Chapter Two: Mansel and the Kantian Tradition

Published by

Lightman, Bernard.
The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge.

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Chapter Two

MANSEL AND THE KANTIAN TRADITION

It has been observed by a thoughtful writer of the present day [Alexander Campbell Fraser, 1819-1914], that "the theological struggle of this age, in all its more important phases, turns upon the philosophical problem of the limits of knowledge and the true theory of human ignorance." The present Lectures may be regarded as an attempt to obtain an answer to this problem, in one at least of its aspects, by shewing what limitations to the construction of a philosophical Theology necessarily exist in the constitution and laws of the human mind.

HENRY LONGUEVILLE MANSEL

Henry Longueville Mansel was once described by William Whewell as "by much the most zealous English Kantian whose writings I have seen."1 Considering that Whewell was one of the few Englishmen thoroughly familiar with Kant's work, and since he had dared to apply German modes of thought foreign to his fellow countrymen in The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences (1840), Whewell's qualifications for judging the extent of Mansel's Kantian proclivities would seem to be unquestionable. But despite Mansel's avowed aim to instill in English minds a respect for Kant, his ambivalent attitude toward a number of central concepts of the critical philosophy led him to present a distorted caricature of the Kantian position on science, religion, and their interrelationship. Mansel may indeed have been the closest equivalent to Kant which Victorian England could produce, but his development of a philosophical viewpoint dramatically opposite to the thrust of Kant's thought is an ironical confirmation of the difficulty Mansel faced when he attempted to make the philosopher of Königsberg accessible to the English public.
The Life of a Controversialist

Mansel was born on 6 October 1820 at the Northamptonshire village of Cosgrove, where his father served as rector. The majority of Mansel's ancestors were important soldiers and clergymen, and the Mansels could lay claim to ancient and honorable descent. Burgon reports that the family traced their roots to a Philip le Mansel, who accompanied William the Conqueror into England in the eleventh century. The young Henry was proud of his heritage, displayed an ardent love for High Church principles and Toryism, and intended to follow in his father's footsteps by entering the ministry. After a distinguished undergraduate career at St. John's College, Oxford, Mansel took his bachelor's degree in 1843. He was ordained deacon in 1844 and ordained priest the following year. But Mansel chose to stay within the ivory towers of academe at Oxford, and from 1843 until 1855 he earned his living as a private tutor. He was appointed to a series of academic positions of increasing importance and prestige, Reader in Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy at Magdalen College in 1855, Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy for Oxford in 1859, and finally Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in 1866. But his duties at Oxford weighed heavily upon him, and he was distressed at the liberal direction the university seemed to take, so two years later Mansel accepted Disraeli's offer of the deanery of St. Paul's. Mansel's life was cut short, for he died suddenly in his sleep on 30 July 1871 at the age of fifty-one, from a ruptured blood vessel in the brain.

Considering Mansel's distinguished reputation at the height of his popularity, his social and intellectual activity has received scant attention from historians. During the 1850s Mansel was a respected figure at Oxford, regarded as one of the best teachers by the undergraduate students, and looked upon as a witty conversationalist by all who frequented the senior common rooms. He had established a name for himself as a logician of repute in the early fifties, and soon after, he demonstrated his skills in the realm of ethics and metaphysics. He was asked to deliver the Bampton Lectures in 1858 precisely because Oxford High Churchmen believed that Mansel was potentially a new Butler who could offer a novel apologetic of intellectual substance to fill the void left by the Tractarians. An obsolete Pusey was no longer attractive to young minds, and conservatives were uneasy that the old man was the only counteracting force to the growing power of liberalism at the university.

The situation at Oxford was only a microcosm of the predicament in which conservative Christians found themselves during the mid-Victorian period. Mansel from the start had seen that the larger
danger infecting the university community was coming from two sources. On the one hand, the Positivism of Comte's early thought seemed to Mansel to have crossed the channel to join hands with a native empiricist and scientific spirit that culminated in an implicit atheism. Mansel was particularly hostile toward John Stuart Mill and his *System of Logic* (1843) as a reflection of this intellectual development. On the other hand, Mansel perceived a second threat to Christianity in the slow permeation of German thought into England which brought with it both pantheism and biblical criticism. German pantheism denied one of Mansel's most cherished beliefs, the personhood of God, while the higher criticism offended Mansel's belief in the sacredness of the Holy Scriptures. In addition to attacking German thinkers such as Feuerbach, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Strauss, Mansel criticized those Englishmen infected by the Germans: W. R.
Greg, Francis Newman and other unbelievers of the fifties, as well as the Broad Church.

Described as being "to the backbone a Conservative" by Burgon, Mansel's politics were a part of his religion. For Mansel, Mill's empiricism, German pantheism, French Positivism, and biblical criticism were all the philosophical manifestations of the liberal movement in the political world. His response to the growing power of middle-class liberalism was similar to other orthodox reactions, such as Tractarianism and Ritualism, and was characterized by a mistrust of reason in the religious sphere and an emphasis on authority in the form of the Church or the Bible. But although Mansel shared the same aims as conservatives of this type, his Bampton Lectures were roundly attacked by men of his own party and judged by them to be an abysmal failure. From the time he delivered the Bampton Lectures up until his death thirteen years later, Mansel found himself almost constantly embroiled in controversy. In addition to answering to fellow conservatives, he was called upon to defend the position articulated in *The Limits of Religious Thought* from the attacks of a number of eminent liberal thinkers, including F. D. Maurice, Goldwin Smith, and John Stuart Mill. After his death his name sunk into obscurity, and his works placed in "a kind of 'Index Expurgatorius'" by Anglican thinkers, even though Mansel's orthodoxy was defended by his former students. This was a tragic fate for one who had labored so hard during his lifetime for the conservative Christian cause.

*Mansel, Hamilton, and Kant*

What the critics disliked most about Mansel's work was the foreign flavor, despite his avowed intention to use German modes of thought as a means to achieve orthodox ends. German thought in any form was looked upon with suspicion by English minds. In William Hale White's *Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, the protagonist recalled that at the Dissenting College where he was to be prepared for the ministry, "the word 'German' was a term of reproach signifying something very awful, although nobody knew exactly what it was." The distrust of all things German was a powerful sentiment in England despite a brief flurry of interest in German literature in the 1820s (exploited by Carlyle) and the impact of German thought on men such as Thomas Arnold, Hare, Coleridge, and Whewell.

Mansel was one of the few English intellectuals who, during the fifties, could read untranslated German theology and philosophy and understand it tolerably well. He was aware of the differences between the intellectual traditions of Germany and England that made it next to
impossible for German philosophy to be easily accessible to English readers. The English he characterized as inductive and empirical, while the Germans were transcendentalists and idealists. "What concord or fellowship can be hoped for," Mansel asked, "between the laborious induction which traces all ideas to sensation and reflection, and the 'high priori' method which deduces a theory of the universe from the innocent assumption that A is A, on the bold paradox that A is equally not A?" Mansel saw his role as introducing developments in German thought to the English public so that they could better deal with the challenge it represented to the orthodox Christian faith. What complicates Mansel's relationship to Germany was his use of a particular strand of German philosophy to undermine the claims of thinkers hostile to orthodoxy. In fighting fire with fire, Mansel's critics claimed,
he had burnt to the ground the very institution he was attempting to protect.

Mansel never concealed his debt to German ideas, and in the Prolegomena Logica he singled out two philosophers as instrumental in the formulation of his thought (x-xi). The first was the prominent Scottish philosopher Sir William Hamilton, who occupied the chair of logic at Edinburgh University from 1836 to his death in 1859. Hamilton's learning was considered by his contemporaries to be extraordinarily vast, and his erudite essays on French and German philosophy suddenly restored Scotland's intellectual reputation on the continent. During the controversies surrounding Scottish university reform Hamilton played a significant role in the fight to retain the old, national heritage of a general and philosophical basis to education as against those who desired to anglicize schools of higher learning through a stress on specialization and the classics. Hamilton exercised tremendous influence over his students at Edinburgh, even after he was stricken by paralysis in 1844. "The massive brow and the calmly observant eye were clouded," one former student recalled, "the articulation was defective and laborious; but he struggled bravely on; and the moral effect on the students of that shattered body sustained by an indomitable will was immense."

One of the major aims of Hamilton's thought was to synthesize Kantian criticism with the philosophy of the Scottish school of common sense. Hamilton was bent on using the critical philosophy as a weapon against the pretensions of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Coleridge to philosophical hegemony. Mansel was considered by his contemporaries to be Hamilton's foremost disciple. He made the Scottish philosopher's name one to be reckoned with in England during the fifties and sixties, not only by referring continuously to Hamilton in his published works, but also by co-editing, with John Veitch, a four-volume edition of Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic (1861-66).

The second thinker who, according to Mansel, played a crucial role in his intellectual development was Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher of the late eighteenth century and professor of logic and metaphysics at Königsberg from 1770 until his death in 1804. Kant's life seemed so regular and uneventful that the inhabitants of Königsberg could set their clocks to his movements. But the outward monotony of Kant's life was deceptive, because with the publication of The Critique of Pure Reason in 1781 he began to produce a series of books which would revolutionize European thought. Mansel believed that Kant (and Hamilton) had taught him the importance of epistemology as a preliminary to all investigation. From Kant he learned that
"the true lesson of philosophy" is "a knowledge of the limits of human reason" (LPK, 4).

Mansel made Hamilton's ideas and his interpretation of Kant part of the intellectual scene of the fifties and sixties. In the process he helped to bring a new Kant to England. According to Mansel, Kant had never received his due in his own country, partly because the German thinker was heir to the English philosophical tradition as founded by Locke and Hume. Mansel asserted that Kant was "the philosophical offspring of Locke and Hume; his writings are the natural supplement
and corrective of theirs; and it may be that the spirit of philosophy is not so extinct among the countrymen of Locke and Hume, but that the 'unsightly root' of the German sage may yet bear in another soil the bright golden flower which it has failed to produce in its own."\textsuperscript{14}

Mansel's emphasis on Kant's affinities with the British empiricist tradition contradicted the prevailing English view of Kant. Most English thinkers of the first half of the nineteenth century perceived Kant as a transcendental philosopher. This is true both of the English romantics, like Coleridge, who were first to react positively to Kant's philosophy, and of the British empiricists, whose hostility toward Kant stemmed from their uncritical acceptance of the romantic view.\textsuperscript{15} But it would be fair to say that Kant generally had little influence on English thought until the middle of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} Only in the sixties did Kant's theories begin to penetrate English Christianity, which had been able to isolate itself from the influence of German and French thought during the first half of the century.\textsuperscript{17} It was therefore necessary for Mansel to point out in 1853 that "it would probably astonish some of the critics who talk so comprehensively of German Metaphysics and German Theology, as if all Germans held the same opinions, to be told that the purport of the philosophy of Kant is to teach a lesson of humility, to inculcate the very limited nature of human faculties and human knowledge."\textsuperscript{18}

Although Mansel admitted that he owed much to Kant (in particular, to Kant's \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}), he was highly critical of many aspects of the German philosopher's thought. Mansel believed that some sections of Kant's works, especially those concerning "the right use and legitimate boundaries of reason," were brilliant, while others tended toward vagueness and error. Kant's obscure language, according to Mansel, often led thinkers to overlook or misunderstand the spirit of the whole, which taught that there are limits to human knowledge. For this reason Mansel often looked to Hamilton's work for a clear and consistent modification of Kant's theory of knowledge.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Kant and the Enlightenment}

Mansel hoped that by using the ideas of both Kant and Hamilton, in particular their epistemological concepts, he could simultaneously undermine German pantheism and French and English empiricism. However, in the realm of philosophy of nature Mansel's application of Kantian and Hamiltonian epistemology led him to a fundamentally sceptical stance that destroyed the possibility of certainty in science. Kant's main aim was the construction of an epistemology that would
account for the possibility of certainty in natural science and yet could retain a place for religion and ethics. He was responding to the threat posed by Enlightenment scepticism and determinism.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the attempts of scientists and philosophers to discover the purpose of nature and the rights and duties of human beings solely through the use of human reason seemed to have led to a choice between the inscrutable and the intolerable. The work of Newton and Locke, which had at first seemed to promise human liberation through a mastery of nature, was developed in such a way by Enlightenment figures as to present late-eighteenth-century intellectuals with two dead ends. They could either follow Helvétius and d’Holbach and preserve science through a conception that the universe is regulated by the blind determinism of matter in regular but aimless motion, or they could side with Hume and save ethics by adopting a sceptical position that denies that people can have access to objective knowledge. But the first option was fatal for religion and the second alternative destroyed the certainty of science. Kant wanted to find a way out of the Enlightenment impasse. Most of all, he desired to construct a third option that would reconcile and unify science and religion. Kant believed that he could accomplish his task if he merely unraveled the implications arising out of the philosophy of nature embedded in the original Newtonian view.

As Kant constructed a philosophy of nature upon which to erect a sound philosophy of science, the example he constantly kept before his eyes was the work of David Hume. In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), in his conclusion to book one, “Of the Understanding,” Hume admitted that he had not succeeded in uncovering a valid criterion of truth in his analysis of the understanding, but nevertheless he elected to proceed onto his examination of the passions and morals. Fretting over the corner he had painted himself into, a choice “betwixt a false reason and none at all,” Hume regained his joviality when he recalled the solution provided by Nature. “Most fortunately it happens,” Hume declared, “that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, Nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when, after three or four hours’ amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any further.”

Immersion in the inanities of social life, however, did not really provide Hume with a rational basis for philosophy. Passing time frivo-
lously was no cure for the perplexities raised by his utterly ruthless consistency. Although Hume tried to mitigate his scepticism, his work amounted to an exposé of the weakness of Enlightenment sensationalism. Hume demonstrated that if one started from Locke’s basic premise that knowledge is produced by experience received through sensations, then the legitimate conclusion to be drawn is the unreliability of such knowledge. Many of the axiomatic principles of Newtonian science, for example the existence of an external natural world, could not be philosophically justified by sensationalism. Experience was insufficient to determine whether the perceptions of the senses are produced by external objects resembling them. To Hume, Lockean empiricism was consistent only with scepticism.

It was in Germany that Hume’s thought had the most profound impact. French and English thinkers never really confronted the problems raised by Hume and therefore did not realize that traditional philosophy had reached an impasse. Kant recognized what Hume had accomplished, and he believed that the only response was the formulation of a revolutionary new program that started from non-Lockean assumptions. Instead of a philosophy of nature based on sensationalism, Kant developed a position in *The Critique of Pure Reason* anchored in what he called transcendental idealism.

**Kant, Nature, and Transcendental Idealism**

*The Critique of Pure Reason* is a search for knowledge “independent of experience and even of all impressions of the senses.” In other words, Kant wants to restrict his study to a priori knowledge [42]. Necessity and universality are the sure criteria of a priori knowledge, since experience can never give birth to this type of knowledge. Kant’s guiding question throughout *The Critique of Pure Reason* is this: “Given a priori synthetic judgments, how are they possible?” Thus, he introduces a particular type of a priori knowledge by distinguishing between analytic and synthetic judgments. In analytic judgments, the connection of the predicate with the subject is thought through identity, while synthetic judgments are those in which this connection is thought without logical identity [48]. Judgments of experience are synthetic and extend our knowledge. But how are a priori synthetic judgments possible if they attempt to extend our knowledge without the help of experience? Kant does not attack the problem using this question, rather he says given that we have a priori synthetic judgments, how are they possible? Science, for Kant, can only be built upon the secure basis of synthetic a priori knowledge, which is necessary and not merely contingent or empirical, and yet which is based on experience and not
merely abstract. He points out that we are already in possession of this type of knowledge in the form of a priori synthetic judgments contained in the axioms of mathematics and natural science. The problem for pure reason to examine is the implications of our possession of this species of knowledge for the sensibility, the understanding, and reason.

Kant’s sole consideration in the “Transcendental Aesthetic” is a transcendental doctrine of sensibility which will explain how pure mathematics is possible. His discussion centers around the question, What a priori representations does sensibility contain which constitute the condition under which objects are given to us? Kant is looking for pure forms of sensibility or pure intuitions “which, even without any actual object of the senses or of sensation, exists in the mind a priori as a mere form of sensibility” [66]. He finds two, time and space. However, Kant is conscious that in making time and space “subjective” forms of sensibility, he has left himself open to the charge of idealism. He attempts to overcome this problem by maintaining both the ideality and reality of space and time. He accomplishes this by redefining the concept of objective reality as that which is universal to all people, and by rejecting the old conception of an independent, self-existing entity (things knowable as objects in themselves). Space and time are not things in themselves existing in nature independently of human beings, yet they are still objectively real (for people). In the case of time, Kant argues that “time is therefore a purely subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensible, that is, so far as we are affected by objects), and in itself, apart from the subject, is nothing. Nevertheless, in respect of all appearances, and therefore of all the things which can enter into our experience, it is necessarily objective” (77–78).

Now Kant is not talking of human beings as isolated individuals who organize the manifold of intuition into their own private idealistic illusions. Rather, Kant is discussing how people universally organize the matter of sensibility in order to communicate about nature. Therefore, when Kant uses the term “subjective,” it is not meant to be the subjectivity of solipsism. The true aim is to break down the polar opposition between the terms “subjective” and “objective” or inner and outer. Just as “subjective” is not the illusion of solipsism, “objective” is not the absoluteness of the thing-in-itself. Nothing intuited in space or time is a thing-in-itself, for the a priori forms of sensibility do not inhere in things in themselves, rather they are the means by which our sensibility organizes the manifold of intuition.

The full implications of this view of time and space for a concept of nature and the status of the understanding were revealed in the “Transcendental Analytic.” Nature is known only as appearance, and
not as it is in itself or that which is completely unrelated to humanity. This notion of unrelatedness is meant to signify a conception of nature as that which exists independently of us or that which would subsist even if humanity, as a race, perished. "By *transcendental idealism,*" Kant explained, "I mean the doctrine that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all, representations only, not things in themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition, not determinations given as existing by themselves, nor conditions of objects viewed as things in themselves" (345). While on a transcendental level, man and nature (appearances) are somehow connected, empirically human beings represent objects in space as being external to them.

Kant maintained that the notion of transcendental externality excluded connection or relatedness but that holding to the concept of empirical externality allowed one to assert simultaneously that on the transcendental plane there is an interrelationship between human beings and nature. Transcendental idealists could admit that, on an empirical level, a dualism (self and not-self) existed without alienating themselves from nature on the transcendental plane. This dualism signifies that from the empirical perspective both self and not-self are real phenomenal entities and are really separate from one another in appearances (nature). Transcendental idealists are also empirical realists (or dualists), because they admit the existence of matter without having to resort to going outside their self-consciousness:

For [the transcendental idealist] considers this matter and even its inner possibility to be appearance merely; and appearance, if separated from our sensibility, is nothing. Matter is within him, therefore, only a species of representations (intuition), which are called external, not as standing in relation to objects in themselves external, but because they relate perceptions to the space in which all things are external to one another, while yet the space itself is in us. [346]

Matter is perceived immediately as being external to us or in space on the empirical plane, but since space, from the transcendental perspective, is a form of intuition, we are related to nature (and nature is related to us), and thus we have our assurance of the empirical reality of nature. Kant stated that "external things exist as well as I myself, and both, indeed, upon the immediate witness of my self-consciousness" (346-47).

Kant believed that in maintaining this position, he could overcome Humean scepticism by avoiding the pitfalls of attempting to infer from an effect to a determinate cause:
Now the inference from a given effect to a determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect may be due to more than one cause. Accordingly, as regards the relation of the perception to its cause, it always remains doubtful whether the cause be internal or external; whether, that is to say, all the so-called outer perceptions are not a mere play of our inner sense, or whether they stand in relation to actual external objects as their cause. At all events, the existence of the latter is only inferred, and is open to all the dangers of inference, whereas the object of inner sense (I myself with all representations) is immediately perceived, and its existence does not allow of being doubted. [345]

In viewing appearances as an effect, one is unable to reach the cause. If inner sense causes empirically external things, then everything is a Berkeleian illusion (“a mere play of inner sense”). Each individual would create his or her own dreamworld. Yet also, if transcendentally external objects cause appearances, then we are unable to get to the transcendental cause, which is outside us (i.e., it is an unrelated thing-in-itself).

But Kant felt he had overcome this difficulty. “In order to arrive at the reality of outer objects,” Kant claimed, “I have just as little need to resort to inference as I have in regard to the reality of the object of my inner sense, that is, in regard to the reality of my thoughts. For in both cases alike the objects are nothing but representations, the immediate perception [consciousness] of which is at the same time a sufficient proof of their reality” [347].

The epistemological position that ultimately had to resort to inference (from cause to effect) was referred to by Kant as transcendental realism/empirical idealism. In opposition to transcendental idealism, the transcendental realist regards “time and space as something given in themselves, independently of our sensibility” [346]. Similarly, nature (outer appearances) is interpreted as a thing-in-itself, which is a self-existing, independent entity unrelated to us or our sensibility. By positing the existence (reality) of two entities on the transcendental level, the transcendental dualist (or realist) ends up dealing with the relationship between human beings and nature in terms of cause and effect.

The transcendental realist afterward plays the part of empirical idealist. “After wrongly supposing that objects of the senses, if they are to be external, must have an existence by themselves, and independently of the senses,” Kant argued, “he finds that, judged from this point of view, all our sensuous representations are inadequate to establish their reality” [346]. In making nature a thing knowable in itself,
the transcendental realist/empirical idealist is unable, like Hume, to be certain of the reality of external objects of the senses. The end result is that the transcendental realist/empirical idealist is forced to resort to inference which never attains its object.

Kant's transcendental idealism not only was a position from which the axiom of an external world of nature could be justified, it also served to resolve Humean difficulties with other a priori synthetic judgments of reason such as the universal and necessary concept of cause. Kant maintained that only if nature is conceived of as being related in some way to human beings (i.e., only if nature is viewed as appearances) could the validity of the foundational propositions of science be made explicable. "Should nature signify the existence of things in themselves," Kant stresses, "we could never know it either a priori or a posteriori." Kant argued that if nature is the thing-in-itself, as the transcendental realist contends, we could never have knowledge of it. On the one hand, the possibility of a priori knowledge of nature (conceived of as the thing-in-itself) is ruled out, for our understanding would have to conform to objects. On the other hand, a posteriori knowledge of nature (thought of as an independent, self-existing entity) is implausible because we could never know the laws of nature from experience, since necessity is derived solely a priori.

The fact, therefore, that we have scientific knowledge can be explained only if the human mind participates in constructing appearances. One can justify synthetic a priori judgments, upon which science depends, only from the transcendental idealist/empirical idealist perspective. Concepts such as cause and substance are categories through which the understanding organizes the vast amount of sense data that is constantly fed into our minds. The synthetic a priori categories of the understanding allow us to "make sense" of the world in which we live by yielding knowledge of objects of the empirical world. The mind, in using the categories, is actively engaged in making experience possible through its systematic ordering of the manifold of sense data. Kant rejects the sensationalist assumption that the mind is a passive receptor of sense data because it undermines the very certainty and universality of science celebrated by the Enlightenment.

The Hamiltonian Natural Realist as Kantian Transcendental Realist

Mansel's mentor, Hamilton, was notorious for his aversion to physics and mathematics. Hamilton believed that the study of science could lead to materialism and atheism, and he was not concerned if his "philosophy of the conditioned" did not provide sound justification for the axioms grounding natural science. Although Mansel did not openly
voice his hostility toward science, he, too, was uninterested in the implications of his position for science. In fact, Mansel fell into the contradiction of transcendental realism/empirical idealism because of his rejection of Kant's conception of nature as appearance. Mansel attacked Kant's transcendental idealism in two ways: first, by maintaining that it is impossible to know whether nature is appearance or not; and second, by espousing Hamilton's doctrine of natural realism.

Mansel asserted that an answer could not be given to the question, "Do things as they are resemble things as they are conceived by us?" Only one who is able to compare the two can provide a legitimate response:

When Kant (Kritik der r. V. p. 49) declares that the objects of our intuition are not in themselves as they appear to us, he falls into the opposite extreme to that which he is combating: the Critic becomes a Dogmatist in negation. To warrant this conclusion, we must previously have compared things as they are with things as they seem; a comparison which is, *ex hypothesi*, impossible. We can only say, that we have no means of determining whether they agree or not. (*PL*, 74)

Mansel argued that if things in themselves are absolutely unknown, then we are unable to say whether they are like or unlike nature.

Mansel seemed, however, to display an insight into the unknowable when he supported Hamilton's epistemological theory of natural realism. Hamilton looked to Thomas Reid (1710-1796), and not Kant, for his conception of perception. Reid, a Scottish philosopher, is generally regarded as the founder of the Scottish school of common sense, of which Hamilton was a member. Hamilton argued that both Reid and Kant were reacting to Hume's scepticism, but that Reid was a better philosopher, especially with regard to a doctrine of perception. Hamilton valued Reid for positing the possibility of an immediate knowledge of material objects, and he criticized Kant's retention of the idealism of previous philosophers. In opposition to what he called Kant's "Cosmothetic Idealism," Hamilton held to natural realism, which posited the unconditional veracity of consciousness in testifying to the reality of both mind and matter. Hamilton believed that we have an immediate knowledge of the external world, and at times he stated that we intuit the thing-in-itself. Hamilton's natural realism was a variation of what Kant called transcendental realism.

Mansel agreed with Hamilton that the consequences of idealism "can only be avoided by abandoning the Idealistic theory, and substituting a Natural Realism." Nature is a self-existent, independent entity, and true knowledge yields insight into the thing-in-itself. "The objects which I am capable of knowing exist whether I know them or
not," Mansel declared, "and my knowledge is real only in so far as it corresponds to the actual constitution of the thing known." By embracing Hamilton's natural realism, Mansel repudiated Kant's transcendental idealism.

It might seem contradictory to attribute to Hamilton and Mansel, two avowed champions of the principle of the "relativity" of knowledge, the view of nature as the thing-in-itself. However, the contradiction exists in their thought. Hamilton was led into this problem by his attempt to synthesize two antagonistic epistemological systems, those of Kant and Reid. Mansel struggled in vain to reconcile Hamilton's natural realism to the Kantian idea that natural objects are known only as they stand in relation to human faculties. In *Metaphysics* Mansel ties himself into knots on this complex issue. We cannot, he begins, be conscious of objects out of relation to our own cognitive powers. We are not sure that, if our faculties were altered, the same things would appear to us in the same form as they do now. "But, on the other hand," Mansel insists, "we have no right to dogmatize on the negative side, and to assume, with equal absence of ground, that things are not in themselves as they appear to us" (54).

Mansel was suspicious of Kant's idea of appearances and of his stress on the active nature of the human mind, for he believed that transcendental idealism led inevitably to the attempt of German idealists and pantheists to overcome dualism. With the example of the history of post-Kantian German thought before his eyes, Mansel defended the Englishman's trust in common sense and its testimony to the existence of subject and object.

Mansel's view of Kant as the father of German idealism and pantheism raises interesting questions about the Kantian tradition. The fact that two disparate movements of thought, English agnosticism and German idealism, claimed Kant for their progenitor is an indication of the extremely delicate nature of Kant's philosophy. If too much emphasis is placed on one aspect of his philosophy, for example, the active power of the human mind, and if Kant's empirical realism is ignored, the result is idealism as presented by Fichte. Kant guarded against this by making the use of the categories of the understanding immanent. This signified that speculative reason could make no synthetic a priori judgments when dealing with the level of the transcendental world and that pure reason must accept the empirical realism of objects in appearances. Mansel, however, overreacted against the German idealists' misinterpretation of Kant and consequently put too much stress on the empirical quality of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Mansel denied that speculative reason was capable of making synthetic a priori judgments in order to guard against pantheism and idealism. But the result was
the destruction of those necessary, a priori principles upon which Kant grounded natural science.

**Mansel the Empirical Idealist**

Mansel, in affirming the views of a transcendental realist, also held to the characteristic principles of empirical idealism. Mansel tried to avoid destructive idealism as best he could, but the logic of his position led him to admit that our senses do not give us information about an external real world. Furthermore, Kant's a priori categories of the understanding, and the forms of the sensibility, were neither acceptable to Mansel, nor justifiable on Mansel's assumptions.

Several times throughout his works, Mansel attacks the association psychologists for denying the importance of a priori laws of thought. He asserts that one must account for the necessary truths of arithmetic and geometry and that this is impossible on the associationist theory. The necessity of mathematical judgments "results from the existence in the mind of the a priori forms of intuition—Space and Time." Mansel agrees with Kant that geometry and arithmetic contain a priori synthetic judgments that point to space and time as subjective conditions of all sensibility. Space is "a subjective condition of all sensible perception, and not a mere empirical generalization from a special class of phenomena," and this is evident from the fact "that it is impossible, by any effort of thought, to contemplate sensible objects, save under this condition." However, in spite of these statements, which appear to be Kantian, Mansel's whole concept of space and time is very different from Kant's.

Mansel asserts that "we cannot help experiencing" a priori intuitions due to "our constitution and position in the world" ([PL], 157). Kant would have argued that to explain the a priori forms of sensibility in terms of our "position" in the world mistakenly allows an empirical element to creep into the discussion. "Position," in the sense of location, is a contingent factor, and this type of consideration is not relevant to the search for necessary, a priori judgments. But more important, to maintain that space and time are a priori because "we cannot help experiencing" them is to imply that space and time are external, self-existing, and independent entities in the world with which we continually come into contact. Our unavoidably constant experience of these entities allows us to develop a corresponding permanent intuition that becomes an a priori form of sensibility. It is a priori, to Mansel, not because our minds actively organize the manifold of sense data, but because of the passive experiencing of a permanent condition of the external world. Space and time, to Mansel, do not make experience of
the natural world possible, but experience of the natural world makes the a priori of space and time possible.

With respect to the categories and scientific knowledge, Mansel was even further from Kant's position. Pointing to flaws in Kant's logic, Mansel agreed with Hamilton's rejection of the categories of Kant's "Transcendental Analytic." But Kant's categories, which were a priori synthetic judgments of the understanding, were meant as an expression of Kant's belief that nature is relational, or that, on the transcendental level, there is an interrelationship between man and nature. In dismissing the concept behind the categories, Mansel implicitly discarded the notion of appearances. Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories is not an empirical proof of their reality (for one is unable to turn to the empirical world for help in justifying synthetic a priori judgments). Rather, Kant's argument is constructed so as to reveal the consequences of each epistemological position. If empiricists do not want to admit a priori synthetic judgments, then the nature of knowledge becomes highly problematical for them. They are left with only purely analytic a priori judgments or a posteriori judgments upon which no certain science can be built. For there to be a certain science, human beings must participate in organizing the manifold of sensibility into appearances. In other words, people, through the categories, help make experience possible.

To probe deeper into Mansel's attitude toward Kant's categories and his justification of science, it is useful to examine how Mansel dealt with the specific category of cause and effect. Mansel affirmed that our concept of cause is derived from our consciousness of our own freedom. Our notion of the causal relation between two objects is modeled on the similar relation that exists between ourselves and our volitions. Mansel, however, questioned if the similarity is acceptable, and concluded that we cannot tell "how far the analogy extends, and how and where it fails." Cause, then, is not a necessary truth, nor is it "capable of any scientific application" (PL, 140-42). We delude ourselves into thinking that we know of the operation of cause and effect in nature because we illegitimately transfer a notion of cause acquired elsewhere. He concluded that we do not receive, anywhere, an intuition of cause in nature; therefore, since a concept of the understanding is valid only if it is based on a sensible intuition, cause is an illegitimate concept.

Mansel attacked Kant's concept of cause as a synthetic a priori judgment in the belief that he was preserving humanity's freedom and defeating Mill's deterministic stance in the Logic. Mansel was influenced in this strategy by Hamilton's similar ploy. Hamilton asserted that to accept a positive principle of causality was to accept fatalism,
for we would find that everything, including human life, is caused (LML 2:412). But Kant had aimed to justify science while simultaneously preserving human freedom. He was able to achieve this through his distinction between appearances and the noumenal world. Cause and effect reigned supreme in nature, but people were free in the realm of noumena. This viewpoint was not open to Mansel, as he rejected Kant's notion of appearances. Once he had dismissed Kant's concept of different levels of existence, Mansel was left with a single existential plane where either necessity or freedom prevailed. Mansel had no other alternative, if he wished to be consistent, because to hold that freedom and necessity coexist within the same level of existence is to introduce a chaos that destroys both science (which requires the a priori necessity of cause) and ethics (which requires freedom). Mansel therefore had to choose between necessity and freedom because, from his position, only one would exist. Obviously, Mansel chose freedom, and the fact that he had destroyed science through his attack on the notion of necessity in cause and effect was of no consequence to him.

If we examine Mansel's attitude toward science, we will discover further confirmation of his empirical idealism. In rejecting the Kantian notion of nature as relational, he found no necessity in nature. He argued that "the belief in the uniformity of Nature is not a necessary truth, however constantly guaranteed by our actual experience." Further, Mansel affirmed that "the fact that nature proceeds by uniform laws at all, is a truth altogether distinct from the laws of thought, and, if not of wholly empirical origin, at least one which cannot be ascertained a priori by the pure understanding" (PL, 208). In direct contrast to Mansel's views is Kant's belief that the categories make possible science, or the study of order in nature, through their active organization of the manifold of sensibility. "Thus the order and regularity in the appearances," Kant affirmed, "which we entitle nature, we ourselves introduce. We could never find them in appearances, had not we ourselves, or the nature of our mind, originally set them there" (CPR, 147).

Mansel may have learned of the importance of epistemology from Kant, but he appropriated only bits and pieces of the German thinker's theory of knowledge in his philosophy of nature. This sporadic borrowing from The Critique of Pure Reason gives Mansel's work a deceptive Kantian quality, and the illusion is only dispelled when their fundamental opposition is perceived. It may not seem significant that Mansel and Kant disagreed in their views on nature and science. However, Kant's religious thought was closely connected to the way he justified the validity of scientific axioms. His critical philosophy formed a systematic unity. In order to continue our evaluation of the accuracy of
Whewell's judgment on Mansel's Kantianism we will now turn to an examination of Mansel's religious thought. Mansel's divergence from Kant on science presented him with a variety of problems in his attempts to build a consistent philosophy of religion.

**Kant, Practical Reason, and Religious Faith**

Mansel claimed that the basis of his Bampton Lectures was the Kantian idea of the limits of knowledge. However, Mansel's motives for accepting the notion of the limits of knowledge differed profoundly from Kant's, and as a result, the thrust of their religious thought is diametrically opposed. Just as Mansel's philosophy of nature, despite its apparent Kantian flavor, was in the end the very transcendental realism against which Kant had warned as being fatal for natural science, in his philosophy of religion Mansel denied the validity of practical reason, which grounded Kant's religious and ethical position. As we follow Mansel in his rejection of the use of reason in religion and in his subsequent reliance on revelation, it will become clear that Mansel followed Hamilton in taking only the negative, destructive aspect of Kant's thought.

Having avoided the scepticism of Hume in his philosophy of nature, Kant did not desire to fall into the determinism of d'Holbach or Helvétius in his ethical and religious thought. In the "Transcendental Dialectic" of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant addressed the issue of the connection between epistemology and religious ideas within the framework of a general discussion of how pure reason misuses the pure modes of knowledge of the understanding. Kant pointed to two situations where this takes place. The first arises if one tries to employ the categories of the understanding by themselves to comprehend appearances that are knowable only as the objects of possible experience (i.e., making a material use of the pure and merely formal principles of the understanding), and the second occurs when one attempts to apply the categories beyond the limits of possible experience. In both cases the sense data supplied by the intuition, upon which the understanding depends to produce real knowledge, is lacking. Pure reason falls victim to this error when it struggles to build a metaphysics based on a supposed speculative knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality.

In the specific case of theology Kant pointed out that "in all ages men have spoken of an absolutely necessary being, and in so doing have endeavoured, not so much to understand whether and how a thing of this kind allows even of being thought, but rather to prove its existence" (501). Kant argued that the very nature of the human mind and the way the mind constructs knowledge precluded the possibility of
knowing God. He denied both that pure reason was capable of producing synthetic a priori knowledge of the transcendental realm, and that the categories were applicable to God. "Now as we have already proved," Kant asserted, "synthetic a priori knowledge is possible only in so far as it expresses the formal conditions of a possible experience; and all principles are therefore only of immanent validity, that is, they are applicable only to objects of empirical knowledge, to appearances. Thus all attempts to construct a theology through purely speculative reason, by means of a transcendental procedure, are without result" (529). The categories of the understanding were valid only if used immanently or phenomenally within the realm of nature (appearances), and they became sources of error when applied transcendentally or noumenally (i.e., to the thing-in-itself).

One purpose that lay behind Kant's insistence on the merely immanent employment of the categories of the understanding concerned his wish to protect God's status as a person. Kant perceived the importance of shielding all subjects, or persons, from the epistemological position that turns them into objects. Apply the categories to any entity, Kant would argue, and one is automatically relating to that entity as one relates to an object, no matter if the entity in question be subject or object. By attempting to know an entity through the categories of the understanding, one "objectifies" it. However, Kant, by restricting the use of the categories to appearances (i.e., by making the categories immanent), also limited knowledge to objects. The noumenal world is not to be thought of as an object of knowledge. God, as the ideal of pure reason and thus of noumenal quality, is transformed into an object of possible experience if we try to know him or prove his existence as an object of appearance (528).

In its search for totality and completeness, reason unknowingly falls into all sorts of contradictions. Kant warns continually of its inherent tendency toward falsehood, error, and illusion. But reason is also capable of guarding against deception. "The transcendental dialectic," Kant states, "will therefore content itself with exposing the illusion of transcendent judgments, and at the same time taking precautions that we be not deceived by it" (300). This is still a somewhat negative definition of reason's powers, but the purpose of The Critique of Pure Reason is largely negative and critical, because Kant's whole point in this work is to demonstrate the limited scope of pure or speculative reason. Kant viewed the first critique as clearing the ground for the second critique, which deals with practical reason, and it is in this realm that reason becomes constitutive by assuming a positive role. Practical reason could actively determine moral law or synthetic a
priori judgments such as the ideas of freedom and the categorical imperative.

Kant's notion of practical reason is meant to be the supreme achievement of his thought. It is from the standpoint of practical reason that we are able to give meaning and significance to human existence by acting according to the categorical imperative. People are able to think of (not know) themselves as participating in the noumenal world by virtue of their freedom.\(^{31}\) Kant conceives of the noumenal world (which he equates with the intelligible world and the realm of freedom and practical reason) as a platform from which we may interpret existence. Yet we cannot see behind the platform, nor does the platform enable us to transcend existence totally. We must never forget that we are a finite part of the physical world.

Kant's preservation of human freedom, and then his attempt to ground ethics in that freedom, are intimately connected to his religious thought. The moral principles arrived at by practical reason become, in his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, the criteria for evaluating the purity of the individual's concept of God, which in turn is the chief means by which we recognize an authentic revelation of the divine. For Kant theology is dependent on ethical theory. "Though it does indeed sound dangerous," Kant declared, "it is in no way reprehensible to say that every man *creates a God* for himself, nay, must make himself such a God according to moral concepts . . . in order to honour in Him the One who created him" (157).

When it came to the issue of revelation, Kant emphasized that people cannot accept the Bible blindly, but always bring to their reading of this text an interpretative guideline—an a priori idea of God. "Hence there can be no religion springing from revelation alone," Kant maintained, "i.e., without first positing that concept, in its purity, as a touchstone. Without this all reverence for God would be *idolatry.*" Kant held that the Bible was not automatically infallible and that it was to be judged by reason to determine if it accorded with the moral law. In contrast to a historical faith that requires scholars as intermediaries, Kant looks to "the pure faith of reason," which "stands in need of no such documentary authentication, but proves itself" (157, 120).

*Dogmatic Scepticism and the Fideist Tradition*

Kant's whole approach to theology was viewed with suspicion by the orthodox. Nevertheless, Mansel believed that elements of the critical philosophy could be pressed into service by Christian theologians with great success. The defense of conservative Christianity through the
adoption of weapons drawn from thinkers perceived to be unorthodox has not been an uncommon occurrence in the history of Christian theology. When people flocked to St. Mary’s in 1858 to hear Mansel deliver what Chadwick has called “the most instructive lectures of the century,” they were usually treated to a Biblical quote at the beginning of each session. Lecture three started off with the reading of Exodus 33:20–23, which Mansel offered as representative of a strand in Christian theology which always had been important. “And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen” [LRT, 45]. Even Moses, the most favored by God, leader of God’s chosen people, was unable to see the divine visage. Mansel was not alone in interpreting this quote as an illustration of the limits of our ability to know a mysterious, transcendental deity.

I have already discussed the sceptical tradition and those hostile to traditional religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the beginning of this chapter I examined Kant’s response to philosophical sceptics who doubted the validity of natural science. Mansel’s Bampton Lectures point to a third type of scepticism that attempts to defend established Christianity by claiming that absolute knowledge is unattainable. This Christian scepticism, usually referred to as fideism, bases all certainty on faith and attempts to demonstrate that, independent of faith, sceptical doubts can be raised about any claims to knowledge or truth found through the rational faculty. Fideism covers a broad spectrum of views concerning the relation between faith and reason. A fideist of the extreme right would advocate a blind faith or unquestioning acceptance of some revealed truth while denying to reason any capacity to reach the truth. But a more moderate fideist would set faith above reason or take the position that once certain truths are taken on faith then reason has a valid role in clarifying our beliefs and adding to our knowledge. In dealing with the correct attitude toward God, fideists might deny that knowledge of God is possible but nevertheless state that through faith we can affirm our belief in his existence.

Elements of fideism can be found in a number of major Christian thinkers and traditions from all ages, including the theologia negativa of Christian mysticism as typified by the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Augustine and the numerous members of the medieval Augustinian family, the followers of Tertullian in the middle ages, Occam and
other nominalists, and Luther and Calvin. Popkin's work has concentrated on those Catholics who responded to the challenge of Protestantism by developing a form of fideism based on a marriage of Christianity and the sceptical tropes of Pyrrho. The French Counter-Reformers argued that the Reformers were dogmatically making reason the rule of faith, and then they formulated, with the help of Pyrrho and Montaigne, a scepticism with regard to the use of reason in religion. Popkin has also placed Bayle, a faithful Protestant, within the fideist tradition even though many of the Enlightenment philosophes found in Bayle's works valuable ammunition to be used against theologians and metaphysicians. It was not just sceptics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who were sincere believers in Christianity, for Catholic apologists of the eighteenth century fought the rationalism of the philosophes by debunking the validity of reason and stressing the authority of faith. As Palmer argues "on the really fundamental question, whether man may trust his own mind to conduct him through the world, it was the religious believers in the eighteenth century, not the infidels, who were fatally touched with doubt."  

Writing on the measures taken by Christianity to defend itself during the nineteenth century, the rationalist Benn remarked that scepticism was the great bulwark of religious faith against the onslaught of rationalism. Indeed, Lamennais had adopted a form of fideism to answer the French Enlightenment and to defend conservatism and orthodoxy. But Benn was more concerned that "in England scepticism has become, under a modified form, the chief official weapon of official Christianity." Besides Mansel, who is explicitly mentioned, perhaps Benn had in mind the Oxford noetics who, in the early nineteenth century, cast doubt on the ability of unaided human reason to attain truth in religious matters in order to gain greater freedom in the discussion of Christian dogma. Or, more likely, Benn might have been thinking of the Tractarians, who opposed the noetics by using the notion of the impotence of human reason in the theological realm as the justification for a stress on the authority of the Church.  

Representative of the Tractarian viewpoint on this matter were the Anglican sermons of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), who, in 1845, traumatized the Oxford Movement by converting to Rome. One theme that ran throughout Newman's work even after he had become a Catholic dealt with the danger of a reason that claims for itself full independence and the right to oppose faith. In his Apologia Pro Vita Sua (1864) he identified liberalism as "nothing else than that deep, plausible scepticism of which I spoke above, as being the development of human reason, as practically exercised by the natural man" (200). To
counter liberalism, Newman was continually arguing that reason, without the aid of the rock of faith, could only produce uncertainties and doubt.

Twentieth-century Christian thinkers have found fideism an attractive position. Christian existentialists such as Marcel, and neo-orthodox theologians such as Barth, have stressed that God is "wholly other," and therefore that knowledge of God is impossible for finite human beings.37

The Ontological and Psychological Approaches to a Philosophy of Religion

Mansel's use of sceptical arguments to undermine the power of reason and simultaneously justify the dominion of faith was squarely within the fideist tradition of Christian theology. His distrust of rationalism and emphasis on the authority of the Church and the Bible was shared by conservative Christians of the nineteenth century such as John Henry Newman and the members of the Oxford Movement. But the scepticism that provided Mansel with ammunition was Kantian, and many English Christians were suspicious of the German philosopher from Königsberg.

For Mansel the virtues of the Kantian tradition lay in its emphasis on the importance of constructing a sound theory of knowledge as a starting point for all religious systems. "The primary and proper object of criticism," Mansel argued, "is not Religion, natural or revealed, but the human mind in its relation to Religion." In order to study the limits of religious thought, which was "an indispensable preliminary to all Religious philosophy," one first had to investigate the limits of thought in general [LRT, 16-17]. To Mansel, the necessary laws of thought held for all subjects of thought, including religious topics. Here Mansel was adhering to Hamilton's assertion that "no difficulty emerges in theology, which had not previously emerged in philosophy," a dictum that Mansel affixed to the beginning to his Limits of Religious Thought. Hamilton rarely applied his epistemological theories to religious thought, although he hinted how fruitful this would be. Mansel endeavored to use Hamilton's theory of knowledge in dealing with problems in the philosophy of religion. In Mansel's opinion, Hamilton's "philosophy of the conditioned" should have been considered "the handmaid and the auxiliary of Christian Truth" [LPK, 44].

Mansel also felt indebted to Kant for teaching him to perceive the connection between epistemology and religious thought. He credited Kant with revolutionizing metaphysics by drawing attention to the importance of a psychological or epistemological approach in contrast to
the old ontological viewpoint. "Instead of asking what are the circumstances in the constitution of things," Mansel argued, "by virtue of which they present such and such difficulties and contradictions to human understanding, we must ask what are the circumstances of the human understanding itself, by virtue of which a distinction exists between the conceivable and the inconceivable. Such, in fact, was the revolution introduced by Kant into metaphysical speculation" (PL, 75). Mansel found this distinction between the ontological and psychological method to be extremely helpful, and he used it as a basis for both the structure of his *Metaphysics* and the central argument of *The Limits of Religious Thought*.

In *The Limits of Religious Thought*, Mansel suggested that there are only two methods by which a rational religious philosophy may be attempted: the objective or ontological approach and the subjective or psychological method. Mansel conducted an examination of both methods in order to support the contention that reason could not construct a philosophy of religion on its own. In his analysis of the first, he claimed that metaphysicians and theologians based the objective or ontological method on a knowledge of the real nature of God. Mansel held that the ontological method described God as being the Absolute, the Infinite, and the First Cause. In the second chapter of *The Limits of Religious Thought*, Mansel dissected these terms as applied to God and concluded that, if attributed to one being, they become paradoxical. "But these three conceptions," Mansel declared, "the Cause, the Absolute, the Infinite, all equally indispensable, do they not imply contradiction to each other, when viewed in conjunction, as attributes of one and the same Being? A Cause cannot, as such, be absolute: the Absolute cannot, as such, be a cause" [31]. The fundamental conceptions of rational theology are self-destructive. Even if taken singly, they lead to insoluble difficulties [33]. Reason does not yield knowledge of God's nature, rather, it produces a startling array of contradictions.

This strategy of revealing the impotence of reason in the transcendental realm by illustrating its paradoxical results resembled Kant's section on the antinomies of pure reason in the "Transcendental Dialectic." Here Kant discussed how reason erroneously attempts to build a pure, rational cosmology by applying to appearances "that idea of absolute totality which holds only as a condition of things in themselves" (448). In so doing, one is able to "prove" two contradictory statements, such as "everything is composed of the simple/nothing is simple," or "the world is finite/the world is infinite." Kant's aim was to demonstrate that whenever reason produces paradoxical statements that seem equally reasonable, it has transgressed its own limits. However, Mansel was more concerned with internal contradictions in the concept of
God, while Kant was exploring contradictions arising out of the attempt to deal with nature as a totality. The common element is their stress on the illusory quality of the contradictions produced by reason.

Although it is clear that Mansel applied the basic idea of Kant's antinomies, it is important to note that here Kant was not dealing specifically with the concept of God. The substance of Kant's attack on rational theology was to be found in the discussion of the ideal of pure reason in the "Transcendental Dialectic," where Kant stressed protecting God from being turned into an object.

Mansel took only the negative side of Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" and therefore emphasized the most destructive aspect of Kant's conception of the role of reason in religion. One must look to Hamilton to understand how Mansel modified Kant's thought. Hamilton took Kant's antinomies and created from them a law of the mind, referred to as the "Law of the Conditioned," which asserted that the conceivable was bounded by the inconceivable:

the Conditioned is that which is alone conceivable or cogitable; the Unconditioned, that which is inconceivable or incogitable. The conditioned or the thinkable lies between two extremes or poles; and these extremes or poles are each of them unconditioned, each of them inconceivable, each of them exclusive or contradictory of the other. Of these two repugnant opposites, the one is that of Unconditioned or Absolute Limitation; the other that of Unconditional or Infinite Illimitation. (LML 2:373)

Hamilton claimed that since these two inconceivable contradictory extremes were "mutually repugnant, one or the other must be true" (LML 1:34). Mansel applied this "Law of the Conditioned" to his attack on rational theology by retaining Hamilton's purely philosophical terms "absolute" and "infinite" and giving them a theological significance.

Mansel argued that the ontological approach to a philosophy of religion was barren. His subsequent examination of the psychological method was to some extent an explanation as to why the ontological approach produced meaningless knowledge of God, for a study of the nature of the mind revealed the inevitable failure of reason to construct a valid religious philosophy. The ontological method, according to Mansel, tried in vain to reason from an object, God, down to human beings, but the opposing psychological method attempted to reason from the subject up toward God. While the former method was a branch of metaphysics known as rational theology, "the latter is a branch of Psychology, which, at its outset at least, contents itself with investigating the phenomena presented to it, leaving their relation to
further realities to be determined at a later stage of the inquiry. Its primary concern is with the operations and laws of the human mind; and its special purpose is to ascertain the nature, the origin, and the limits of the religious element in man; postponing, till after that question has been decided, the further inquiry into the absolute nature of God" (LRT, 23). The psychological method, therefore, is epistemological, because it endeavors to find out what people can know about God given the nature of their minds.

Mansel's first step was to affirm that, given the structure of the mind, people can intuit God neither through the sensibility nor the understanding. In denying intellectual intuition Mansel was preventing the many liberal Anglicans influenced by Coleridge, who made reason into an intuitive faculty, from using this epistemological position as a point of departure for their religious thought. Mansel cleverly attacked the inspiration of Broad Church theology at its source by offering English intellectuals a new perspective on the Kantian tradition, which emphasized its empiricist leanings. But this position echoed the approach of Humean empiricism and did not explain fully the mass of confusion arising out of the ontological approach. Mansel, therefore, developed a critique of the conditions of consciousness or of what made thought possible. His main assumption was that the mind is compelled to think under certain laws that it cannot transgress. "If our whole thinking is subject to certain laws," Mansel stated, "it follows that we cannot think of any object, not even of Omnipotence itself, except as those laws compel us" (PL, 72). The aim of his argument was to prove that the key terms of rational theology abrogate the very laws of thought.

In particular, four conditions that make thought possible come into conflict with rational theology's conception of God. The first condition, that consciousness implies limitation or is only possible if we discriminate between one object and another, explains why we cannot understand the unlimited or infinite. Second, consciousness is only possible in the form of a relation between subject and object, and thus the absolute (that which is independent of all relation) cannot be thought without contradiction. Third, human thought is subject to time because consciousness involves succession in time, and hence the eternal (a timeless being) is inconceivable to us. Finally, the fourth condition of thought, that consciousness involves personality, which Mansel considered a limitation because we can only conceive of persons like ourselves, is further explanation of how rational theology's God is unthinkable.38

Mansel had learned a great deal about the limits of thought in general from Hamilton; this learning helped him develop his critique of
reason from the point of view of the psychological method. Hamilton also saw the mind as bounded by laws of thought which set the unconditioned out of bounds \( \text{DPL, 14} \). Undoubtedly, both Hamilton and Mansel had appropriated those sections of *The Critique of Pure Reason* where Kant discussed how people cannot know God due to the nature of their minds. Mansel agrees with Kant that human beings can gain no knowledge of God through pure reason. Both argue that speculative reason is fallible in the realm of theology. But there are subtle differences in the content of the two arguments. Where Mansel bases his rejection of rational theology on laws of thought such as limitation and relation, Kant grounds his discussion on the inapplicability of the categories to God.

*Reason and Faith*

The profound differences between Mansel and Kant on religious thought are most apparent in the contrast in their attitudes toward reason. Mansel believed that his discussion of the ontological and psychological approaches to the philosophy of religion proved that the contradictions into which theology inevitably falls, when it attempts to conceive of God, exist in man's mind and not in God. Since it is not the nature of God but rather the nature of the human mind that is to blame, then one can still believe in God without knowing or comprehending him. By setting up a dichotomy between belief on one hand and conception, comprehension, knowledge, and thought on the other, Mansel tried to "prepare the way for a recognition of the separate provinces of Reason and Faith" \( \text{LRT, 39} \).

In adhering to this position, Mansel quite rightly saw himself as following Hamilton's lead. "The cardinal point, then, of Sir W. Hamilton's philosophy," Mansel claimed, "expressly announced as such by himself, is the absolute necessity, under any system of philosophy whatever, of acknowledging the existence of a sphere of belief beyond the limits of the sphere of thought." Mansel's presupposition that God is totally transcendent or wholly other inevitably ended by giving human reason only a negative role in religion. Kant directly opposed the whole thrust of the standpoint that divorced reason from faith. Where Mansel grouped knowing, thinking, and reason together in opposition to faith, Kant conceived of thinking and reason as an integral part of the realm of faith.

Mansel was acutely conscious of his divergence from Kant on this matter, and throughout his works he attacked Kant as a rationalist. Those works in which Kant emphasized the importance of reason for the philosophy of religion, in particular *Religion within the Limits of*
Reason Alone, represented, to Mansel, Kant at his worst. Mansel stated that he would “rather contract than enlarge the limits assigned by Kant to the Understanding and the Reason.” The English philosopher mistakenly saw Kant’s insistence that human beings possess a faculty of reason as an attempt to build a new rational theology. Mansel asserted that after establishing an epistemology inimical to the ontological method, Kant proceeded to reconstruct what he had torn down. The nub of the problem, to Mansel, was that Kant viewed the understanding and reason as two separate faculties when in fact both were “governed by the same laws, and must be referred to the same faculty.” Mansel argued it would be safer to conceive of reason as a mere impotence of the understanding. 40

Mansel believed that by pointing to the defective nature of human reason he could undermine both pantheism and Positivism (including atheism, scepticism, and empiricism) in addition to rational theology, for he viewed them all as products of an exaggerated use of reason. To Mansel, upholders of religion as diverse as Francis Newman, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Maurice, and other Broad Churchmen relied on reason as much as did empiricists such as Comte and Mill. Mansel felt that his critique of a well-meaning rational theology could be extended into a condemnation of the use of reason altogether in defending or attacking religion. Adapting the strategy behind Kant’s antinomies which had worked so well in his attack on rational theology, Mansel inspected pantheism and atheism. Mansel maintained that the theist used reason to prove that the infinite and the finite coexisted; the pantheist drew from the same source to deny the existence of the finite, while the atheist rationalized away the infinite. All three positions were equally irrational. “It is no matter from what point of view we commence our examination,” Mansel claimed, “whether with the Theist, we admit the coexistence of the Infinite and the Finite, as distinct realities; or, with the Pantheist, deny the real existence of the Finite; or, with the Atheist, deny the real existence of the Infinite;—on each of these suppositions alike, our reason appears divided against itself, compelled to admit the truth of one hypothesis, and yet unable to overcome the apparent impossibilities of each” (LRT, 45).

Mansel admitted to the weakness in the theistic position but simultaneously pointed to analogous problems with atheism and pantheism. His whole aim in separating faith and reason was to permit himself to turn the weapon of atheism, empiricism, and scepticism (i.e., reason) back on itself. In admitting reason’s impotence in religious matters (and subsequently relying on revelation), Mansel accommodated empiricism and scepticism within a religious framework. If empiricists argue that their five senses and their understanding do not
intuit God, and their reason runs into difficulty proving God's existence, Mansel replies, "I grant you all of this." He would agree that a religious philosophy cannot be built solely upon these materials. But if sceptics try to use Mansel's attack on reason to advantage, they are frustrated in their attempt. True reason is deceptive in the religious realm, but this is due to our perverse misuse of our rational capabilities. "We may indeed believe, and ought to believe," Mansel states, "that the powers which our Creator has bestowed upon us are not given as the instruments of deception" (PL, 73). Reason is valid and competent if it does not stray beyond its limits.

A Positive Religious Philosophy

In granting the empiricists and sceptics their contention that reason is unreliable in religious matters and unable to prove God's existence, Mansel meant to move the emphasis away from reason as a means of constructing a religious philosophy and inexorably toward revelation. His negative and critical principles (from which the agnostics drew their epistemological theory) were a preliminary step to a positive and constructive attempt to build a philosophy of religion based on a psychological approach that did not use reason as its tool to know God's nature. In studying human beings, and not God, through his psychological method, Mansel endeavored to derive a notion of God founded on an investigation of human religious experience.

According to Mansel there are three sources from which we may form a judgment about the ways of God (PC, 145). The first source of information concerning God lies in a faculty of religious intuition upon which religious consciousness was built. The feeling of dependence and impotence leads us to a consciousness of God's power and impels us to prayer, while the sense of moral obligation establishes a belief in God's goodness and his role as a moral governor who is the source and author of the moral law within us. But Mansel maintained that these two elements of the religious consciousness were bound by the same limits as all consciousness and therefore did not reveal God's true nature. Mansel often complained that freethinkers such as Francis Newman depended too much on internal evidences. Similarly, Mansel limited the value of the second source, natural theology. Natural theology was basically dependent on a reliable rational faculty that could justifiably draw an analogy from products of human contrivance to marks of design in the natural world produced by a divine intelligence. But Mansel had undermined both the power of reason and the idea that there was a close likeness between human and divine wisdom.
Undoubtedly, Mansel saw the supreme achievement of his whole religious philosophy to be his defense of the third source of knowledge about God, revelation. Where Mansel seemed radical in his use of Kant and Hamilton to attack rational theology from the sceptical position, his true ultra-conservative colors show through when we see that the whole tendency of his thought is to uphold the dogma of biblical infallibility. Mansel sets up a dichotomy between revelation and reason that parallels the antithesis between faith and reason.

Mansel conceived of the Bible as a communication from a transcendent, infinite deity to a finite being. "Revelation," Mansel claimed, "represents the infinite God under finite symbols, in condescension to the finite capacity of man" (LRT, 20). Like the other two sources of information concerning God, revelation did not reveal God's true nature. The Bible presented humanity with regulative, not speculative, principles that "do not serve to satisfy the reason, but to guide the conduct: they do not tell us what things are in themselves, but how we must conduct ourselves in relation to them." 43

From these premises, Mansel could argue that neither pantheists nor empiricists, nor any other type of thinker, could criticize the Bible by employing reason:

If Revelation is a communication from an infinite to a finite intelligence, the conditions of a criticism of Revelation on philosophical grounds must be identical with those which are required for constructing a Philosophy of the Infinite. . . . Whatever impediments, therefore, exist to prevent the formulation of such a philosophy, the same impediments must likewise prevent the accomplishment of a complete criticism of Revelation. (LRT, 18)

One must possess a philosophy of the infinite in order to criticize the Bible, but since Mansel has ruled this out due to the existing laws of human thought, revelation is above criticism. A corollary of this position is Mansel’s insistence that logically one must accept the whole of revelation. It was an all or nothing situation for Mansel. Either we accepted Christ as the Son of God, “and if so, we may not divide God’s Revelation, and dare to put asunder what He has joined together,—or the civilized world for eighteen centuries has been deluded by a cunningly devised fable,” and Christ was “an impostor, or an enthusiast, or a mystical figment; and his disciples crafty and designing, or well-meaning but deluded men” (LRT, 162). To Mansel, Christianity was wholly true or else wholly false.

Mansel’s purpose was to undermine completely the basic assumptions behind biblical criticism and to attack the Broad Church and un-
believers of the forties and fifties for daring to think that they can improve revelation by simply chopping off those portions that displease them. Some Broad Churchmen and unbelievers such as Francis Newman and W. R. Greg had rejected the infallibility of the Bible on the grounds that God is portrayed as sanctioning immoral acts. Mansel objected that these men erroneously assumed that “the moral or intellectual nature of man is made the rule to determine what ought to be the revealed attributes of God, and in what manner they must be exercised” [LRT, 28]. Later, Mansel was attacked vigorously on this point, for many felt that he was espousing a theory that denied that the term goodness possessed essentially the same meaning when applied to both people and God. This is analogous to maintaining that Mansel’s regulative truth was speculative falsehood, which Mansel refused to admit. Mansel never really clarified the problem of how divine goodness resembles human goodness.

Interestingly enough, Mansel blamed Kant and his followers for the contemporary rationalistic tendency in England to criticize revelation on moral grounds:

The works in which Kant and Fichte have attempted to construct an \textit{a priori} criticism of revelation, upon moral grounds, are remarkable instances of this departure from the limits of all sound philosophy. Both assume that the sole purpose of revelation must be to teach them morality; and both assume that the morality thus taught must be identical to the minutest particular with the system attained by human philosophy; which last is supposed to be absolutely infallible. Hence Kant maintains that the revealed commands of God have no religious value, except in so far as they are approved by the moral reason of man.\textsuperscript{44}

Mansel perceived in Kant’s practical reason a morality that was obligatory for all rational beings, including God. This naturally put us and God on the same level as far as morality is concerned. Kant indeed maintained that “unless we wish to deny to the concept of morality all truth and all relation to a possible object, we cannot dispute that its law is of such widespread significance as to hold, not merely for men, but for all \textit{rational beings as such}—not merely subject to contingent conditions and exceptions, but \textit{with absolute necessity}.” Thus, even God has to treat humankind as an end in itself. Mansel, however, would admit none of this, and he not only repudiated the idea of the categorical imperative but also charged that Kant’s practical reason represented the attempt “to construct once more, in its most dogmatic form, that philosophy of the absolute which his criticism of the speculative reason was expressly instituted to overthrow.”\textsuperscript{45}
However, Mansel's rejection of practical reason, and the epistemological position upon which Kant preserved both science and religion, presented him with insurmountable difficulties in his attempt to frame a consistent ethical and religious philosophy. Mansel fell into the trap of conflating the realms of freedom and nature when he attempted to build a bridge from an ontological approach to psychology to a philosophy of freedom and a theory of divine morality. Although Mansel asserted that ontology is objective and psychology is subjective, he paradoxically maintained that psychology is a valid ontology because people are able to intuit themselves as the thing-in-itself. Mansel believed that he could move from psychology as a valid ontology toward a justification for freedom. Unless we are directly conscious of the self as noumenon, he argued, there can be no consciousness of having power over one's own determinations, and hence no freedom. In other cases where he deviated from Kant, Mansel was usually following Hamilton's lead. However, here this is not the case, as Hamilton asserted that mind is an unknown.

It was important for Mansel to insist on knowledge of self and freedom, for he linked both to the existence of an intuitive moral faculty, implanted in human beings by God, which compelled them to "assume the existence of a moral Deity, and to regard the absolute standard of right and wrong as constituted by the nature of that Deity" (LRT, 74). Consciousness of God is possible, for Mansel, only if we are conscious of ourselves. Kant maintained that the "I" could not be intuited, for that would allow a human being to become a possible object of knowledge and therefore subject to the chain of cause and effect in appearances. Mansel's epistemology was unable to support the very notions, such as the importance of freedom, the distinction between persons and objects, and the existence of an intuitive moral faculty, that he tried to maintain in the face of attack from Utilitarians like Mill.

Agnosticism and Mansel's Kant

Mansel is best known for his attack on rational theology, and it is here that he seems closest to Kant and the agnostics. The agnostics were attracted to Mansel's insistence that reason be given a completely negative role in religious and transcendental matters. Nothing compelled them to follow out Mansel's second step, the reconstruction of a religious philosophy based on the religious consciousness, natural theology, and an infallible Bible. With the advantage of hindsight Flint recognized how Huxley and his friends later benefited from Mansel's use of Kant. This led him to the hasty conclusion that religious agnosticism, like "every kind of agnosticism[, ] tends towards agnostic com-
pleteness." In other words, any use of sceptical principles in one sphere, be it religion, science, or philosophy, tended to demand a consistency that ultimately infected the whole body of thought with a debilitating scepticism. Flint referred to religious agnosticism as "inherently self-contradictory" and saw the alliance of agnosticism with fideism as "unnatural." He warned that the religious agnostic's denial of knowledge of God was far more dangerous than the antireligious agnostic's denial, since the latter is generally discounted and the former much overestimated. "The assaults of Sir William Hamilton, and Dean Mansel on the evidences or rational bases of theistic belief," Flint declared, "made a vastly greater impression on the public mind than those of J. S. Mill, W. K. Clifford, and G. J. Romanes." 47

Flint's belief that scepticism is a very dangerous weapon that rebounds on its user holds for the Victorian agnostics and Mansel, but it would be a mistake to say the same for Kant. For Kant it is knowledge which is banished from the religious sphere. Reason gives rise to illusions but is not totally deceptive. Mansel distorted Kant's theory of knowledge by selecting only certain facets of the argument in *The Critique of Pure Reason* and by failing to understand how this book laid the groundwork for *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Instead of grounding his philosophical theology on practical reason's affirmation of God through human freedom and morality, Mansel espoused a belief in God based on the impotence, ignorance, and finite limitations of human beings. In his haste to protect revelation by valuing the authority of the Bible above human reason, Mansel took only the negative, destructive aspect of Kant's thought. It was Kant's insistence that we can have no knowledge of God through our understanding or speculative reason which Mansel adopted in his own religious philosophy. Mansel's selective use of Kant, and his additions, warped Kant's delicate epistemological viewpoint so that, in Mansel's hands, reason was divorced entirely from faith. Only through such a process could Kant's brand of agnosticism be transformed into the basis for what was to become Huxley's agnostic position.

In view of the opposition between Kant and Mansel on many of their key ideas, Whewell's claim that Mansel was the most "zealous English Kantian" stands as an ironic commentary on the inability of English intellectuals, including Mansel, to come to grips with the German mind. There were two Kants in mid-nineteenth-century England. On the one hand, there was the picture of Kant the transcendentalist glorified by the English romantics, Coleridgeans, Broad Churchmen and, later, the neo-Hegelians. But, on the other hand, there was the version of Kant as an empiricist who eschewed the use of reason in religion which was presented by Hamilton, Mansel, and Huxley. When
the ideas of great thinkers are subjected to a post-mortem by those claiming to be philosophical descendants, more often than not the integral unity of their thought is dissolved in the process of analysis. Both pictures of Kant were distortions, the result of a one-sided emphasis on one aspect of his thought. English intellectuals of the nineteenth century seemed to be unable to hold together both Kant's criticism of pure reason and his construction of a theory of practical reason.

Similarly, English thinkers encountered difficulty when they attempted, as Kant had, to preserve science and religion. Actually, Mansel was not interested in justifying science; he saw Kant as a means to protect religion from the attacks of science. But he was not successful in providing a consistent theory of knowledge for this purpose, because his attack on rational theology seemed to the agnostics to undercut the very Christianity he defended. The agnostics therefore fastened onto Mansel's vision of the Kantian tradition in order to legitimize the value of natural science and their view of true religion. However, Kant's epistemology proved to be too difficult for them to control, and their modification of its sceptical element undermined natural science, while their rejection of practical reason weakened their attempt to allow a place for religion.