Constance Naden's Metaphysics:
Hylo-Idealism's Ideal Known World and Unknown Matter

1 Introduction

In 1880s Britain, Constance Naden published several dozen philosophical texts, many defending 'hylo-idealism', a theory aiming to unify materialism with idealism. There is a large body of scholarship on Naden's poetry but her prose philosophy is neglected; and, whilst some discussions of her hylo-idealism enter into metaphysics, none take it as a focus[1]. This paper offers the first sustained study of Naden's metaphysical system. On this new reading of Naden's hylo-idealism, her materialism is carefully qualified; and her idealism is distinctively Kantian, her construal of the external cosmos as unknowable placing her within the Victorian school of metaphysical agnosticism.

One way this paper seeks to understand Naden's metaphysics is by closely reading her texts. Setting aside her poetry, it considers her entire prose corpus: an unpublished 1878-9 *Notebook*, discovered by leading Naden scholar Clare Stainthorp; 1881-1889 published essays, book reviews, and notes; and posthumous collections of essays. Her views remain remarkably consistent across this eleven year span. Another way is by situating Naden's thought within the philosophical movements of her period, and comparing it with that of her peers. Naden's hylo-idealism belonged to a small movement, pioneered by her friend and fellow hylo-idealist Robert Lewins. In the literature, Lewins is a shadowy background figure, his philosophy barely studied. Nonetheless, his intellectual relationship with Naden is of obvious interest to scholars, who ask how closely their views align, and whether she was ultimately distancing herself from his hylo-idealism. This paper offers a fresh take on these issues by comparing the metaphysics of Naden and Lewins, and arguing there were *always* major differences. In fact, this paper argues that Naden's metaphysical system is closer to that of evolutionist Thomas Henry Huxley, and that a Huxleyian evolutionism powers her conclusions regarding the brain and external world.

This paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the intellectual context in which Naden's thought emerged, surveying the major schools of Victorian metaphysics, and offering the first study

[1] The *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* contains no mention of Naden or hylo-idealism. Discussions of Naden's hylo-idealism, mostly in reference to her poetry, can be found in Smith (1978, 305), Alarabi (2012, 848-9), Stainthorp (2019, 59-62), Murphy (2019, 161-4), Stone (2022, 108-9), and Huber (2022, 88-92). Rare scholarship on Naden's philosophy includes Stainthorp (2019, 135-193), who explores Naden's atheism and scientific rationalism; and Stone (2022, 108-113), who focuses on Naden's philosophy of mind.

of Lewins' hylo-idealist metaphysics. Section 3 provides a brief intellectual biography of Naden, before setting out a novel reading of her metaphysics. I distinguish Naden's agnosticism from Lewins' phenomenalism, and highlight its Kantian bent. Against various critics, this section argues that her system has the resources to rebuff objections facing hylo-idealism. Section 4 explores connections between the work of Naden and Huxley. Section 5 summarises my reconstruction of Naden's metaphysics and, by way of concluding, reflects on its place within the longer history of women's anti-dualist thought.

This study primarily seeks to take Naden scholarship in new directions, but it should be of broader interest to historians of nineteenth century metaphysics. As Mander (2020, 5) put it in his groundbreaking study of the topic, 'Victorian Philosophy has been very largely neglected, and Victorian metaphysics doubly so'. Including Naden amongst the metaphysical agnostics helps us better understand that under-studied school[2]. As we watch Naden navigate the turbulent seas of materialism, idealism, and atheism, we can better understand agnosticism's attractions and challenges, *and* one of its driving forces - evolution, that hoary sea monster cresting the horizon.

2 The Roiling Seas of Victorian Metaphysics and Hylo-Idealism

Victorian metaphysics is a complex affair. I follow Mander (2020, 4) in distinguishing three schools within it. *Metaphysical agnosticism*, aka unknowability theory, holds that ultimate reality is unknowable. This school originates in the 1829 work of William Hamilton, who continued to publish until his death in 1856; it continued with the 1860s onwards work of Herbert Spencer, and Huxley. For example, Spencer (1862, 68) argues we can only know the world of appearances: 'the reality existing behind all appearances is, and must ever be, unknown'. Against agnosticism, *empiricism* holds that reality *is* knowable - through sense experience. Its advocates include John Stuart Mill and William Kingdon Clifford. Mander (2020, 4) explains that empiricists deploy several strategies against the unknowable, such as setting it aside, or reinterpreting it in terms of things we can know. *British idealism* is opposed to agnosticism and empiricism: it expands the realm of the knowable beyond sense experience, holding that through reason we can know more or even all of ultimate reality. British idealists include T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley.

If these schools were ocean tides, hylo-idealism would be a streamlet. In addition to Lewins and Naden, the hylo-idealists include a writer using the pseudonym "Julian", E. Cobham Brewer, Herbert Courtney, and George McCrie. Scholarship on hylo-idealism centres around Naden: there is

[2] Mander's (2020) *The Unknowable* provides its only study. Rare papers consider the metaphysics of particular unknowable theorists, such as Gilley and Loades (1981, 297-301) on Huxley, and Fitzgerald (1987) on Spencer.

no literature on the movement as a whole, and very little on decorated army surgeon Lewins[3]. With an eye to ultimately distinguishing Naden's thought from that of her friend, this section explores the development of Lewins' hylo-idealism.

Its origins lie in Lewins' earlier theory, 'hylozoism'. As Lewins (1887, 12) explains in an 1878 letter to Naden, the term derives from the Greek *hylē* for 'matter' and *zōē* for 'life': 'Hylo-zoism means that energy is inherent in matter itself'. If matter can live and think, there is no need to posit anything immaterial. His theory first appears in an 1869 pamphlet, *On the Identity of the Vital and Cosmical Principle*. As its title suggests, the pamphlet is concerned with vitalism. Nineteenth century vitalists held that life cannot be fully characterised in mechanist or materialist ways, and instead should be characterised as a non-material or immaterial force; they usually took this force to be of supernatural origin[4]. Against vitalism, Lewins identifies the force that works in living things with the forces working in material things such as the cosmos:

> one force or agent… is active both in thought and the objects of thought; or in other words, that external creation from the smallest molecule of matter in ourselves… up to planets and suns, is acted on or moved by the same medium as that which effects sensation and thought (Lewins, 1869a, 3)

Lewins (1869a, 11) claims that 'one wave of matter' comprises the 'organic and inorganic'. He uses this materialism to support atheism, aiming to 'get rid entirely of all religions' which confuse 'a finite personal being with the impersonal formative agent in creation'. Later that year, Lewins expands on his position:

> I cannot, for the life of me, see anything but the prejudice of foregone conclusions and vain pretensions in the objections to hylozoism, from which, under the term materialism, men seem to shrink with horror. "Immaterialism" - the existence of "spirit,"… appears to me coherently unthinkable. To pretend that the material structure is not the human being himself, mind and body, seems fatal to all rational knowledge (Lewins, 1869b, 480)

Lewins' hylozoism involves materialism and atheism. It immediately attracted one supporter: the mysterious "Julian".

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[3] Naden is the only hylo-idealist included in *The Dictionary of Nineteenth-century British Philosophers*; see Thain (2002). Moore (1987, 231-4) provides the only substantial biography of Lewins, 'ferreted out' of sources such as *The Army List*, and medical journal *The Lancet*. He argues Lewins' materialism and atheism were confirmed on the battlefield: 'Shell shock, brain lesions, and the like tended to disprove the duality of mind and body.'

[4] Mariscal (2021, §2.1) gives a historical overview of philosophical characterisations of life. On nineteenth century vitalism specifically, see Bowler (2001, 160-2).

Several scholars have suggested that Julian is 'probably' a pseudonym for Brewer but do not give evidence[5]. I have uncovered (what I take to be) conclusive evidence that Julian was Brewer: an article titled "Hylo-idealism" is printed under Julian's name in (1883), and reprinted under Brewer's name in (1891b). Cambridge-educated Brewer is best known for writing textbooks and dictionaries, but he also wrote on history and theology[6]. Assuming Brewer is Julian, I suspect he published his early hylozoist works under a pseudonym because they are so vehemently materialist and atheist. Julian's first, 1870 contribution to hylozoism, *The Physical Theory of Animal Life*, reviews Lewins' pamphlet and reply. Describing the pamphlet as a 'midwife of thought', Julian (1870, 4; 8) endorses its 'utmost' materialism, and atheism: 'All that is termed spirit, soul, mind, life, force, are simply products of material organisation; even Deity itself is a mere name'. He went on to produce a dozen works on these themes during 1870 and 1871, with provocative titles such as *Life on the Basis of Hylozoism*, and *The Bible irreconcilable with science, experience, and even its own statements*. In contrast, the articles on hylo-idealism published under Brewer's name are restrained, and do not defend materialism or atheism[7].

Lewins' hylozoist campaign continued in 1873, with the publication of *Life and Mind: Their Unity and Materiality* - another pamphlet arguing for materialism and atheism[8]. At some point Lewins and Julian began working together, for Lewins edited Julian's 1879 *Natural Reason versus Divine Revelation*. Presumably, by this point if not before, Lewins was aware of Julian's identity. Brewer wrote that he knew Lewins (implicitly via correspondence) from at least 1861, and that they first met in person during 1874 or 1875[9].

Given how negatively Victorians regarded materialism and atheism, it is surprising Lewins argued openly for both. The writer Thomas Carlyle offers a germane example of how toxic these views were. In 1870, he complained about Huxley's evolutionism (more on this below), as well as Lewins and Julian[10]:

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[5] For example, see Smith (1978, 304) and Stainthorp (2019, 30). In contrast, Robertson's (1929, 392-3) detailed discussion suggests that Julian could be Brewer or John Allen Giles.
[6] See Ridler (2004), who notes that, in 1871, Brewer used the pseudonym Julian in another context.
[7] See Brewer (1891a; 1891b).
[8] For example, Lewins (1873, 3-5) aims to remove 'everything supernatural' from 'the domain of sense and fact'. Through science, we can be confident of 'the all-sufficiency of Matter to carry on its own operations, and the consequent absurdity, uselessness, non-necessity of any hypothesis which assumes… an immaterial, spiritual, or supernatural factor, to perform functions, which Matter… really performs for and by itself'.
[9] Brewer (1891a, 3; 23) wrote, 'I have known Dr. Lewins for more than thirty years, sometimes as travelling companion, sometimes as an intimate friend, and sometimes as a frequent correspondent'. He adds, 'I first met the Doctor some sixteen or seventeen years before'.
[10] Carlyle omits Lewins' name, but Lewins (1890, 84) helpfully fills it in.

> It is notable how Atheism spreads among us in these days. Huxley's protoplasm… is raising a great crop of atheistic *speech*… One Lewins, an army surgeon, has continued writing to me on these subjects from all quarters of the world a set of letters… which indicated an insane vanity, as of a stupid cracked man, and a dull impiety as of a brute,… Yesterday there came a pamphlet… [by] Julian, which… I find to be a hallelujah on the advent and discovery of atheism… like the shout of a hyaena… In about seven minutes my great Julian was torn in two (Carlyle, 1885, 388)

For Carlyle, and many other Victorians, atheism was dangerous and offensive.

Throughout these early writings, Lewins only argues for materialism and atheism. His philosophy takes a new turn in his letters to Naden (some of which Lewins published). Consider this letter, dated 31 December 1878:

> Scientists are really, in the last analysis, under a radical delusion; for all research and so-called discovery is a mere state of change in their own internal perceptions - a subjective phenomenon. Bishop Berkeley showed this so long ago as 1708; and more recently John Stuart Mill… defined matter as a "permanent possibility of *sensation*", thus making the garniture of earth and the unutterable magnificence of the celestial vault a mere projection or extension of our own inner consciousness (Lewins, 1887, 17)

George Berkeley famously argued that there are no mind-independent things, that to be is to be perceived. As Lewins (1887, 19) approvingly writes in a letter dated 2 January 1879, Berkeley 'meant that we really perceive nothing but our own perceptions - *i.e.,* ideal mental representations'. Of course, Lewins adds, Berkeley failed to recognise that the 'source' of the mind is 'a material organ, the brain'[11]. In 1865, loosely working within this Berkeleyian tradition, Mill (1979, 183) argued we can only know our mental sensations, offering a phenomenalism about matter: 'Matter, then, may be defined as the Permanent Possibility of Sensation'.

In line with his empiricism, Mill's phenomenalism pulls matter back into the sphere of sensation - the knowable[12]. Lewins endorses Mill's phenomenalism about matter *and* Mill's empiricism: Lewins is exclusively concerned with our private mental worlds, there is nothing more to be said of reality. Take Lewins' "Hylo-Phenomenalism the Summa Scientiae", published February 1882. Having stated that the universe is a projection of our minds, it continues:

> all "things" or entities, or non-entities, - abstract or concrete, - from Divinity downwards, are merely ideal or phenomenal imagery of our own Mind…

[11] On Berkeley's idealism, see Downing (2021).
[12] On Mill's phenomenalist account of matter, see Mander (2020, 114-7).

> The very keystone of Hylo-Phenomenalism is the impossibility of affirmation or negation, as regards any "phenomena," outside the subjective universe of Self (Lewins, 1882, 109-110)

This is a strict phenomenalism: we cannot even affirm or negate anything outside our private mental worlds.

Although idealism and phenomenalism appear for the first time in Lewins' 1878 writings, by 1882 this element of his metaphysic takes centre stage:

> the Hylozoic theorem of Life and the World may be formulated as the utter and self-evident impossibility… to transcend or escape… our own conscious Ego, - the Non-Ego, or, falsely so-called "external Universe," being but the objective or projective, image of our own Egoity… Hylo-Idealism, [is] the sole legitimate creed… of modern Physics and Physiology (Lewins, 1882, 109-110)

For the first time, Lewins labels his position 'hylo-idealism': the unification of hylozoism, on which matter is active; with a Mill-style phenomenalism. Scholars debate whether Lewins or Naden first used the term 'hylo-idealism', a question taken to bear on which of them developed the theory[13]. Shortly after her death, Brewer (1891a, 4) claimed that Naden 'changed the term Hylo-zoism into Hylo-idealism'. Against this, Lewins (note on Brewer, 1891a, 4) objects it was *his* term, 'though the concept was her suggestion, and is already implicit in my identification of Thought with Cerebration'. I side with Lewins: he used the term in print first[14], and the theory originated in his 1878-1879 letters.

3 Naden and Her Metaphysical System

3.1 Introducing Naden

Naden (1858–1889) grew up in Birmingham[15]. Her unpublished, handwritten 1878-79 *Notebook*[16] constitutes the earliest extant record of her philosophy. Most of its entries are written in English but a few are in French and German[17]. From 1879–1881 Naden attended botany classes at

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[13] On one side, Thain (2002, 847), Alarabi (2012, 849), and Stainthorp (2019, 61) claim that Naden introduced the term hylo-idealism. On the other side, Moore (1987, 232) claims that Lewins used it from 1880; frustratingly, he does not provide a reference.
[14] Naden (1882b, 249) first uses the term in May 1882 - three months later.
[15] I borrow the following biographical details from Den Otter (2004), and Stainthorp (2019, 27-80).
[16] I am extremely grateful to Clare Stainthorp, who discovered the notebook, for sharing her private photographs and transcript with me. The notebook is located in the Cadbury Research Library, Birmingham, manuscript USS 115. I reference it by entry number.
[17] Lewins was fluent in German and encouraged Naden to learn it; on Naden's relationship with this (and other) languages, see Moore (1987, 239) and Stainthorp (2019, 172).

the Birmingham and Midland Institute; in autumn 1881 she entered Birmingham's Mason College, studying physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, physiology, and geology. From 1881, Naden began publishing philosophy in periodicals, sometimes under pseudonyms. In 1884, she joined a 'section' of the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society formed to study Spencer's philosophy, delivering several papers on his work. In 1887, Naden moved to London, becoming a member of the Aristotelian Society. She was due to read two papers there, events that were cancelled due to her death; the paper outlines survive. Aristotelian Society President H. Wildon Carr (1928-9, 384) wrote that Naden's 'great interest was philosophy': 'During the year she was with us she came to all our meetings and took part in our discussions'.

Naden met Lewins in 1876, and he had a major impact on her thought. Naden (1887c, 3) herself wrote that the letters 'addressed to myself by Dr Lewins in the years 1878-80', 'aided by conversation and by study of the exact and moral sciences, convinced me of the truth of his position'. Commentators acknowledge Lewins' influence in various ways. For example, Dale (1891, 233) describes Naden as an 'apostle' of Lewins; this confirms Huber's (2022, 89) claim that Naden's contemporaries saw her 'mainly as a voice-piece' for Lewins. Thain (2002, 846) writes that Naden's hylo-idealism 'is first and foremost' based on Lewins' hylozoism. Den Otter (2004) agrees, claiming 'Naden's first philosophical essays reproduced aspects of Lewins's system'.

Stainthorp (2019, 138) has argued that, by the end of her life, Naden 'had distanced herself' from hylo-idealism; Stone (2022, 109) agrees. As evidence, Stainthorp points to a note Naden prefixed to some essays:

> For my first apprehension of the principle which underlies these logical and ethical theories, I am indebted to my friend Dr. Robert Lewins, who makes it the central point of his system of Hylo-Idealism… that "man is to himself, on the relative theory of knowledge, the measure of all things," in the light of modern physic, physics, and physiology. (Naden, 1890, xxii)

Here, Naden describes hylo-idealism as *his* system, not hers. For Stainthorp, this emphasises the 'independence' of Naden's philosophical work. As Stainthorp (2019, 183) reads Naden, she was 'unwilling to subscribe to a world-scheme devised by anyone but herself'. This paper will offer fresh support for Stainthorp's thesis.

3.2 Naden's Hylo-Idealism

Naden (1882b, 249) describes hylo-idealism as unifying materialism with idealism. This section explores each part of her system in turn. Materialism is usually construed as the metaphysical thesis that the nature of the world is material[18]. Although I will show below that Naden's materialism is qualified, she is straightforwardly opposed to positing anything non-material, such as immaterial substances or vital forces. Naden's materialism is sourced in Lewins' hylozoism. For example, Naden's *Notebook* (1878-79, #86) states, 'Energy is a property of Matter', and this 'disposes of the need for a principle of vitality'. In her first philosophic article, "Hylozoic Materialism", Naden (1881a, 314-5) argues that as 'energy' is 'inseparable from every particle of matter', matter is 'active', so there is no need to posit a 'distinct, immaterial, vivifying agency'. Like Lewins, Naden argues that as matter has energy, we need not posit non-matter to explain life or mind.

Idealism is a family of positions holding that reality comprises something mental, such as mind, spirit, or experience[19]. Naden takes a key idealist thesis from Lewins: the known world is ideal. We saw that Lewins' letter of 31 December 1878 advanced Mill's phenomenalism about matter. Naden's *Notebook* entries #85-86, authored around the same time[20], state:

> All objects, which we perceive, are only our own sensations… If there were no humans, then there would be no heaven and no earth[21]…
> [it is] clearly demonstrable that the appearance of things are merely our own sensations (Naden, 1878-79, #85-6)

These tightly compressed lines seem to endorse Lewins' view that material objects, the appearances of things, are merely our own sensations.

Naden sets out her first argument for idealism in "The Identity of Vital and Cosmical Energy", published May 1882. The article cites the latest physiology of its day: an 1881 English translation of Julius Isidor Rosenthal's *General Physiology of Muscles and Nerves*. On Rosenthal's (1881, 278-279) account of sensations, external causes (e.g. light waves) irritate terminal organs (e.g. the eye), which irritate sensory nerve-fibres (e.g. those attached to the nerve of sight). These nerve-fibres terminate in central nerve-cells connected with the 'grey matter' of the brain,

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[18] See Stoljar (2022, §1.1).
[19] See Guyer and Horstmann (2021, §1).
[20] #84 is dated 3 December 1878, and #98 is dated 13 February 1879, so #85-86 were presumably authored between these dates.
[21] I borrow Stainthorp's translations of Naden's original German: '*Alle Gegenstände, welche wir wahrnehmen, sind nur unsere eigene[n] Empfindungen… Wenn keine Menschen wären, so gäbe es keinen Himmel und keine Erde'*. I add the 'n' to correct a grammatical mistake in Naden's German; thanks to an anonymous referee for spotting it.

producing our sensations (e.g. a sensory impression of light). Rosenthal (1881, 283-4) claims our nerve-fibres are homogeneous, but our nerve-cells are not. An external cause 'elicits different sensations in us' depending on 'the character of the nerve-cells in which the nerve-fibres end'. He asks us to imagine a scenario on which our nerve-fibres of hearing and sight were 'cut' and swapped about: our ears would connect via nerve-fibres with nerve-cells of sight, and our eyes would connect via nerve-cells with nerve-cells of hearing. On this scenario, he claims 'the sound of an orchestra would elicit in us the sensation of light and colour, and the sight of a highly coloured picture would elicit in us impressions of sound'. This leads Rosenthal to conclude:

> The sensations which we receive from outward impressions are therefore not dependent on the nature of these impressions, but on the nature of our nerve-cells. We feel not that which acts on our bodies, but only that which goes on in our brain… the sensation of light bears no likeness to the physical process of the ether vibrations which elicit it. (Rosenthal, 1881, 283-4)

I read this passage to mean that the *nature* of our sensations (whether we see the colour red, or hear a whistling noise) doesn't depend on the nature of their external causes, but on the nature of our nerve-cells.

Having set out Rosenthal's account of sensation, Naden (1882b, 250-1) states, 'Idealism is thus irrevocably established… Science has led us to Idealism'. Her implicit reasoning seems to be as follows. Against the view that the nature of our sensations depends on the nature of external causes acting on our bodies, Rosenthal claims they depend on our brains. My sensation of light may be caused by external vibrations, but the cause bears no likeness to the sensation. Given this, it is no great step to suppose that our brains play a tremendous role in shaping or forming our sensations. And, if our sensations or perceptions are actively created by the brain or mind, we have arrived at idealism. This line of reasoning is reminiscent of that found in an earlier essay by Huxley (1881, 209), which claims: 'no likeness of external things is, or can be, transmitted to the mind by the sensory organs', and 'a more or less complete idealism is a necessary consequence'. This essay can be found in Huxley's *Science and Culture and Other Essays*, which Naden (1882a) reviewed in April 1882 - just one month before her (1882b). Given this, it seems likely that Huxley's work was on her mind.

Naden states her idealism bluntly in "The Brain Theory of Mind & Matter; or Hylo-Idealism":

> No one has ever been able to deny… that man is the maker of his own Cosmos, and that all his perceptions… have a merely subjective existence…
> we are forced to accept that Relative Idealism which declares that the only Cosmos known to man, or in any way concerning him, is manufactured in his own brain-cells. (Naden, 1883c, 157; 160)

As in Lewins, the known world comprises ideal sensations, and our brains are their source.

Thus far, the metaphysics of Naden and Lewins seem to be in accord. Yet when we go deeper into their views, differences emerge. Let's start with Lewins. Above, we saw that Lewins is a strict phenomenalist about matter. This kind of empiricism is fundamentally opposed to metaphysical agnosticism, which posits an outside Unknown. Unsurprisingly, Lewins later distinguishes his position from agnosticism, in annotations on Brewer's study of hylo-idealism. For example, Brewer (1891a, 5) writes, 'Lewins divides the universe into two parts - the Terra Cognita and the Terra Incognita'. Against this, Lewins objects:

> In Hylo-idealism there is no universe outside the Universal Idea or Thought…
> I do not find… this division into two worlds - a Known and Unknown one - compatible with the strict monocosm of Hylo-idealism (Lewins, note on Brewer, 1891a, 5)

Brewer (1891a, 6) writes that what a person does not know of the external world belongs to the 'Unknown World'. Lewins (note on Brewer, 1891a, 6) adds, 'With which "Unknown World" we have no concern whatever'. Lewins' hylo-idealist universe is a 'monocosm' in that it *only* posits a Known World. Brewer (1891a, 23) claims that in writing of the 'starry heaven', Lewins 'recognises' an 'existing world, a non-ego till it has entered the realm of our Ego'. Again, Lewins objects:

> My meaning is that all we can see is brain-born. It is only Kant's negation of *Thing in itself,* which leaves, as the only alternative, *Thing in myself*...
> Both Miss Naden and myself everywhere contest Kant's dualism in separating the motions of the celestial bodies from those of his own mind - the former for us having no *locus standi* [place to stand] till emerged in the latter. (Lewins, note on Brewer, 1891a, 20; 23)

To understand this passage, and my alternative reading of Naden, we must enter a little way into Kant's idealism.

Kant's 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason* (repr. 1998, A369) opposes a kind of realism 'which regards space and time as something given in themselves', and 'therefore represents outer appearances (if their reality is conceded) as things in themselves [*Dinge an sich selbst*], which

would exist independently of us'. Against this realism, Kant argues that space and times are forms of our sensibility, and the sensible world we perceive is actively constructed by our inner senses:

> everything intuited in space or in time, hence all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which, as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself. This doctrine I call transcendental idealism. (Kant, repr. 1998, B519)

Some Victorians advanced 'two-world' readings of the *Critique*, on which it offers a kind of dualism. Arguably, Kant (repr. 1998, B275) implies that, while we cannot know things-in-themselves, we *do* know they exist independently of our representations of them. This creates the dualism: there is a world of mind-dependent appearances, comprising all possible objects of our experience; and there is a world of things-in-themselves, which may be non-mental in character, and is certainly beyond our cognitive reach. For example, an 1883 *Edinburgh Review* article claims that for Kant the mind receives 'unformed' material and actively fashions it into experience: Kant 'everywhere accepts the vulgar view of facts or things external to us'[22]. As Guyer and Horstmann (2021, §1) explain, on such readings, Kant's claim that things *as we perceive them* do not exist outside of our experience is idealist, yet his further claim that things-in-themselves exist is realist.

On this Victorian reading of the *Critique*, Kant holds that celestial bodies such as stars exist as mind-dependent appearances, *and* as unknown things-in-themselves. Against Brewer, Lewins is claiming that he and Naden *reject* this kind of two-world dualism. Lewins' idealism is in the tradition of Berkeley and Mill, not the two-world dualist tradition of Kant. Although they do not give details, several scholars characterise Naden's idealism in ways that are reminiscent of my characterisation of Lewins' idealism. For example, Alarabi (2012, 848-9) writes that Naden's hylo-idealism involves 'Berkeley's subjective Idealism', and that 'the world existing beyond our perception, is of no interest to Naden'. Stainthorp (2019, 61) reads Naden as rejecting Kant's 'dualism', in favour of starting from a Hegelian unity of subject and object. Stone (2022, 112) states, 'Naden's idealism owes to Berkeley'.

Contra Lewins, and these scholars, I argue that Brewer's characterisation of hylo-idealism is correct with regard to *Naden's* system. As on the two-world dualist reading of Kant, Naden extends reality beyond our mental worlds; and with the agnostics she describes that reality as 'unknown',

[22] See Anon (1883, 29-30).

dividing the universe into ‘Terra Cognita’ and ‘Terra Incognita’. Naden’s idealism exhibits these elements from her earliest writings. Take these *Notebook* (1878-79) entries, all italics mine:

> the appearance of things are merely our own sensations, caused by the interaction of our own forces *& those of the universe*, which are one in kind (#86)

> The mind is not passive, but active. We not only receive sensations, but combine for their creation with forces homogenous with ourselves… other forces *which exist around u*s… are one in kind with ourselves…
> our sensations… [are] produced by some *unknown agent* (#89)

> our sensations… are not the representations of outward objects but… impressions which *certain unknown agents* produce in conjunction with ourselves (#108)

> When *matter* comes into contact with mind, it becomes sensation – that is, a… state of the mind, & one with its essence. All matter of which we have any cognisance is therefore homogenous with the mind (#132)

As I read Naden, our minds produce sensation when they interact with the ‘forces… of the universe’ or ‘matter’ - described repeatedly as ‘unknown agents’. Unlike the phenomenalist, Naden does not merely posit known matter-as-sensation, but unknown matter-in-itself.

A few years later, Huxley prompts Naden to reject phenomenalism in print. Huxley usually maintains that the known world is ideal, and the external world is unknown. However, he occasionally lapses into phenomenalism. As Mander (2020, 97) puts it, on this ‘stronger idealism’, ‘extra-mental reality is judged something altogether impossible’. For example, in *Science and Culture and Other Essays*, Huxley (1881, 240) claims he is not a materialist, ‘for I am utterly incapable of conceiving the existence of matter if there is no mind in which to picture that existence’. In her review of this book, Naden quotes this line, and critiques it:

> Here, as elsewhere, he confounds material phenomena, which cannot exist without a percipient mind, with matter itself. Unless his views have recently undergone a marvellous change, he holds that the earth was in being very long before the appearance of any sentient organism… that mind is developed from matter, and … “germinate[s] in lower forms of life.” According to his present theory, nothing whatever could have existed previously to this germination - not mind, since it was as yet unborn; not matter, since there was no mind in which it could be pictured. In fact, there could have been no “lower forms of life,” and therefore no germination. The existence of matter may now be regarded as theoretical and practical necessity (Naden, 1882a, 200-1)

Naden is referring to Huxley's evolutionism about life and mind.

In an 1870 address, Huxley (1870b, 401) coined new terms for two processes: *biogenis*, whereby living matter (and ultimately mind) comes from living matter; and *abiogenesis*, whereby living matter (and ultimately mind) comes from non-living matter. Against other biologists, Huxley (1870b, 404) set forth the innovative position that abiogenesis only occurred during the Earth's distant past: 'if it were given me to look beyond the abyss of geologically recorded time… I should expect to witness the evolution of living protoplasm from not living matter'[23]. Presumably, this is what Naden refers to when she writes that Huxley holds 'the earth was in being very long before the appearance of any sentient organism'. On Huxley's theory, the earth and lower forms of life existed before sentient organisms. Naden points out that 'material phenomena', the ideal known world, 'cannot exist without a percipient mind' - without a sentient organism. This entails that 'matter itself', matter independent of mind, which includes the earth and lower forms of life, existed before 'material phenomena'. Further, as sentient organisms and their mind-dependent phenomena evolved out of non-living matter via abiogenesis, there is a sense in which the existence of material phenomena depends on matter. This is why the 'existence of matter' is a 'theoretical and practical necessity'.

The following month, her piece "The Identity of Vital and Cosmical Energy" advances a parallel argument:

> we must accept this unknown Matter as the basis of our ideal Cosmos. That this is the case has been shown in a previous paper [i.e. Naden 1882a]…
> What is really meant by the geologist who deciphers the unwritten records of a period when Earth was literally "without form and void," since there was no eye to receive the rays of light and transmute them into form and colour; by the astronomer who reveals the secrets of Heaven in ages yet more remote, and sees in imagination that molten and swiftly rotating terrestrial mass which could never have been an actually present phenomenon to the brain of man or beast? Phenomenal existence is in both cases clearly out of the question… Evidently both astronomer and geologist mean to imply that Matter existed long before any known mind, and that the reality of its existence is in no way affected by the presence or absence of a percipient (Naden, 1882b, 250-1)

[23] This was partly to sidestep ongoing debates and experiments around spontaneous generation. Strick (1999, 70-2) puts Huxley's position in context, explaining why his move to place abiogenesis in the distant past was unique and important.

Evolutionary theory describes matter that predates human minds, and so do geology and astronomy. For Naden, these scientific theories do not refer to mere 'phenomenal existence', but to matter that exists independently of mind. Her advocacy of this 'unknown Matter' is utterly at odds with Lewins.

Naden's metaphysical agnosticism emerges even more clearly the following year, when she writes of the nervous system and brain:

> It can appear to us only phenomenally, and we cannot speak of it otherwise than in terms of phenomena but here, at least, we are forced to assume an underlying noumenon, while renouncing the vain hope of penetrating to its essential nature by reason or intuition… all those objects which constitute our world are made up of subjective sensations… Even the vibrations supposed to impinge on the surface of the body… are merely convenient intellectual representations of the unknown. (Naden, 1883b, 216)

Physiology forces us to assume an 'underlying noumenon', of unknown nature; and she confirms that our sensations merely 'represent' the unknown noumenon. As Naden (1884c, 497) puts it: 'Mountains, rivers, and seas, sun, moon, and stars, and the *phenomenal* human brain, are fashioned into the forms which we know by the *actual* human brain… The actuality of things is unknown'.

To summarise, on my reading of Lewins, his idealism is in the Berkeley-Mill phenomenalist tradition, placing his metaphysics amongst the Victorian empiricists. In contrast, Naden's idealism is in the two-world dualist Kantian tradition, and her metaphysics lies amongst the Victorian agnostics. There is only one text where the gulf between their ontologies surface. Naden's (1883c, 166) "The Brain Theory of Mind and Matter; or Hylo-Idealism" writes that without the intellect, 'Matter would still, as in geologic and pregeologic ages, continue its immortal existence; but matter, untouched, unseen… must be a void and formless chaos'. In a footnote, Lewins (note on Naden, 1883c, 166) worries, 'Is not even the term "chaos," which is only Cosmos "in the making," too much… "void," best describes the nullity all is to us outside consciousness'. For Lewins, the world beyond consciousness is null, but for Naden it is real. Were they aware of the gulf between them? Given Lewins' claim that Naden rejects Kantian dualism, it seems he was unaware. What about Naden? On the one hand, Naden never attacks Lewins' phenomenalism as she did Huxley's - but that might have been out of respect for her friend. On the other hand, we saw above that, in her later work, Naden distances herself from 'his' hylo-idealism. Perhaps that was because, for most readers, Lewins' hylo-idealism *was* hylo-idealism, and Naden became conscious of a need to distinguish her position from his.

3.3 The Kantian Bent to Naden's Metaphysics

Naden's system is not a reworking of Kant and some aspects of it - such as her materialism, and arguments from physiology to idealism - are not Kantian. Nonetheless, this section argues that her metaphysics incorporates several distinctively Kantian theses. I explore her engagement with Kant chronologically.

The first time Naden cites Kant in support of her metaphysics is in "The Brain Theory of Mind and Matter". Having argued for 'relative idealism', Naden (1883c, 160) writes it may not be 'altogether useless' to 'refer' readers to a recent translation of Kant's *Critique*, and to the *Edinburgh Review* article mentioned above. She finds the following sentences from that article 'especially applicable' to her position:

> Kant's whole system throughout is… whether we can really know things or only thoughts… The only way this can be done is to recognise from the first that thought and things are not diverse or dualistic… Objects are not passively apprehended by the mind as something distinct from it, *but are actively constructed by it*. (Anon, cited in Naden, 1883c, 160-1)

Naden added the italics, indicating she finds the activity of the mind highly important. Her article affirms the mind's activity, as well as the Kantian thesis that space and time are forms of thought:

> In the grey cells of the cerebral cortex are generated, not only the visible heaven… [but] even the conditions of time and space which correspond to the revolution of its spheres. For, without the intellect, time and space… would, in the form in which we know, then be annihilated. (Naden, 1883c, 166)

Speculatively, it may be this passage Brewer has in mind when he describes hylo-idealism's discussion of the 'starry heaven'.

Naden's next significant engagement with Kant appears in 1887:

> A turning point in the history of philosophy is marked by the question of Kant - "How is experience possible?"…
> [His reply] is briefly as follows: our experience is rendered possible by a certain "unity of apperception," by which the perceiving and thinking mind introduces order into the world of sensation, imposing its own forms upon the given matter… Space and Time, which as they do not belong to the matter of phenomena, and yet are essential to its coherence, must exist in the mind antecedently to experience. (Naden, 1887a, 76-77)

Although critical of Kant's terminology[24], Naden endorses his account of experience:

> Experience is possible in virtue of the original constitution of the mind. The thinking and feeling subject unifies its sensations, by referring them to itself… Hence comes that unity in diversity, which renders the world Cosmos instead of Chaos. (Naden, 1887a, 79)

On her account, a mind unifies chaotic diversity into the non-chaotic 'Cosmos' we experience. Kant's *Critique* (repr. 1998, B42-3) implies that, if humans had a different kind of mind, the world of appearance it creates could be different: 'we cannot judge at all whether the intuitions of other thinking beings are bound to the same conditions that limit our intuition and that are universally valid for us'. Naden (1887b, 128) makes the same point: 'Another kind of brain would construct another kind of cosmos'.

This Kantianism persists into Naden's latest, posthumously published writings. For example, "Pig Philosophy"[25] discusses Kant's *Critique,* and Naden's (1891, 7) approves its thesis that 'The categories of cause and effect, action and reaction, substance and quality, are implied throughout man's intellectual life… in the very possibility of experience': 'Take them away and the cosmos falls into a meaningless heap of crude sensations'. And consider this passage in "Philosophical Tracts":

> The neo-deductive method of Kant, as used by some of his recent exponents, is now making clear the defects of pure empiricism even to its principal champions. Professor Bain, for instance, recognizes the uniformity of Nature as a necessary assumption not derived from experience; and he needs to take only one step farther to see that it is *implied* in all experience (Naden, 1891, 136)

For Naden, the uniformity of nature stems from her Kantian account of experience: our minds create a unified, uniform world. Incidentally, this passage also confirms her opposition to empiricism.

Finally, Naden's Kantianism illuminates a surprising aspect of her later thought: her admiration for Green. As you would expect, given her materialism, Naden (1883c, 160) rejects 'that Absolute Idealism which will deny the existence of aught that is corporeal'. Nonetheless, she endorses aspects of Green's work; Naden (1891, 2) even refers to his 'calm wisdom'. For Green

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[24] For example, Naden (1887a, 78) complains that as Kant enters deeper into his system 'his luminous central idea is obscured by a verbal haze'.
[25] Alarabi (2012, 850) explains that the unusual title of this essay is indirectly borrowed from a piece by Carlyle, which asked how pigs would perceive the universe.

(repr. 2003, 43), relations are the work of the mind, so our unified, relational world *must* comprises a single, eternal consciousness. Although he draws on Kant's *Critique*, Green (repr. 2003, 48) rejects Kant's dualism of the 'knowable' and its 'unknowable opposite'[26]. There are obvious differences between Green and Naden: not least, Green opposed materialism, atheism, and metaphysical agnosticism. Stainthorp (2019, 174-7), the only scholar who has considered Naden's engagement with Green, argues that while the British idealists would not consider her a 'fellow-thinker', there are 'points of connection' between them, such as Green's view that sensation results from an actively creative mind. I agree. And, going further, I offer an underlying explanation for many of these connections: they stem from Naden's Kantianism. For example, having approvingly described Green's 'advanced' views as 'substantially those of Kant', Naden (1890, 82-3) affirms Green's thesis that knowledge can only be drawn from experience if it is already implicitly present. Developing her Kantian idealism along Green's lines, Naden explains that perceiving an 'object' works as follows: we 'perceive phenomena under relation of space and time', 'perceive the mutual relations of these phenomena', 'and "colligate" them into definite objects'. The elements of Green's idealism that Naden admires are those sourced in Kant.

3.4 Objections and Replies to Naden's Hylo-idealism

Hylo-idealism faces several metaphysical objections. By way of bringing out further subtleties of her thought, this section asks how Naden would reply to three of them. An advantage of reading Naden as a metaphysical agnostic is that her system has the resources to rebuff these problems.

The first objection is described by Stainthorp (2019, 75-7): Victorian critics attacked hylo-idealism's reconciliation of idealism with materialism. I give two examples[27]. In an 1888 editorial addressed 'To Dr. Lewins, and the Hylo-idealists at large', theosophist Helena Blavatsky (2003, 55-6) objects, 'No man can be at once a Materialist and an Idealist, and remain consistent'. Blavatsky (2003, 58-9) reads Lewins as 'declaring… the whole objective world - "*phenomenal* or *ideal*,"… and yet *admitting the reality of matter'.* Against this, she objects: *'*matter cannot surely be *real* and *unreal* at the same time'. Six years later, theologian Paul Carus (1894, 236-7) writes, 'Lewins boldly declares that there is nothing beyond our self'. Against this, Carus objects that hylo-idealism has not shown how the 'contradictions' of idealism and materialism 'should be reconciled'. Both these objections are aimed at Lewins' position, which does seem contradictory. How can you

[26] On Green's metaphysics, and his debt to Kant, see Brink (2022, §2).
[27] On Blavatsky, see Stone (2022, 113). On Carus, see Stainthorp (2019, 77).

be a phenomenalist about the material world, and a materialist? How can the same table be both an ideal sensation, and material? Lewins does not explain. However, on my transcendentalist reading of Naden, her position is not contradictory. The known world is ideal, and that is compatible with the further view that the world outside of mind is material.

Although Naden can answer this first objection, her answer raises a second. How can we reconcile materialism with metaphysical agnosticism? To paraphrase Blavatsky, the external world surely cannot be *material* and *unknown* at the same time. On my reading of Naden, she reconciles these positions by holding a carefully qualified version of materialism. Although she often describes external reality as 'material', she occasionally explains that this is just a useful label for the unknown. Take these passages:

> [Regarding] the noumenon of which the Universe, subjective and objective, is the phenomenon. It signifies little whether this one and indivisible reality be spoken of as god, force or matter (though the last term is preferable, as being the **simplest and least liable to misconstruction**), for to us it is practically non-existent. No man can transcend his own egoity or individual subjective cosmos (Naden, 1881b, 196)

> while we are compelled… to postulate some independent Reality, or "Ding an sich", our total ignorance of its nature admonishes us to adopt the **simplest and least imaginative terminology** (Naden, 1882c, 317)

> it is surely far **simpler** and better to speak of this proplasm [of physical and psychical phenomena] as "Matter," and thus to avoid the… term "spirit," which is 'irrevocably' committed to Dualistic associations (Naden, 1884a, 242)

> The name of the Entity ["Ding-an-sich"] at which we have at last arrived is of very little importance… Dr. Lewins… terms it matter, and I adopt his nomenclature as the **simplest and least misleading**. To speak of "Spirit" with Hegel, or "Will" with Schopenhauer, seems to imply the necessary possession of mind or volition, and Herbert Spencer's "Unknowable" has more than a tinge of mysticism (Naden, 1884d, 704-5)

Some of the claims made in these passages are familiar. One is that we are 'compelled' to posit an external, mind-independent reality; Naden does not explain why this is so, but presumably she has in mind the claims of evolutionists, geologists, and astronomers who posit matter independent of mind. Another familiar claim is that external reality is cognitively inaccessible to us: a person cannot 'transcend' their 'individual subjective cosmos'. All four passages also advance an important

new claim: as we do not know the nature of external reality, we should label it in the 'simplest', 'least imaginative', and 'least misleading' way possible. Naden argues that many labels for external reality carry connotations we should reject. The label 'spirit' connotes the 'possession of mind or volition'; Naden would not want to imply that external reality was necessarily conscious or wilful. Meanwhile, the label 'unknowable' could connote mysticism to Victorian readers, through its connection with Spencer's work. Spencer himself was no mystic but some of his more oblique statements could be read as offering a 'religion of the unknowable', and were so developed by some of his followers[28]; such religious mysticism would have been unacceptable to the atheist Naden. In place of these labels, Naden finds 'matter' to be simpler.

To better understand Naden's move here, let's put it within the context of metaphysical agnosticism more broadly. Reflecting on the nature of reality, Spencer (1862, 483) rejects labelling it 'matter' or 'mind', for neither 'can be taken as ultimate'. As such, Spencer avoids materialism. Eight years later, Huxley considers how best to label the cause of our consciousness. Like Spencer, Huxley (1870a, 27; 32) disavows materialism, arguing that strictly we know nothing of 'this terrible "matter," except as a name for the unknown and hypothetical cause of states of our own consciousness'. Yet, unlike Spencer, Huxley argues we *should* label it 'matter'. Huxley (1870a, 35) argues 'materialistic' terminology is helpful for science, 'For it connects thought with the other phenomena of the universe'. In contrast, 'spiritualistic' terminology is 'utterly barren, and leads to nothing but obscurity and confusion'[29]. I read Naden as reasoning along the same lines as Huxley. Once we appreciate the qualified nature of Naden's materialism, her resources to resist the second objection emerge. Naden's external world *is* unknown but our best working label for it is 'matter'.

The final objection lies in Stone's recent, insightful study of Naden's philosophy of mind; I take issue with a particular critique it makes of hylo-idealism. Stone (2022, 113) argues that on Naden's system, 'we cannot legitimately say that there really are such things as brains, only that the world of ideas originates somehow'. Stone argues that here, Naden's idealism 'undermines' her materialism: as we only know our ideas, we cannot know what generates them. Stone reads this passage in Naden as acknowledging the problem:

> If the universe be simply a more or less coherent vision… how are we to know that there is any such thing as matter? …how are we to be sure that the brain itself really exists, and that the all-generating cells are not mere illusory appearances? (Naden 1884b, 172)

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[28] For example, Spencer (1862, 46) argues the basis of 'reconciliation' between religion and science must be this 'deepest' fact: 'that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable'. On the religion of the unknowable, see Mander (2020, 66-71).
[29] On Huxley's materialism, see Blitz (1992, 39-41).

Naden's answer to this question is that our mental reasoning processes cannot be constituted by 'inert' or 'passive' mental phenomena, for that could not influence subsequent mental states. Thus, to explain our reasoning processes, 'we are obliged to assume the existence of some active basis of thought, that is, of something which thinks'. Why identify this active basis of thought with the brain? Naden argues:

> Having seen that sensation and motion follow upon excitation of the brain… we are justified in restoring our thought-cells to their proud creative eminence, and in proclaiming that they constitute this "active basis of thought"; that they think, and therefore exist (Naden 1884b, 173).

Stone (2022, 113) reads Naden's argument as claiming, 'I know by observation that my thinking agency has its source in a material object, the brain'. However, Stone finds this step 'problematic': 'For Naden takes it that in at least this one case observations give us access to reality as it is in itself… why not say the same for other observations'. Stone concludes that 'hylo-idealism's problems remained intractable'.

I agree with Stone that Naden's argument does not show the brain to be *material*. However, I argue that Naden's argument does show the brain to be the *basis of thought*. We can only know the brain as an appearance. Yet the unique experience of observing our own active mental reasoning processes, and of observing close interactions between mind and brain, gives us reason to believe that our brains comprise the basis of our minds - whatever the ultimate nature of brain may be.

Again, this reading of Naden brings her close to Huxley, who argues:

> the roots of psychology lie in the physiology of the nervous system. What we call the operations of the mind are functions of the brain, and the materials of consciousness are products of cerebral activity…
> the doctrine just laid down is what is commonly called materialism… [But it] contains nothing inconsistent with the purest idealism. For, as Hume remarks…
>
> > "'Tis not our body we perceive when we regard our limbs and members, but certain impressions which enter by the senses…"
>
> Therefore, if we analyse the proposition that all mental phenomena are the effects or products of material phenomena, all that it means amounts to this; that whenever those states of consciousness which we call sensation, or emotion, or thought, come into existence, complete investigation will

> show good reason for the belief that they are preceded by those other phenomena of consciousness to which *we give the names of matter and motion*. (Huxley, 1879, 80-81; my emphasis)

Huxley is (at least nearly) identifying mind with brain: consciousness with cerebral activity. Yet he argues that this materialist position is compatible with his further view that the known world is ideal. This is because, for Huxley and Naden, the claim that mental phenomena are the products of material phenomena simply means they are the products of phenomena to which we give the *name* of matter. Naden's hylo-idealism faces difficult challenges but they are surmountable.

4 Naden, Huxley, and Evolutionism

This section explores connections between Naden and Huxley, with an eye to illuminating her views. Many scholars have found affinities between Naden and Spencer[30] but, beyond their shared agnosticism, I do not find particular affinities between their metaphysics. Indeed, there are some significant differences: as we saw above, Spencer rejects materialism; and his empiricism led him to reject Kantian idealisms wherein the mind imposes forms on experience[31]. In contrast, I will show there is a great affinity between the metaphysics of Naden and Huxley. To date, this affinity has gone unremarked in the scholarship, but it is important.

Naden and Huxley share much more than just agnosticism. We have seen that Huxley is also inclined towards materialism, given his labelling of ultimate reality as 'matter', and his near-identification of mind with brain; and Naden accepts his physiologically-motivated idealism. Huxley also aims to unify materialism with idealism. In an 1870 essay, Huxley (1894, 190-1) describes Descartes' thought as a 'stem' dividing into two branches. One branch, via Cartesian scepticism, leads by way of idealists such as Berkeley, 'to Kant and Idealism'. The idea is that, once we doubt that our senses provide knowledge of the external world, idealism of some kind becomes inevitable. The other branch, via Cartesian mechanism, leads 'to modern physiology and materialism'. Huxley argues both branches are 'sound', and have 'life and vigour': 'their differences are complimentary, not antagonistic'. In his study of Huxley's metaphysics, Blitz (1992, 41) argues this is how we should understand Huxley's seemingly 'paradoxical' combination of materialism and idealism: materialism extends physical science to all phenomena, whilst idealism acknowledges that science 'required consciousness as its pre-cognitive condition'. Just like Naden, Huxley marries materialism with idealism, against a background of metaphysical agnosticism.

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[30] Especially with regard to their evolutionary ethics. See Smith (1978, 307), Thain (2002, 847), Alarabi (2012, 849), and Stainthorp (2019, 177-183).
[31] On Spencer's disregard for Kant, see Fitzgerald (1987, 480-4) and Mander (2020, 63).

Naden also makes important use of Huxley's evolutionism. Above, I argued Huxley's abiogenesis powered Naden's rejection of phenomenalism, in favour of unknowability theory. Here, I argue it powers her materialism. To make this case, I turn to a divisive issue amongst Victorian evolutionists: the *continuity* of evolution. Darwin's (1859, 194) *Origin of Species* argued that evolution is continuous: 'natural selection can act only by taking advantage of slight successive variations; she can never take a leap'. Blitz (1992, 9-12) explains that many evolutionists agreed that nature could not, by itself, make the leaps or jumps required to produce 'novelties' such as consciousness or mind. This led to two widely held positions. Naturalists held that consciousness or mind is produced by nature. As nature cannot make jumps, evolutionists such as Darwin and Ernst Haeckel were pushed in the direction of 'panpsychism', on which mind or mentality is not a novelty but is somehow present throughout nature. In contrast, supernaturalists such as Alfred Russell Wallace held that minds are novelties, and they are not present throughout nature; minds appear in nature through divine intervention. Wallace (1895, 209) presented his supernaturalism as the only acceptable horn of a dilemma: 'There is no escape from this dilemma, - either all matter is conscious, or consciousness is… something distinct from matter'[32].

One way to understand Huxley's evolutionism is as an escape from Wallace's dilemma. Huxley drives a middle road between its horns, affirming the continuity of evolution but rejecting panpsychism. In an 1868 address, "On the Physical Basis of Life", Huxley (1870a, 7-8) argues that 'one kind of matter' provides the basis of all living beings: 'protoplasm'. What is the origin of protoplasm? Huxley (1870a, 19) writes it could be diffused throughout the universe in unchanging molecules, a kind of panpsychism; or it could be composed of 'ordinary matter', differing only in the way its 'atoms are aggregated'. He defends the latter view, arguing that, on death, the living protoplasm resolves into its 'mineral and lifeless constituents'. These lifeless constituents include the elements carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen; and their compounds, carbonic acid, water, and so on. Huxley (1870a, 23-4) writes that when these compounds 'are brought together, under certain conditions, they give rise to the still more complex body, protoplasm'. This is the process by which his abiogenesis occurs. Huxley concludes, 'I see no break in this series of steps in molecular complication'. Nature proceeds continuously from non-living to living beings, increasingly only in complexity. As Blitz (1992, 37) puts it, Huxley avoids panpsychism by arguing for a 'reductionism' of living beings to non-living ones.

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[32] For more on this, see Blitz (1992, 46). Bowler (2001, 42-50) provides more general background to the debate, describing the Victorian theism that led evolutionists such as Wallace to seek a firm place for God in their scientific worldviews.

I read Naden as endorsing Huxley's reductionism. Having argued we need not posit non-material forces, her "Hylozoic Materialism" considers a possible objection. Naden's (1881a, 315) hypothetical critic objects it is 'impossible' to explain the properties of organic bodies by those of inorganic bodies: our mental faculties 'are not qualities of *matter*, not even of *living* matter', or else 'they would be exhibited by plants and trees as well as animals'. 'This', Naden replies, 'is certainly true'. She is dismissing any kind of panpsychism. However, Naden goes on to advance a Huxleyian argument from chemistry to explain how life, and then mind, proceeds continuously from the non-living and non-mental:

> In following the history of any chemical compound, we meet with phenomena not less wondrous and inexplicable than those of Life and Consciousness. I select a well-known example: - Nitrogen and carbon, two inodorous and innoxious elements, unite to generate cyanogen, an extremely poisonous gas… Here it is evident that the constituent atoms no more possess the qualities of the compound than the molecules of the brain are individually endowed with the powers of judgment and reflection. Yet we do not find it necessary to assume the addition of a poisonous and odorous immaterial principle to the compound cyanogen (Naden, 1881a, 316)

Nitrogen and carbon can produce cyanogen without requiring an immaterial principle. Analogously, brain molecules can produce a brain without requiring one. "Hylozoic Materialism" concludes:

> The Darwinian and any other modern theory of Evolution *must* be essentially materialistic, since the continuity of the chain of life, from yeast-cell to man, leaves no point where we can assume the intervention of a spiritual entity… [Man must recognise] the sentient and non-sentient Cosmos as an indivisible and homogeneous unity. (Naden, 1881a, 318)

This distinctively Huxleyian evolutionism powers Naden's materialism. She starts from the supposition that elements such as nitrogen and carbon are 'material', so their increasingly complex compounds are material also.

Many of Naden's later pieces make briefer arguments from the continuity of evolution to materialism. For example, Naden (1881b, 194) states, it is 'credible and rational that consciousness, like other bodily functions, is evolved by complexity of organisation'. And:

> [The] Hylo-Idealistic conception of human nature… is implicitly asserted in the Darwinian theory of evolution, which acknowledges no impassable gulf between man and "the brute creation". All consistent advocates of this theory must assume the possibility of an organic ladder from the amoeba to man (Naden, 1883a, 123)

Her knowledge of evolution, and of the natural sciences more generally, created a powerful weapon for her metaphysical arsenal.

Naden's arguments from evolution also reveal the depth of her materialism. We have already seen that unknown 'matter' *must* exist, that it is posited by evolutionists and astronomers, that it is the basis of thought. Here, we see that 'matter' comprises the chemical elements and compounds out of which life and consciousness evolved, that 'Evolution *must* be essentially materialistic'. Above, we saw her passages on labelling unknown reality 'matter' hint at some kind of monism: she describes reality as 'one and indivisible', and seeks a label that avoids 'dualistic associations'. This passage is more explicit: 'the sentient and non-sentient Cosmos' is 'an indivisible and homogeneous unity'. The monism given here is a kind of materialism: everything is material. The non-sentient world is material and, as matter comprises the basis of sentient thought, the phenomenal world is also ultimately material. (Huxley's desire to label the unknown 'matter', in order to 'connect thought with the phenomena of the universe', points towards a similar materialistic monism.) For Kant, things-in-themselves are beyond our cognitive reach. For Naden, some aspects of the external reality we label 'matter' are *within* our cognitive reach: its role in evolution and thought, its oneness. I maintain that Naden's distinction between the phenomenal known world, and the unknown external 'material' world, allows her to avoid the three objections levelled above at hylo-idealism. Yet her substantial materialism could leave her open to another objection, previously levelled at Spencer: the 'absurdity' of insisting that absolute reality is 'unknowable', 'whilst at the same time telling us all about it'[33].

Importantly, in using Huxleyian evolution to argue for materialism, Naden is using Huxley's work to advance theses that Huxley himself would not accept (at least, not publicly). As Blitz (1992, 19-20) explains, another divisive issue between nineteenth century evolutionists concerns materialism about the mind. Although it might seem a small step from naturalism about evolution to materialism about human minds, few evolutionists made it, for fear of being painted atheists. We have seen that how Huxley sidesteps materialism by claiming we cannot *know* the mind is material. Similarly, Huxley (1881, 240-1) writes he cannot be ranked amongst atheists, 'for the problem of the ultimate cause of existence is… hopelessly out of reach of my poor powers'. In contrast, Naden does *not* use metaphysical agnosticism to deflect materialism or atheism. She explicitly defends materialism and - like Lewins - was an 'outspoken' atheist; this aspect of her thought is well-

[33] On this critique, see Mander (2020, 68).

studied[34]. I'll give just a few examples from her corpus. Naden's *Notebook* (1878-79, #138) describes 'insurmountable objections' to Christianity. Naden (1881b, 191-2) states that the hylozoic materialist rejects 'the supernatural element from their *rationale* of existence'. In *What is Religion? A Vindication of Neo-Materialism*, Naden (1883a, 131) argues for atheist materialism, praising the 'practical apostles of Freethought' who free moral truth from 'the dogmas of a decaying theology'. Naden perhaps saw herself as following Huxleyian evolutionism to its natural, materialist, atheist conclusion.

5 Piecing Naden's Metaphysics Together

My reconstruction of Naden's metaphysical system is as follows. From her 1878-9 *Notebook*, Naden held a qualified materialism, on which the active nature of matter allows us to reject anything non-material; and an idealism, on which the known world is ideal. In my view, Naden takes two elements of her position from Lewins: matter is active, and the known world is mind-dependent. In its other particulars, Naden's metaphysics diverges from that of Lewins. Against Lewins' phenomenalism, Naden's *Notebook* already hints at Kantian idealism and unknowability theory: 'unknown' matter 'comes into contact' with mind, enabling minds to actively produce our world of sensation.

Evolutionism is not prominent in Naden's *Notebook*, but it becomes so in her later writing. From at least her (1881a) essay, Naden defends Huxleyian evolution, including his unique kind of abiogenesis. In (1881a) she uses Huxleyian evolution to argue for materialism; from (1882a) to argue for agnosticism, asserting the existence of mind-independent unknown matter. On this reading, evolution is central to her metaphysical outlook, and it helps us understand why Naden turned away from Lewins' phenomenalist empiricism. Like Spencer and Huxley, evolutionism flows through the veins of Naden's thought. Where Naden stands apart from her fellow agnostics is that she does not use this metaphysic to hedge her materialism, nor leave open a religion of the unknowable. Naden *is* an independent thinker, her world-scheme all her own.

Naden held this system across her career. Here is a passage from one of her last pieces of writing, an Aristotelian Society paper outline:

> the universe, as known to us, exists only in our sense-perception, synthesised by the intellect… [And] The intellect asserts the persistency of the universe, as a system not made by any individual human mind, nor by the mind of collective Humanity - a system which… will continue after the

[34] For example, see LaPorte (2006), Stainthorp (2019, 153-168), and Huber (2022).

> death of Humanity, and existed before its birth. The universe, then, does not depend on my physical and intellectual perception of it… There must therefore be a persistent element in the universe… capable of existing apart from and independently of consciousness and knowledge. (Naden, 1899-90, 81)

Naden's choice of the term 'persistent element' is reminiscent of Kant[35]. Her metaphysics are complex, subtle, and reward study, helping us better understand Naden's work and the school of Victorian agnosticism.

Thus far, this paper has contextualised Naden's thought within its adjacent metaphysics. I'll conclude by placing it in a broader context. Scholars have argued for a long tradition of women philosophers blurring the distinction between body and spirit, encompassing seventeenth century thinkers such as Anne Conway and Margaret Cavendish. For example, Broad (2002) argues that Conway and Cavendish both 'collapse' the distinction between mind and body, and in doing so 'anticipate' recent feminist critiques of dualism. Naden's thesis that all matter has energy and activity, and some matter is alive and thinking, suggests she may belong this tradition. For example, Naden (1881b, 191) explicitly notes that as 'physical structure is capable of thought and sensation, it possesses the attributes usually assigned to "spirit" and thus complementary qualities… [of matter and spirit] are united in one'. Similarly, Naden (1883a, 125-6) writes that, as her definition of matter substitutes energy for extension, 'we shall no longer be able to distinguish between matter and spirit'. Naden's work also has affinity with Mary Shepherd's early nineteenth century thesis that the causes of our perceptions are unknown[36], with Harriet Martineau's mid-nineteenth century materialism[37], and especially with Frances Emily White's 1880s evolution-powered materialism[38]. Naden's anti-dualist metaphysics constitutes a fresh, fierce voice within these longer traditions[39].

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[35] In his 'proof' of the 'existence of objects in space outside me', Kant (repr. 1998, B276) refers to 'something persistent in perception'.
[36] See Bolton (2021, §5.2). Shepherd's pertinent texts were authored before Hamilton advanced his philosophy of the unknowable, so she seems to be writing independently of that specific movement.
[37] See Hoecker-Drysdale (1995).
[38] In an 1881 lecture, poorly-known American physiologist-philosopher White (1882, 366-7) argues that as *all* animals derive from protoplasmic cells, 'man… is *protoplasm, protoplasm, only protoplasm*'. Naden would probably applaud. On White, see Pearce (2020, 129-130).
[39] Acknowledgments.

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