

**Sylwia Wilczewska: Beyond the Empirical: The Role of Aesthetic Experience in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Agnosticism**  
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Within the philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century agnostics, whose epistemological views were inspired by scientific evidentialism and Herbert Spencer's concept of "the Unknowable," aesthetic experience has often filled the space made empty by the realization of the lack or impossibility of knowledge about the supernatural. While Spencer associated it with an urge or impulse without any immediate practical significance, such authors as Leslie Stephen or John Tyndall saw it as an inspiration to action in the absence of evidence sufficient for justifying a decision, agreeing with Spencer that its content points out beyond empirical reality. The aim of my presentation is to outline the role of aesthetic experience in Victorian agnosticism and its possible significance for contemporary philosophy – especially religious fictionalism.