average of intelligence of a penetrative and efficient kind which should be made the most of; one spontaneous and without that self-consciousness of which I have noted the increase even during my life. [...]

Victoria Welby to Mrs. Ella Stout

19 December 1910

At a time of mutual good wishes my thoughts naturally turn to you and yours who have been so much in my life and counted for so much in what to me is far more than life – my life's work. I hardly indeed require to tell you how warm are my wishes for you all, – for all possible good in your lives. Please tell your husband that under the editorship of Mr. Macdonald, the new book is making rapid progress; and little more remains now but my Introduction and a selection from my encyclopaedic and every growing mass of witness to the present need and lack and also to the growing sense (which I rejoice to recognize) of impatient disgust at the quite needless difficulties in expression which we so supinely tolerate. But I have better news even than this. A young Cambridge (Magdalene) man, C. K. Ogden, who came upon *What is Meaning?* by accident is prepared to take the subject up seriously and thoroughly and tells me (what indeed I had already suspected) that he finds much discontentment among his undergraduate friends both in Cambridge and Oxford with the general barrenness of discussions from the balking effect of needless ambiguity. I have therefore at last acquired a practical and young representative in both universities and have good hopes now of attracting for *Significs* some of the best young minds. I much hope that it won't be many days now before the 'Essays' are in the Publisher's hands, as I do not want to produce my book until I can allude to your husband's. [...]

Victoria Welby to George F. Stout

5 January 1911

[...] I am rejoicing greatly in a Cambridge neophyte for *Significs* – Mr. Ogden, Secretary of the Debating Club. He is here seriously studying my materials and shows a strong and practical interest in the whole subject. [...] [see sections 7.1 and 7.2, this volume].

22 April 1911

[...] I think the book *Significs and Language* will be out now in a week or two. It will be a slender one as I was advised to make it a sort of first instalment or general statement, while another book to follow would give applications and suggestions. But I suspect that will have to be done by a younger hand with my materials, which are now very ample. You see I am 74 next week and not feeling very strong; the violent changes of temperature have been very trying.

[...] Mr. Alfred Sidgwick & Mr. Jourdain have been asking me anxiously when the *Essays* are to appear, as they would like, if the plan was given up, to use the material. I have referred them to Dr. Slaughter; but he told me he knew nothing. I have made a fresh attempt to get at Mr. Peirce, but it seems at present hopeless; and I should be a little afraid that at his age the whole outlook is not very hopeful. Mr. Ogden (of Magdalene, Cambridge) has been here again and is very keen. I had a most satisfactory little conference (Mr. Ogden being present) the other day with the Headmasters of Eton and Harrow. They are both inclined to look into the question of *Significs* with reference to future developments of education. [...]

10 August 1911

[...] Mr. Peirce is now apparently very much 'all there.' In a letter just received he says 'I wanted to write an abstract of my entire system of logic. But in order to make sure of being within the limits of space and time, and to be readable – or as nearly so as I can ever hope to be – I must limit myself to *Logical Critics*; that is, to the quality of grade of assurance that the three classes of reasoning afford.' [...]

Early volumes

1.8. A selection from *Links and Clues* (1881)

In the Preface to the first edition of *Links and Clues*, 1881, Welby states that in her quest for truth, understanding and creativity she was not presenting a full theory or thought system, but suggestions uniquely inspired by her readings of the ‘Bible’ and the ‘book of Nature.’ These had provided her with links or clues which in turn were intended to stimulate further inferences and applications by others interested in the same problems. In the Preface to the second enlarged and revised edition of 1883, Welby expresses her gratitude for the ‘unanimous sympathy’ received by her book, which she attributed to the ‘inherent power of the truths’ she had striven to suggest in the context of a growing need for ‘larger and more uniting conceptions of Christian truth’: ‘We need, in the fast-spreading anarchy of thought, not compromises, not starved or partial “systems,” not patchworks of fancy theories or modalities, but something fuller than anything we have as yet apprehended, and thus the true alternative of the withering negations with which we are threatened; a completeness indeed, “objectively” ours already, fitting our needs perfectly and embracing them wholly, but which we are slow to discern and assimilate.’ (Welby 1883 [1881]: xii)

This second reviewed and amplified edition aims at rendering the volume more connected and intelligible, though Welby was always humble about her lack of a formal education (but she was also critical of educational systems, cf. Ch. 5): ‘But the book perforce remains as before, fragmentary and formless. Matured or worked-out thought or deduction are not in my province or power; and the sense of my exceptional ignorance warns me of the danger of any approach to definitely doctrinal inference, since to develop and expound theological truth in its due proportion and perfect balance, requires qualifications which I do not possess, and a position to which I can lay no claim’ (1883 [1881]: xii–xiii). All the same in this Preface she did not hesitate to defend her position against the accusation of ‘Universalism’: ‘there are three fatal flaws in that thought, as commonly held or understood. (1) It puts misery before sin, and joy before holiness, as the first or main considerations. (2) It puts time-words and time-thoughts into Eternity, as if adequate, or indeed relevant. (3) It does not sufficiently recognise the discordant duality within our identity – the contrasted “old” and “new” Man – and therefore, I venture to think, leaves unused a precious key to the mysteries of judgement’ (1883 [1881]: xiii).

Welby’s reflections in *Links and Clues* are organized into a series of entries on specific themes, such as the following, often supplemented with references to the Sacred Scriptures: ‘Perfection,’ ‘The Light of Love,’ ‘Love and Justice,’ ‘Two Conceptions,’ ‘Returning Good for Evil,’ ‘The Power of the Selfish Will,’ ‘Divine and Human Love,’ ‘The “Our Father” of Love,’ ‘The Holy Scriptures,’ ‘Higher and Lower,’ ‘Bear Witness,’ ‘Inspiration,’ ‘The Swallow Imprisoned,’ ‘The Living Word,’ ‘Two Kinds of Assurance,’ ‘The True Offence of the Cross,’ “‘What do Ye more than Others,’” ‘Conversion,’ ‘The Cursing of the Fig Tree,’ ‘He Is the Life,’ ‘Why is Barrenness accursed?’, ‘The Blessed Motherhood,’ ‘The Birthday of the World,’ ‘The True Child, our Pattern,’ ‘Learn of Me,’ ‘Extremes,’ ‘The Way,’ ‘The Door,’ ‘Recognition,’ ‘Honour,’ ‘Three Witnesses,’ ‘Faith,’

'Shadow and Substance'; 'The Two Realities,' 'The "Now,"' 'Iconoclasm,' 'Substitution,' 'Reconciliation,' 'The Reversal of Thought,' 'Sin v Sinner,' 'Words,' 'Reverting,' 'Never discard: always transform,' 'Point of View,' 'Truth,' 'Duality within Identity,' etc.

This booklet was well received by many and criticized by others. Many of the issues dealt with are discussed and developed in the letters included in the initial chapters of *Echoes of Larger Life*, 1929, the volume of correspondence edited by Welby's daughter Mrs. Henry Cust. The second edition includes extracts from Welby's letters to Reverend Charles Voysey, the well-known leader, for nearly thirty years, of the Anti-Christian Theists. He is described in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, reported in a note by N. Cust in *Echoes of Larger Life* (p. 35), as courageous and sincere, and as having profoundly influenced the religious sense of his followers. Some extracts from Welby's letters to Voysey have been included in the present collection. *Links and Clues* did not escape attention, indeed was at the centre of public debate. Though met with approval by many, it was considered to be controversial and in some cases even scandalous. One of Welby's illustrious correspondents was The Bishop of Durham (Dr. Lightfoot), described in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the following terms: 'His personal character carried immense weight, but his great position depended still more on the universally recognized fact that his defence of Christian truth was supported by learning as solid and comprehensive as could be found anywhere in Europe' (Cust 1929: 47). In a letter addressed to Lightfoot, Welby stated that '... My ever-recurring difficulty is to persuade people that my "lines of thought," however defective and incomplete, are really in harmony with Church teaching.' That *Links and Clues* provoked discussion is testified by another letter to a friend, which Welby wrote from the Theological College in Leeds: 'I introduced it here, and great controversy rages about it. D- is indignant with it, but last time I saw him he retracted "baneful" and suggested "possibly helpful" as an epithet. He has spent hours in trying to convince me of its unsoundness. But then his mind demands that facts of doctrine or revelation should underlie all books, and is, I think, naturally averse to all real speculation, especially mysticism. H- and I and one or two more stand up for it vigorously. There seem to me to be two answers to D-. (1) There are regions where you cannot base thought on facts, but on hypotheses. Such a book is not dogmatic but only tentative, suggesting an hypothesis to fit what facts we know. Intellectual pioneering of that kind is not only good but necessary, if our minds are not to go to sleep. (2) The force of the book rests quite as much if not more on its moral teaching, which is to my mind splendid' (Cust 1929: 55).

The excerpts below from *Links and Clues* present considerations of a methodological and interpretive order, beyond more strictly philosophical or theological discourse. For example, the section entitled 'The Holy Scriptures' is entirely dedicated to the 'principles of interpretation,' and as such evidences the value of *Links and Clues* as representing an early phase in the development of Welby's theory of meaning and interpretation (see Chs. 2 and 3).

The Light of Love

'Flee from the wrath to come.'

What are we to flee from? Always from sin, from evil, from wrath and anger, and the kingdom of hatred and malignity, rage and fury. Whom are we to flee unto? To our Father: to the Source

of life, who is Love, Author of peace, and Father of all mercies. We are always to flee from the kingdom of hate to the kingdom of love; from the kingdom of darkness, away from Him, to the kingdom of light, His presence. Let us think of Him as the Sun of righteousness. Neither darkness nor cold in the sun, only light and heat. So there is only light and love – life and goodness – in the Sun of righteousness. But if we turn our backs on the benefits of the sun and dwell in the icy shadows of a polar winter, we shall find there all the things that belong to it, only we must not speak of the ‘bitter cold’ of the sun we have left. We must not say, ‘the sun freezes.’ So if we choose the realm of cursing, bitterness, and destruction, and turn away from the sun of our souls, we shall verily find the things of darkness; but let us beware of supposing that *they* are in the sun of life.

If we leave the blessed kingdom of light and air, and descend into the bowels of the earth, we there (away from the sun) find again the things of darkness, though not the bitterness of deadly cold. We find stifling, poisoning gases; but, again, we must not say that these things are in the open air and daylight we have left; they are in the absence from those things (*Rom. ii.8*). Yea: indignation and wrath – shame and horror – belong to unrighteousness only. If we obey the power of evil, instead of GOD Who is all and only Goodness, then we must reap his harvest, receive his wages, share his attributes. We have chosen wrath for our ‘father,’ we have turned away from GOD, and so cannot see Him. The pure in heart alone can see Him; and what do *they* see? Blessing and cursing, sweet and bitter, love and hatred, life and death? . . .

Let us think again of GOD as light. A man with inflammation of the eyes or brain has to be kept in a dark room; and if a ray of light is admitted it tortures and injures him. But no one therefore says ‘the *sun* is inflamed,’ or ‘there is inflammation in the light’! All know that the inflammation is in the man himself, and that the blessed light is always the same; the difference is in that which it touches. Let the patient’s brain or eyes be cured, and he will be restored to the kingdom of light from which his diseased state had exiled him.

‘Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.’

We all want to be perfect – some day. And we all ignore the lesson of the Cross more or less by deeming it only a time event, something that endures but for a time, that like the grass withereth and fadeth, giving place to resurrection. That was, we seem to say, an exceptional and temporal interruption of eternal glory and honour; the Master is really like an earthly king who once in his life for an hour assumed the garb of a slave to avert some great calamity.

We are naturally delighted to be ‘as’ a king; to be what we see here as royal, and honoured in sumptuous splendour. Which of us does not rise to the bait in one form or another?

True, the preliminary ‘hour’ of tribulation and self-denial daunts us. But even the stockbroker can and does lead a life of rigid self-denial with the prospect of thus becoming opulent and a great man in his old age.

Do we want to be ‘as He is’?

Do we want to be constrained, by the intensity of His love poured into us without stint, to leave gladly any glory, any heavenly throne we can conceive, and share in rescuing some perishing world *at the cost represented by the Cross*? And when one world is redeemed, shall we be ready for another with fresh forms perhaps of exquisite suffering, borne not with the armour of divine impassibility but with all the sensitiveness of creature-infirmities? Do we really want to see with His eyes? To recognise that the highest honour is to wash the feet of the lowest for the sake of pure and perfect goodness, not only here and now but eternally? Do we really want to be content with ceaseless work, with obscurity, with homelessness? Perfect? The son of Man is the One who hath not where to lay His head. And where He is there may we be also – if we will! and His words pass not away; true once, true always. When, when shall He come in clouds of real glory (not our counterfeit earthy gorgeous glories), too dazzling for the eyes of our selfish or at best childish souls, with all His holy angels eager and thankful to minister with Him, only not allowed like us the honour of sharing His Sacrifice-life to the utmost? The angels sang, ‘Glory to GOD in the

highest,' when we in their place should have wept and wailed over the utter extinction of that glory in the unspeakable humiliation of the mangerbirth. Glory! at the Ascension, yes; but never in that unsoundable condescension to the extreme of helplessness in the finite. . .

What is man that Thou art mindful of him? Is he indeed capable of rising to this? Surely; else would Thou not have come and lived the parable of sacrifice to show us, as it were, the nucleus of the only true life.

And Thy saints have shown it, though hitherto they have seemed unable to see that the selflessness which brought them close to Thy heart here, and made their very hunger, thirst, weariness radiant, was but the expression of Thine eternal nature, was but Thy deathless light shining through them.

Yet Thou hast verily visited the son of man as the Son of Man; and even we shall know as we are known, as He knew. . .

'Perfect through Thy comeliness': 'The Manhood taken into GOD.'

'GOD is love.' Do not all commands to us not only imply, but culminate in love? Why else is St. Paul's description of charity so divine? It is the description of Christ. Thus, over all these things we 'put on charity' (Col. iii. 14), though we seem to have done so already in the list he gives. It seems superfluous; but no, for it is the very bond of perfectness – that which encircles and includes all its parts. So he says, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. xiii. 14). Thus we 'put on love' – Christ, the love of GOD give to us. 'Blessed be Thy coming, O Heart of Heaven!' That was written on a Mexican temple. Yea, the very Heart of heaven beating for us, given to us, aching for us, bleeding for us, bearing our sins, our pains and sorrows, and griefs and sufferings. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10), for incarnate love says, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O GOD!' Thus it includes all other attributes *knowable to us* (that is, within the 'Be ye perfect as...'), and that could only be said of love. Before I saw that GOD is love, in a special sense greater and more inclusive than the expressions, He is just, pure, powerful, etc., I could not see why, without love we were not merely imperfect, but – *nothing*; however heavenly and great our other gifts, I could not see why, over all things, we were to put on charity – love. Why not equally truth, justice, purity? And why the highest of gifts? Surely prophecy and faith – insight into the hidden things of GOD – must be as high or cannot be as nothing without it. But now I seem to see that the highest meaning of love includes *all else that we can grasp*. Divine love must be true, just, holy, pure, beautiful, faithful, lowly, patient, pitiful, and all else that is good which we can understand. (This is surely the key-thought). Take any one of these qualities, and we shall find it does not inherently include or imply the rest. For instance, justice need not necessarily be loving, nor purity patient, nor truth pitiful (or forgiving), in the sense in which the highest conception of love includes justice, purity, truth, etc. Again, *is not love the only thing of which you can say at once that it is interpreter and that which is interpreted, revealer and that which is revealed?*

Surely, it is our dwelling on the idea of GOD as omnipotent (that is, on the unknowable) which makes the difficulty of taking to our hearts the precious truth, that indeed and in reality, He is perfect and boundless Love. How often we hear it said, and sometimes out of a torn and bleeding heart one longs to heal – 'Omnipotence, boundless power, can do anything. Why then not so order things here, that goodness might reign without suffering and sing? GOD "could" have done it, and if He had, it must have been right because He did it. Having the power to produce a perfect result, without exposing us to the horror of sign and suffering, He has willed, has chosen, to inflict evil upon us. Why are we not like the angels – no Agony, no Cross, no Juda (no suffering, no death, no sin)?'

That is the needless wail, the weary doubt, the baffling darkness, which surely flows from the conception of GOD as power, rather than as love. It comes from putting will, power, sovereignty first in our thought of Him: the ruler rather than the Father. But the son revealed the Father, not the Ruler, for man had evolved *that* for himself, and had failed thus truly to know GOD; for thus he is unknowable by us – beyond us. We put supreme will and boundless power and omniscience first, and love second – or even on a level with all other 'qualities' or 'attributes.' But if we put

love first, we are free to say, 'It could not have been otherwise (we can even almost dimly begin to see why), there 'must have been' the possibility of sin and evil, else no choice, no trial, no victory, no love. Here comes in our Lord's test: – 'Was it from heaven, or of men?' Does this 'savour of things that be of GOD, or those that be of man?' Are we so blind yet, though with the Light of the world to open our eyes, as not to see that for love to rule and conquer through lowliness and weakness even, for love to direct both will and power as instruments, is a thought which man could never have evolved for himself (being at once too unloving and too naturally a power-worshipper), and which is thus divine. GOD alone could have told St. John He was Love – unto us – rather than Power. That He is power, force, is man's natural conception of supreme Deity, derived from the analogy of human rulers: what more obvious than the reign of superior strength, of supreme will? *Man can know and do that of himself in his lower nature, apart from goodness even.* But for Love to reign supreme, ready to abdicate power and glory to come among us, and with the great might of sacrifice to succour us and serve us and give us the Kingdom – is not this thought blessed and life-giving, and high above the other as the heaven above the earth? *As we are constituted,* the idea of a point beyond which Omnipotence 'cannot' go seems inevitable (so surely the word is misleading): for instance, GOD 'cannot' make wrong right or evil good, or, at least, we must certainly say that Omnipotence 'cannot' destroy itself. But there ought to be no 'cannot' at all in abstract omnipotence, else the word is meaningless. Surely this and all kindred words are as the Bable of thought to us, the building of which brings upon us confusion of tongues and bewilderment of heart! All the 'cannots' belong to 'can' – to power. Love has no 'cannots,' so to speak, and no limits: the power of *love* may have limits and cannots, and so may the will, in a sense; but love itself we can conceive as boundless. How infinitely we gain thus. Power in itself is not necessarily loving; it might be either wanton or implacable, or even unjust. So with will – Supreme Will might have willed our destruction. The expression, 'imperious, wilful,' contrasted with 'loving,' will show us how we gain in association. When we think that evil 'might have been avoided' – forgetting that the highest type of holiness known to us is victory, which, so far as we can conceive, could not have been attained without it – then we are taking the name of Love in vain. . . . *What is temptation unfelt – agony unknown – death suffered? Only an angel. What is temptation overcome – agony passed through – death conquered? The son of GOD.* How many of us know Him for ourselves as the One who, being Love, only and always overcomes evil with good, returns good for evil: mirrored for us in the beloved One, who, being one with the Father, our King and Lord, yet identifies Himself with the neediest and feeblest to whom we minister; yet washed in the garb and fashion of a slave, the feet even of the traitor and murderer He knew would use those feet *so washed* to go forth and betray Him to death?

Why can we embrace and press to our innermost heart (when our will turns true as the needle to the pole, and is not deflected by self and sin), the perfect will? Because it is the blessed will of Love. It is the heart and not the mind of the universe, so to speak, that we can bear to look upon without being blinded: yea, and unite our hearts unto. So it is that 'Thou shalt love' is the essence of the two great commandments which include all others, on which all else hangs: the root, the key, the epitome of the 'Be ye therefore perfect, even *as* your Father which in heaven is perfect.' Light, life, love – how these three thoughts, taken together, help us in conceiving a threefold perfectness, the Triune glory! But of the three, love alone fully includes the other two. We can conceive light without love, as knowledge; of light without life, only revealing, manifesting it. But we speak of the light, the life of love; and this is a fuller thought than the love of light or life – so that light and life, in a sense, are included in the 'bond of perfectness.'

The utmost glory of love would be towards us as though it were not, unless we had light to see it as it truly is, the root and source and comprehension of all perfectness revealed to us; so He is light to us in order that by Him we may see that He is love.

Faithfulness presupposes faith. And what does faith presuppose? The knowledge of GOD as love; whom for that very reason we may trust utterly and wholly. (Welby 1883 [1881]: 7–18)

Love and Justice

Is justice apart from love, or an integral element in it?

With us this is so. But in GOD I see Justice perfectly developed within Love; – in the form of fire inexorable.

In what seems to me the lower conception, i.e. the separation, the contrast between justice and love (the one balancing or limiting the other), we are surely shut up to this: – that the highest form of love may conceivably be unjust; if not actively, at least passively. That is monstrous; and does it not betray at once how inadequate, how thoroughly anthropomorphic in the bad sense are our natural ideas of that transcendent completeness? Were this so, St. John would surely have given us the necessary complement of ‘GOD is love’ – ‘GOD is justice.’

If a mother is only ‘just’ as well as ‘loving’; deals out justice as well as love, but separately: – If she requires to be reconciled *to her children*, or if any possible interposition could reconcile her *to their sin*: that surely is simply a proof that she is creature and imperfect, not Creator and Perfect.

Why are we not told that GOD is Justice? Is it not because justice is included in love and light and inherently implied by them?

Our love may conceivably tolerate evil; but His (blessed thought!) can never condone the smallest speck of it; for it is fire. Not that sentimental, fond, cruel indulgence which some of us call ‘love’! That, when we apply it, or anything distantly like it, to Divine Love, is only the deification of a mother’s weak faleness to and betrayal of her trust; of that which she is to her spoilt child (expressive epithet!).

Is it not true that while the purest love cannot be unjust, pure justice does not necessarily imply love, except by existing within and proceeding out of it?

‘Be ye therefore perfect even *as*’ . . . Let us really take this in its fulness, and we shall know that man would never devise or imagine a GOD whose character was a standing rebuke and reproach to him; whose perfection covered him with shame and self-horror. Man in his natural pride does not like to be humiliated. Therefore he always tries to keep down or to lower the apprehension of that glory; the highest revelation of GOD is too painful to our egotism. If we want to get nearer and see more divine truth we must lift up our hearts to do it; and that is an effort – worse, it cuts across our pride by implying our debasement. How often we hear that we are not justified in inferring some confessedly higher principle from the study of the perfect life ‘because not distinctly laid down in so many words.’ . . . Easy enough to feel we can interpret and understand Scripture so long as it is not beyond a natural standard, an ‘evil for evil’ level; but the moment it transcends that limit (as in the eternal return of good for evil, the eternal joy in giving, the eternal remembrance ‘though even a mother may forget’), then we instantly take refuge in our ‘ignorance.’ . . . Oh, that we should yet be ignorant after the lesson of the cross, in which we are to learn what GOD *Is*. Some have said of diviner conception: ‘Yes, that is pure, and high, and true; but cast not that pearl before swine; the world is not ready yet to dispense with lower terms and levels.’ (The offence of the Cross [Gal. V. 2]; always too high, too spiritual). Others (doubters or outsiders) say: ‘This or that is pure gold, it draws and wins: if you can convince us that thoughts like these are not yours only, but are in Christ and from Him, then the victory is won; but for a purer Gospel than we were taught to find.’

There is a sore famine in the land. But He who holds the key of the granaries will not let us see His face till we bring Him His youngest brother; the pure heart specially dear to Him which as yet knows Him not by sight, and whose separation from Him and estrangement from Him has been our fault and our doing.

O the fatal blindness of us! not seeing that we are some of us driving the purest hearts and most truthful spirits into the wilderness like hireling shepherds, by denying them the highest we can reach unto, the treasure expressly entrusted to us who bear His name for them. Can we not give our best and trust him?

Think of the Pearl of pearls, cast before, and set between what swine of thieves and murderers, jeerers, mockers, trampers, renders! – the Holiest given to the dogs – to those who cried, ‘Away with Him, crucify Him! Surely until we have seen that pearl our heart knows not its own swinishness. . . . ‘And many smote their breasts and returned.’ . . . ‘Truly this was the son of GOD.’

We are always ‘bringing down.’ When we make Him angry, jealous, changeable, vindictive – down to our level. When impassive, impersonal, loveless, ruthless, apart – below our level. But ‘He brought Himself down to our level.’ Yes, in order that we might in light and life mount higher towards His; and yet we grovel in our own, and read the Blessed One by its light! – Let us not read Him by our flaring, smoky, dim lamplight, but by His own open sunlight. The higher and lower meanings we may choose even for the same words are sometimes almost or quite like ‘He forgot Himself’ (meaning sacrifice) and ‘He forgot Himself’ (meaning disgrace). (1883 [1881]: 18–22)

The Holy Scriptures

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION. – How shall we choose the best? that is – (1) the truest; (2) the most fruitful.

Let us try several.

But first, we must bear in mind that we are looking therein for the word of GOD; for the highest, the deepest and purest, in one word, the most Divine truth we can bear, and for that which man would not have reached or apprehended by his own light and faculties alone – that beyond man’s highest natural standard. We must ask ourselves also, *Do we want to know what the Bible says only, or what it means?* If only ‘what it says,’ we shall assuredly be taken at our word and left, in confusion of tongues, to our barren text-banding. Do we want to know what is eternally true, and what true of certain ages and races – ‘temporally’ true; what the Holy Scriptures would say equally and in the same terms if written now, or 2000 years hence, and what they said at certain times, and to certain people, and in certain circumstances?

First, The literal. – Easy to show the utter shipwreck which this would lead to from one end to the other. ‘Thou wilt show thyself *unsavoury*’²⁸ or ‘froward.’ ‘Surely thou hast *greatly deceived*.’²⁹ ‘The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do.’³⁰ ‘The Lord thy GOD hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate’; and ‘If any man come to Me, and *hate* not his father and mother.’³¹ But, in fact, the passages are so many that the difficulty is to choose examples. Well may He say that the letter killeth; by contracting, and by deadly work of disunion, leading astray and hiding truth.

Secondly, The equal, the level (all passages in the Old Testament to be taken as on one level and of equal value, and all in the New Testament the same). – Here, have we not also the decision of our Lord? ‘It was said. . . *but* I say unto you.’ Of course, this referred to what all acknowledge more or less, the difference of level between the ‘first and second dispensation,’ the right of the ‘Word made flesh’ to expand and to fulfil the written word. But does not that establish in a sense the principle of difference of level? Lastly, if we grasp in its fulness the truth of our Lord’s divinity, His own words, as His life, must in some real sense stand on a higher level than any others before or after. The principle of the higher and lower requires no Scripture broken; it requires only our Lord’s own rule of interpreting and expanding the lower by the higher, the lesser by the larger, that which ‘hath been said’ by the greater truth which includes, and thus supersedes and replaces it. Sometimes Scripture has to be, not broken as disobeyed or cancelled, any more than law, but

28. Sam. xxii. 27.

29. Jer. iv. 10.

30. Ex. xxxii. 14.

31. St. Luke xiv. 26.