

**EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH
MORAL PHILOSOPHERS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF VIRTUE**

Emma Veitch

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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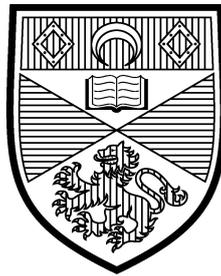
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Early eighteenth-century British moral philosophers
and the possibility of virtue.

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University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
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Abstract

The general aim of this thesis is to further undermine the convention that British moral philosophy of the early eighteenth century is best conceived as a struggle between rationalist and sentimentalist epistemologies. I argue that the philosophers considered here (Samuel Clarke, Francis Hutcheson, Gilbert Burnet, John Balguy and John Gay) situated their moral epistemologies within the wider framework of an attempt to prove the 'reality' of virtue in terms of virtue being an achievable, practical endeavour. To this end, they were as much concerned with the attributes that motivated or caused God to create in the way that he did – his communicable attributes - as they were with our own natural moral abilities. I maintain that this concern led Clarke, Burnet and Balguy to look beyond a rationalist epistemology in an attempt to account for the practical possibility of moral action. I claim that it led Hutcheson to develop a moral theory that reflected a realist theistic metaphysics that went some way beyond an appeal to providential naturalism. I argue that it led Gay to try to synthesise the approaches of rival moral schemes in order to offer a unified account of agency and obligation. The thesis has three key objectives: 1) to examine the relationship of rationalism to obligation and motivation in the work of Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, and 2) to explore the relative roles of sense and judgment in the moral epistemologies of Hutcheson, Burnet, Balguy and Gay and to (re) examine the nature of Hutcheson's moral realism, and 3) to investigate the theistic metaphysical claims made by all parties with respect to their arguments about moral realism.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: 'An inquiry into the understanding pleasant and useful'.¹

In this introductory chapter I discuss how the subject matter of the thesis arose, set out its aims, and explain how the fulfilment of those aims makes a contribution to scholarship. I will then provide some background detail of the approaches to epistemology taken by seventeenth-century thinkers, whose work set the parameters for the debate that followed in the early eighteenth century. I will close with a brief summary of the content of each chapter.

The beginning of the thesis

There is an historiographical method that champions the incongruous fact as the starting point for historical research. Anomalous details are prized as signs of deeper, obscure layers of cultural meaning. They function like the tips of hermeneutic icebergs. This 'method of clues' insists that a certain level of coherence or rationality underwrites human behaviour. The disclosure of another, less visible context, is required in order to resolve apparently irrational or counter-intuitive thought or behaviour.²

The interpretation of historical philosophical texts might, I suppose, also begin by investigating the apparently anomalous or contradictory parts. Irrespective of any ongoing assessment of truth-value, or the potential of certain themes to contribute to current preoccupations, that which seems to be discordant can prompt the re-framing of a text. This involves the assumption that any apparent contradictions should be viewed as having been non-apparent to the author. Not

¹ John Locke, "The Contents," in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* ed. P. H. Nidditch

² For summaries of the Italian micro-historical approach see, for example, Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Post Modern Challenge* (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1997). Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001). They borrow(ed) heavily from Clifford Geertz's cross-cultural hermeneutics. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

because the author was unaware of any defect in their argument, but because, at the time of writing, the charge of inconsistency would have been rejected in the first place. Within intellectual history, at least in the very first instance, this approach puts to one side appeals to individual or group psychology, adopted personas or political performativity as explanatory accounts of inconsistency.

I offer this as a small justification for the fact that the starting points for this research were a couple of unrelated features of the argument of Samuel Clarke, and the debate about Francis Hutcheson's moral sense theory that I didn't understand. First, I understood Clarke to have been a rationalist and a leading representative of Selby-Bigge's 'intellectual school'.³ On Clarke's account, the secondary literature said, we were supposed to be able to do the right thing, just because we knew it was the right thing to do (without referring to Scripture) and that, therefore, we ought really to do it. Why then, I wondered, in the second of his Boyle lectures, did Clarke appear to be quite so obsessed with the need for us to understand the reality of the rewards and punishments that awaited us in the afterlife?⁴ It was not that this part of Clarke's work had gone unnoticed. Clarke's adverting to the practical force of a belief in divine justice had been pointed out but this seemed to have been tidied away into the claim that it was simply a motivational aid for the degenerate, or the cognitively compromised.⁵ I kept returning to Clarke's second Boyle lecture. Clarke, I thought, did not appear to have suggested that a belief in the pains and pleasures of a future life functioned merely as a support for those of us who were especially given to vice. On the contrary, it seemed to me as if Clarke had insisted that none of our (post-lapsarian) moral lives could get off the ground, in practical terms, without our holding these beliefs. In which case, Clarke's rationalism, at least in so far as I had understood it, might be open to qualification.

³ Lewis A. Selby-Bigge, *British Moralists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897).

⁴ Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse on the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, 8th ed. (London: Knapton, 1732). Henceforth *Natural Religion*.

⁵ The specifics are discussed in chapter 2, but I refer to Jerome B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 310-327, and Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study. Volume II: From Suarez to Rousseau* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 372 -306. See D.O. Thomas "Reason and Revelation in Samuel Clarke's epistemology of Morals," *Enlightenment and Dissent* 16 (1997): 114-135, for a more nuanced discussion of this aspect of Clarke's work.

When I eventually moved on to Clarke's defenders, Gilbert Burnet and John Balguy, I found that it was Burnet who, in the particular context of an exchange of letters with Hutcheson, tried to explain how a rational appreciation of the morality of an action *ought* to be able to motivate us to actually perform that action (although he also allowed that plenty of other natural motivational factors most often *did* move us to virtue).⁶ Balguy, on the other hand, appeared to be even closer to Clarke, as I understood him. Balguy had insisted that we were under two sorts of obligation – one moral and the other religious. It was the thought of our religious obligation and not our moral obligation alone, Balguy claimed, that actually motivated our moral behaviour. For Clarke and Balguy then, prudential considerations of one sort or another appeared to be key to explaining the actual occurrence of moral action. To be sure, they argued that our knowledge of what was virtuous and what was not, *ought* to have been able to motivate us. Yet Clarke and Balguy seemed to me to have claimed that in practice, at least as things had stood since the Fall, this knowledge alone was insufficient. At the very least, they seemed to have insisted that it could not lead us to the sort of regular virtue that would be acceptable to God.

My other niggling query concerned the apparent proliferation of operational definitions of a moral 'sense' from theorists who very obviously supported rival moral schemes. In his four treatises, Hutcheson had looked to our experience of moral thought to account for moral epistemology.⁷ The immediate, affective, involuntary nature of our moral reactions suggested to him that an 'inward'

⁶ I have used the Peach edition of the correspondence between Hutcheson and Burnet. "The Correspondence between Gilbert Burnet and Francis Hutcheson," in *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. Bernard Peach (Cambridge Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 199-247. Henceforth *Correspondence*. John Balguy, *The Second Part of The Foundation of Moral Goodness; Illustrating and Enforcing the Principles and Reasonings Contained in the Former. Being an Answer to Certain Remarks Communicated by a Gentleman to the Author*, (1729), 14-15. Henceforth *Second Part*.

⁷ These four treatises were his first two inquiries into beauty and virtue, first published together in 1725, and revised in 1726, 1729 and 1738, as *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), and his later two texts, first published together in 1728, and revised in 1730, and 1742, as *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. Aaron Garrett (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002). Henceforth, variously, *four treatises*, *Inquiries*, *Inquiry*, *Essay/Illustrations* or *Essay and Illustrations*.

sense, rather than reason, supplies our original ideas of virtue. This moral sense responds selectively to the appearance of benevolent intention. It appeared that in the immediate aftermath of Hutcheson's early publications there had been something of a rush to admit the existence of this moral sense and to explain its operation. What was surprising (to me at least) was that Clarke's defenders, Gilbert Burnet and Balguy, had agreed that we have a moral sense, but that they thought that this moral and 'internal' sense was reason itself. The theological utilitarian John Gay argued (again, against Hutcheson) that our proper motive for benevolence was the thought of the consequence of that action to our self.⁸ Yet Gay had also agreed that we had a moral sense of the right and wrong in actions. Its operation, Gay claimed, was not explained by a special sense, or by reason, but by the association of ideas. Not only had Hutcheson warned his readers about the pernicious effects of the process of association upon moral thought, but Locke, who Gay took himself to be following, had stated this criticism first and in even stronger terms. Locke's criticism surrounded the tendency of ideas, which had an inherent connectivity, to become habitually linked or associated with one another, to form judgment-like entities without the proper supervision of reason.⁹ The moral sense then, could refer either to a distinctive internal sense on the model of our external senses, or to reason, or to the unsupervised formation of connections or associations between ideas.

Hutcheson's own account of moral sense, moreover, on show in his text on metaphysics (initially composed at the same time as his *four treatises*, but not published until later), claimed that the moral sense, or sense of 'the fitting and the good' played a judicial role. He claimed that it

passes judgment as from the bench on all the things men do, on all our pleasures of body or mind, on our opinions, sentiments, actions, prayers, intentions, and feelings, determining in each case what is fine, fitting and good, and what is the measure in each.¹⁰

⁸ John Gay, "Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principles of Virtue or Morality," in William King, *An Essay on the Origins of Evil*, trans. Edmund Law (London: Thurlbourn, 1731). Henceforth *Dissertation*.

⁹ Locke, *ECHU*, 2:33:5, 395.

¹⁰ Francis Hutcheson, *Logic, Metaphysics, and the Natural Sociability of Mankind*, ed. James Moore and Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund press, 2006), 119. Henceforth *Logic, Metaphysics*, and the *inaugural lecture* as individual texts, and *LMNSM* for the publication.

Hutcheson seemed to suggest that our ideas from moral sense were not just inherently evaluative because of their affective quality (i.e. that we somehow 'liked' benevolence), although this claim was controversial enough. Hutcheson claimed here that the moral sense issued a judgment ('as from the bench') upon the moral value of an action, and upon how good it was ('the measure in each').

All of the authors discussed here were signed up to the post-Lockean agreement as to the illegitimacy of an appeal to innate guidance in moral thought. It appeared then, that in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, an idea from sense could be inherently evaluative and pass judgment in a verdictive way. Reason could be described as an 'internal' moral sense, and ideas could be associated with one another (without the inferential oversight of judgment) and, potentially, provide us with an accurate view of the moral value of an action. During this attempt to account for the *experience* of moral thought, the terms 'sense', 'judgment' and 'reason' appeared to have slipped their referential moorings in moral epistemology (at least in so far as I had understood those terms to have been used in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century). What is more, their explanations of the operation of this sense all appealed to Locke in one way or another.

At this point I had two questions in mind – first, how had Clarke, Burnet and Balguy accounted for moral motivation, and second, how could a sense operate like a sense yet be a judgment, or reason be a sense, or a sense be an associative process which delivered information, at least of potential value, in moral thought? The introspective method that theories of mind such as Locke's were built upon provided a connection between the two.

The foundation of Locke's way of ideas was the premise that introspection could deliver truth about the operation of mind (if not about its substance). This was the essence of his 'historical, plain method'.¹¹ Introspection was used by Hutcheson, Burnet and Balguy, and to a certain extent Gay, in order to account for the immediate, intuitive, affective experience of our moral evaluations and to

¹¹ See Locke *ECHU*, 1:1:2, 44.

proffer candidate mental processes. This approach reflected the psychological or epistemological approach that logics of ideas, such as Locke's, brought to bear upon accounts of knowledge acquisition.¹² Within epistemological logics, method demanded that we introspect and observe the experience of thought (the flow of ideas through the mind and the operations that we performed upon them) in order to explain how we arrived at truth (or probable belief).

The theistic metaphysics that Clarke, Burnet and Balguy and Hutcheson offered as guarantee for their moral philosophies also relied, to some extent, upon our introspective experience into our moral attributes. They, and Gay, all took the latitudinarian position (against orthodox Calvinism) that those remnants of our moral and intellectual abilities that had survived the Fall were sufficient for us to lead lives that were acceptable to God. They all assumed that God had made virtue possible for us without a personal, supernatural infusion of grace. For Clarke, Burnet, Balguy, and Hutcheson and Gay the reality of virtue was secured by an appeal to God's moral attributes. All accepted that God had created the world as he did as a result of his moral perfection, or his goodness. Furthermore, they were in agreement that the only way for us, eventually, to be truly happy was to at least aim for virtue. In addition, for Clarke and his defenders and Hutcheson, despite the unbridgeable gap between God's moral perfection and our own state, the true foundation of morality was to be found in that faint echo within each of us of whatever it was that was morally perfect in God. We needed to look at our own capacities and decide which of them resembled, in however meagre a way, the attributes of God, and which were the parts of our nature that ought to be governed by those attributes. These attributes were God's communicable virtues. God's communicable attributes were those attributes of God that we were capable of understanding because we had been created with an analogous form of them.¹³

¹² For the identification of cognitive psychology with descriptive epistemology, see Alvin I. Goldman, "The Relation between Epistemology and Psychology," *Synthese* 64, no.1 (1985): 29-68.

¹³ These are contrasted with God's incommunicable attributes. The distinction is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Beyond this they offered quite different accounts of the principles behind God's creative activity. Clarke, Burnet and Balguy maintained that God's moral perfection lay in the 'rectitude' of his will. This meant that God always acted in the way that his reason dictated. Furthermore, God could not alter what was good and what was evil in the act of creation. As Balguy put it, God

was under a necessity of suiting it [the creation] to his own perfect ideas and the exact model of his own mind.¹⁴

Hutcheson maintained that God's benevolent nature was his moral perfection and that, as such, God's actions derived from the necessity of his own nature (which was no abridgment of his freedom).¹⁵ Hutcheson and Clarke also agreed that God, being perfectly happy in his own moral perfection, wanted to communicate the nature of this moral perfection to us, in order to make us happy. This act of communication also made God happy. Yet this desire for happiness, for Clarke and Hutcheson, was not, in itself, God's moral motivation.

Gay, I will suggest, did not make use of the notion that God's moral perfection is replicated in an analogous form in our own nature. Gay claimed that it was 'evident from the nature of God' that God was infinitely happy and furthermore it was evident (from his goodness in creating the world) that his aim was to make everyone else happy. We ought to aim at the happiness of all, Gay argued, because it was clearly God's will that all should be happy. It was God's command that had been communicated to us here, and not an analogous form of his nature per se.¹⁶

The point here, for the moment, was that Clarke, Burnet, Balguy and Hutcheson, all assumed that we could discover the nature of moral goodness, partly through introspection, because God's perfections were realised, or realisable, in some small imperfect way in our own nature.¹⁷ To be clear, none of these authors

¹⁴ John Balguy, *Divine Rectitude: or, a Brief Inquiry Concerning the Moral Perfections of the Deity, Particularly in Respect of Creation and Providence*, (1733), 5. Henceforth *Divine Rectitude*.

¹⁵ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 173 -174.

¹⁶ Gay, *Dissertation*, xix.

¹⁷ Balguy objected to the argument from analogy with our own nature to that of God only where it led us to develop the wrong ideas of God's virtue from our own imperfect nature. *Divine Rectitude*, 5.

argued that we could discover all moral knowledge by introspection alone – observation of the world around us, and/or reflection upon the causes of the existence and nature of that world were also important. They suggested that we ought to use introspection into the ways in which we think about morality with respect to our own nature in order that we discover, to the extent that we are able to discover such things, what exactly it is that God thinks constitutes moral goodness, and then govern our behaviour accordingly.

So, for example, Hutcheson's great suggestion was that, in the first instance, rather than spend our time attempting to deduce the laws of nature we should pay attention to our experience of our more immediate moral reactions and to what we instinctively approve in our motivational impulses. In reply, Burnet and Balguy appealed to introspection to claim that it was our *experience* of self-evident thought and reasoned demonstration that led us to understand that our conduct ought to conform to the deliverances of reason. Gay too encouraged reflection upon what we deemed virtuous. It was Gay, however, who argued that there were limits to what we could discover about the fundamental principles behind our moral thought and behaviour by appealing to our conscious awareness of our own motives and moral responses. Gay suggested that we needed to go beyond this in order to uncover the fundamental principles of virtue, or morality.

In the next section I will argue that the search for an answer to both of my initial questions conforms to the aims of a broader movement in the secondary literature. This movement insists that the division of the philosophy of the early modern period into that of continental rationalists and British empiricists, or within the British sphere into intellectualist or sentimental moralists, is in need of qualification. I will provide a more formal introduction to the themes discussed here, state the aims of the thesis, and explain the contribution that I think the thesis makes to scholarship.

The thesis and its aims

Critiques of the argument that there were ‘fundamental differences of method and purpose’ between the continental rationalists (usually meaning Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Arnauld and Malebranche) and British empiricists (traditionally Locke, Berkeley and Hume) have long been a feature of the secondary literature.¹⁸ The tension between rationalist and empiricist elements in Locke’s approach (the nature of his ideas of reflection, the claims about the demonstrability of moral knowledge and his account of the foundation of morality) has been a recognised feature of his work since the publication of the *ECHU*.¹⁹

Amendments to the reading of later seventeenth and eighteenth-century British moral philosophy as the binary opposition of intellectualist to sentimentalist epistemologies, as presented by Selby-Bigge, have been also gathering pace.²⁰ The role of reason in Shaftesbury’s approach has been well attended to by Grean, Gill, and Darwall.²¹ Gill, Hutton and Darwall have all emphasised the significance of the role that sensory elements played in Cudworth’s epistemology.²² Yet the opposition to a rationalist/empiricist division and Selby-Bigge’s binary classification has taken another form. This is to downplay the significance of

¹⁸ John Cottingham, *The Rationalists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 2. See also Louis E. Loeb, *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 25-35.

¹⁹ The literature is vast clearly, but for example see David Hartley, *Observations on Man* (Bath and London: Samuel Richardson, 1749) on Locke’s ideas of reflection as compromising his empiricism. See John Coleman, *John Locke’s Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), on the coherence of Locke’s moral thought. See Francis Oakley, “Locke, Natural Law and God – Again,” *History of Political Thought* 18, no. 4 (1997): 624-651, on the tension in Locke’s account of natural law. For one recent intellectualist interpretation see Andrew Israelson, “God, Mixed Modes and Natural Law: An Intellectualist Interpretation of God’s Moral Philosophy,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21, no. 6 (2013): 1111-1132.

²⁰ Cuneo also objects to the rationalist/sentimentalist division in the work of MacIntyre and Rawls. Terence Cuneo, “Reason and the Passions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James A. Harris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 226.

²¹ Stanley Grean, *Shaftesbury’s Philosophy of Religion and Ethics: A Study in Enthusiasm* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1967). Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 77-132. Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal ‘Ought’, 1640-1740*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1995), 176-206.

²² Michael B. Gill, “From Cambridge Platonism to Scottish Sentimentalism,” *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 8 (2010): 13-31. Darwall, *Internal Ought*, 109-148. Sarah Hutton, “From Cudworth to Hume: Cambridge Platonism and the Scottish Enlightenment,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 6 (2012): 8-26.

epistemology as the leading principle by which philosophies might be classified.²³

Knud Haakonssen has offered a sustained and programmatic critique of the emphasis placed on epistemology, or epistemology narrowly conceived, in histories of philosophies of the early modern period. Haakonssen objects to the Kantian/Reidian vision of post-Cartesian epistemology as paradigmatically concerned with knowledge, where knowledge is stripped back to its propositional character and regarded solely for its truth-value.²⁴ Haakonssen claims that this misrepresents the wider philosophical concerns of a number of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century theorists.²⁵ According to Haakonssen the main effect of the Lockean ground clearance project was to reveal an impressionable *subject*, together with its various environmental conditioning factors, as the primary object of philosophical enquiry:²⁶

The central part of the Lockean revolution was to ask “What does knowledge do to the knower?” or “What are the conditions under which a knowing subject holds knowledge?” That is to say, *the primary object of attention was the subject as such, and knowledge was only one of the conditioning factors of the subject.*²⁷ [My emphasis.]

One corollary of Haakonssen’s position is that the aims of the philosophers under discussion may be misunderstood if it is assumed that they were solely concerned to provide their readership with compelling reasons to always be virtuous. Rather, it is argued that the relationship between thought and action in the moral sphere was considered to be a multi-factorial affair. Moral theorists

²³ I am going to discuss recent approaches, but of course Whewell offered a different classification to Selby-Bigge. William Whewell, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy in England* (London: Parker, 1852).

²⁴ Knud Haakonssen, “Protestant Natural Law Theory: A General Interpretation,” in *New Essays on the History of Autonomy: A Collection Honoring J. B. Schneewind*, ed., Natalie Brender, and Larry Krasnoff, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 97.

²⁵ See Knud Haakonssen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3-25. For commentators who share Haakonssen’s concerns see, for example, Timothy J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Aaron Garrett, “Seventeenth Century Moral Philosophy: Self-Help, Self-Knowledge, and the Devil’s Mountain,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 229-279 and James A. Harris, “Religion in Hutcheson’s Moral Philosophy,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46, no. 2 (2008): 205-222.

²⁶ Haakonssen, “Protestant Natural Law Theory,” 97.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

were concerned to do more that provide an account of the actions that were required of us, and an explanation of why we ought to fulfil those requirements. They aimed, more broadly, to explain how we could achieve virtue. The following passages from Bacon, More and Locke provide an indication of this:

The main and primitive division of moral knowledge seemeth to be into the Exemplar or Platform of Good, and the Regimen of Culture of the Mind; the one describing the nature of good, the other prescribing rules how to subdue, apply, and accommodate the will of man thereunto. (Francis Bacon).²⁸

Ethics are divided into two parts, the knowledge of happiness, and the acquisition of it. (Henry More.)²⁹

There be two parts of ethics, the one is the rule which men are generally in the right in, though perhaps they have not deduced them as they should from their true principles. The other is the true motives to practice them and the ways to bring men to observe them, and these are generally either not well known or not rightly applied. (John Locke.)³⁰

Clarke, Burnet and Balguy were left out of Darwall's British history of the 'internal ought'. Darwall relegated them to the sideline on the grounds that their position was a reiteration of a Platonic position, and, as such, was not the sort of internalism that he [Darwall] was interested in. This position held that the motivation for virtue followed as a 'necessary consequence' of a knowing encounter with the good, but was not part of that knowing encounter.³¹ Hutcheson was also put to one side, in a sense, in Darwall's overall scheme (although he presents a very detailed, careful and revealing account of Hutcheson's position on obligation). This was because Hutcheson, like Clarke and his defenders, did not find moral obligation to consist in a rational motive to act. For Clarke, I argue, motivation was indeed independent of obligation, but not perhaps in the way in which Darwall understands it to have been. Clarke here, I believe, may be seen to have taken Locke's view of the 'two parts of ethics'. For Clarke, the 'true motives' to act according to one's moral obligation, did not arise

²⁸ Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, 14 vols, ed. James Spedding, Robert L. Ellis and Douglas D. Heath (London: Longman and Co., 1857-74), iii, 419.

²⁹ Henry Moore, *Enchiridion Ethicum, The English Translation of 1690*, trans. Edward Southwell (New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930), 3.

³⁰ John Locke, "Ethica B," in *Locke: Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 319.

³¹ Darwall, *Internal Ought*, 10.

as a ‘necessary consequence’ of the recognition of an obligation (or at least they had not done so since the Fall). Darwall is correct in seeing that Clarke, Balguy and Hutcheson (at times) did not privilege the sort of normativity that makes motive and moral obligation coincide. For Darwall this makes them anomalous.

Darwall did not consider John Gay in his history. Gay’s particular version of voluntarism did have motivation contained within obligation (although its ultimate source is clearly extrinsic). For Gay, obligation is a state in which the obliged person finds herself when she finds an action to be necessary to her own happiness, so that it is not *directly* a matter of command, or self-command (but is ultimately a matter of divine command).³² This thesis finishes with Gay for a number of reasons, but as Garrett has recently pointed out, Gay viewed the separation of moral knowledge, obligation and motivation as problematic, and his aim was to address this.³³

The relation of judgment, motivation, obligation and action in the work of all the philosophers under consideration here was fundamentally secured by providence and a theistic metaphysics. The guiding concern of all the philosophers considered here was, I suggest, as follows: they sought to explain the ways in which God had created us so as to allow for the possibility of our being good. Clarke, Hutcheson, Gilbert Burnet, John Balguy and John Gay all asked how was it possible for us to be virtuous? They aimed, to this end, to show how the natural principles supplied by providence operated to produce our moral experience, and to show how an understanding of those principles might be used to best practical effect. As I said, they shared the assumption that our natural condition is not one of Calvinist post-lapsarian degeneracy.

Nevertheless, they all understood that our moral vulnerabilities, both cognitive and motivational, needed to be addressed within a moral scheme. In addition, they all, bar Gay, pointed to an understanding of revealed religion as a resource

³² Irwin, *Development*, Vol. II, 826. Irwin mentions Gay very infrequently, but he does draw succinct attention to the difference between Gay’s voluntarism and the voluntarism of those who made the immediate perception of an obligation a matter of the perception of the need to fulfill the command from an authority.

³³ Aaron Garrett, “A Lockean Revolution in Morals,” paper presented to the John Locke Conference, Department of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, April 11th 2015.

that was intended to help supply this want of natural moral ability.³⁴ To be sure, the question of what constitutes our moral obligation was one that they all addressed, but this was done in the service of a wider explanation of how virtue is made possible for us.

There are then three lines of enquiry taken up by this thesis. They are broadly governed by the concern to further undermine the convention that British moral philosophy of this period is best conceived as a struggle between rationalist and sentimentalist epistemologies. I do not deny that there were differences between the epistemologies proposed by Hutcheson, Burnet and Balguy and Gay, and I spend time looking at those differences. However, I suggest that each of the philosophers considered here situated their epistemology within a wider concern to account for the possibility of virtue being a real practical endeavour, the reality of which was secured by an appeal to theistic metaphysics. This concern led Clarke, Burnet and Balguy to look beyond a rationalist epistemology in an attempt to account for the practical possibility of virtue. I suggest that it led Hutcheson to develop a moral epistemology that reflected a realist theistic metaphysics, or at least one that went some way beyond an appeal to providentially implanted moral abilities. It led Burnet and Balguy to consider the experiential qualities of reason, and to appeal to the sensory and affective elements of reason itself. It led Gay to attempt to synthesise the approaches of Clarke and Hutcheson, with his own voluntarist position. Gay's scheme relied upon their agreement that God aimed at the happiness of all, and that this ought to be our aim too. His multifactorial model of moral thought and action used elements of Clarke and Hutcheson's epistemology to explain different aspects of our introspectively available moral experience. Gay's aim, however, was to demonstrate that the various features of our moral experience were all best accounted for by a more fundamental, explanatory principle. This was 'reason pointing out private happiness'.³⁵

³⁴ Although the will of God is the ultimate source of our obligation and motivation for action, Gay does not refer directly to Scripture in his short *Dissertation*.

³⁵ Gay, *Dissertation*, xiv.

The thesis is narrowly focused on a debate about the original, foundational and fundamental principles of virtue that occurred between 1725 (the publication date of Hutcheson's *Inquiries*) and 1732 (the publication of Gay's *Dissertation*). The focus is justified, I believe, because a closer reading of this small exchange of views brings to light the ways in which the various protagonists sought to account for the experience of moral thought. The truth-aptness of any moral judgments, or evaluations, was assumed by all to be underwritten by divine guarantee. The disagreements were about the internal mechanics of facultative logic, which put to one side considerations about the proper form of inferential relations in favour of an explanation of the ways in which our moral thought and behaviour reflected the impoverished, but analogous, operation of the divine 'virtues concerned with the understanding'.³⁶ In addition, I argue that the governance of those principles or attributes of human nature which were not found in the divine case, were of equal importance in the accounts of the ways in which God had made it possible for us to be virtuous. These arguments need to be given equal weight in interpretations of the work of Clarke and his followers. Both these aspects of the debate are neglected in current accounts of the moral philosophy of the period.

The thesis therefore aims to (1) examine the relationship of rationalism to obligation and motivation in the work of Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, and (2) to explore the relative roles of sense and judgment in Hutcheson, Burnet, Balguy and Gay. My secondary aim (2b) is to examine the somewhat vexed question of Hutcheson's realism. I take this matter up because I believe that by looking carefully at the relative place of sense and judgment in Hutcheson, something new might be offered to the debate. To this end, I also trace the influence of Locke's logic of ideas upon the accounts of moral cognition offered by Hutcheson, Burnet, Balguy and Gay. I will also (3) investigate the theistic metaphysical claims made by all parties with respect to the arguments about moral realism, and Hutcheson's realism in particular.

³⁶ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 168.

These three themes are covered to a greater or lesser degree in each of the chapters. The first chapter on Clarke (Chapter 2) speaks largely to the first aim (Clarke's thoughts on theistic metaphysics are covered in chapter 3). The two chapters on Hutcheson (Chapters 3 and 4) speak to the second and third aims. The chapters on Burnet and Balguy (Chapter 5) and Gay (Chapter 6) encompass all three.

The first aim

As to the first of line of enquiry, Michael Gill has argued that rationalism or, 'the claim that morality originates in reason alone', actually contains three separate claims. These are: the metaphysical claim that morality consists in reason (the values present in the universe), the epistemological claim that moral knowledge is acquired solely through reason, and the practical claim that reason alone can move us to moral action. Gill believes that Clarke and Balguy (along with Cudworth) made all three claims and rarely distinguished between them.³⁷ I believe, however, that if the practical claim is to be attributed to Clarke and Balguy then this claim ought to be unpacked a little further.

I will argue that Clarke and Balguy very deliberately did not make the claim that the rational perception of the fitness of an action *alone* is sufficient to move us to moral action, although they did make the claim that it ought to be. (Clarke's views on the motivational impotence of *all* perceptions and the immediate natural causes of all actions are not the main focus of the argument here.) I argue that for Clarke and Balguy, rectitude of will is God's moral perfection alone - divine goodness leads God to always conform all of his actions to the knowledge of what is right, or fit. God however, created us rational *and* sensible, and, at least since the Fall, we have been required to discover (or to be taught) other motivating truths that appeal to the sensible parts of our nature, in order to perform moral actions. These are truths about the certainty of our continued

³⁷ Michael B. Gill, *British Moralists*, 273. See also Michael Gill, "Moral Rationalism vs. Moral Sentimentalism: Is Morality More Like Math or Beauty?" *Philosophy Compass* 2/1 (2007): 26. See also Frederick C. Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason: The Defense of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 267, who outlines similar tripartite ambitions.

existence in a future state, where, as recipients of divine justice, we can expect reward or punishment.

This argument offers a partial corrective to certain views of the relationship between rationalism and motivation in Clarke that are currently on offer in the secondary literature, which appear to deny or to downplay the role of reward and punishment in moral motivation. In addition, there has been very little discussion of Balguy in the secondary literature, especially with respect to this issue.

The second aim

As to the second aim, I will argue that there is a shared reliance, in all authors, on the scaffold of Locke's approach to theory of mind. I will argue that the psychologism inimical to logics of ideas such as Locke's, and a focus on the introspected experience of moral evaluation, entailed that the nature of the separation between sense and judgment in the *descriptive* moral epistemologies of rationalism and sentimentalism was complex and is worthy of further exploration. The various accounts of sense, judgment and reason across the work of the authors considered here is examined in the context of epistemological logics. This issue has not been fully discussed in the secondary literature.³⁸

At this stage it is appropriate to ask why the focus here is on Locke, and to this end I offer the following rationale. Samuel Clarke's appeal to the self-evident intuition of the moral value of actions did not sit within an explicitly Lockean theory of mind. The work of the rest of the philosophers selected here all took inspiration from Locke's general *descriptive* account of cognition. Each of them took something from him directly in the detail of their accounts of the cognitive aspects of moral thought. That is, they borrowed small parts of the mental machinery by which Locke's general account of human understanding proceeded. These were: ideas of internal sense (Hutcheson), the perceptual

³⁸ Gill, in "Math or Beauty?" discusses the phenomenology of sentimentalism and rationalism, but not in relation to the logic of ideas.

nature of reason and internal sense (Gilbert Burnet and Balguy), and associationism and the idea of mixed modes or compound ideas (Gay).

Nevertheless, as Norton and Moore have been at pains to point out (with respect to Hutcheson), there were several other 'ways of ideas' than Locke's way.³⁹ Malebranche and the Port-Royal logicians in particular, were influential in terms of theory of mind in the early eighteenth century in Britain (not speak of influential earlier non-ideaists). Each of the figures considered here was influenced by a wide variety of thinkers, both ancient and modern, in any number of ways. Indeed, Locke may have been a figure that they disagreed with fundamentally in many respects. There were certainly other, more direct influences, upon *particular* aspects of the theory of mind that Hutcheson used. Nonetheless, Locke's descriptive account of mind provided the general framework to which Hutcheson and the other groups referred. They borrowed terminology, adapted concepts, argued over, agreed and disagreed with many aspects of Locke's approach, which of course itself reflected a multiplicity of influences. Locke's way of ideas, his general account of the operation of our minds, was the paradigm in which they worked - but this did not entail that Locke's moral philosophy, his metaphysics, or indeed any other aspect of his approach were taken up. As such Hutcheson, Burnet, Balguy, Law and Gay can be seen very frequently, to borrow a phrase from Stephen Buckle, to have used 'Lockean concepts to serve quite un-Lockean ends'.⁴⁰

I also argue that, in particular, problems in Locke's terminology and the treatment of his 'ideas of reflection', or internal sense, allowed for the production of the conflicting accounts of the existence and operation of a moral sense, with which this thesis is concerned. Locke's ideas of reflection were termed ideas from an internal sense.⁴¹ Locke did not clearly distinguish these ideas from consciousness, or, our awareness of the content of our minds. Neither did he

³⁹ David Fate Norton, "Hutcheson's Moral Realism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 397-418. Moore, Introduction, *LMNSM*, xi-xii.

⁴⁰ Stephen Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

⁴¹ Locke, *ECHU*, 2:1:4,105.

distinguish between our intuitive knowledge (our awareness) of the existence and content of our own ideas, and the perception of the certain agreement or disagreement of ideas (also intuitive knowledge), or our intuitive insight into (speculative) self-evident principles. Moreover sometimes, the having of ideas of reflection (i.e. ideas of our mental operations) was confused by some of his readers with our power of reflection (or reason).⁴² I will argue that this confusion caused some of the apparently bewildering use of terminology to account for the nature and operation of a moral sense. I am not concerned here with whether or not Locke's theory was coherent or confused. I just aim to show that the reading of it allowed for a range of understandings as to the nature of an 'internal sense' in the early eighteenth century. There has not been a detailed discussion of Locke's influence in this respect across the work of the range of authors discussed here.

I will also offer a fairly substantial treatment of Hutcheson's claim that his moral sense does not operate by means of native ideas or propositions. This discussion will centre around Locke's (and Hutcheson's) commitment to what has been termed the 'awareness principle', and Locke's discussion in the *ECHU* of implicit and explicit, or declarative principles.⁴³ There has been no discussion in the secondary literature of the way in which Hutcheson may or may not have controverted this principle.⁴⁴

Examination of the impact of Locke on Hutcheson is not unprecedented, of course. The dispute between Norton and Winkler is perhaps the most well

⁴² Udo Thiel, "Hume's Notions of Consciousness and Reflection in Context," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 2 (1994): 75-115, and *The Early Modern Subject: Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity from Descartes to Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 118-119.

⁴³ De Rosa names this aspect of Locke's approach the 'awareness principle' and offers a revealing discussion of its role Locke's rejection of nativism. Raffaella De Rosa, "Locke's Essay, Book I: the Question-Begging Status of the Anti-Nativist Arguments," in *John Locke: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Series II. Volume II, Knowledge: Its Nature and Origins*, ed. Peter Anstey (London: Routledge, 2006), 82-110.

⁴⁴ Daniel Carey provides a good account of Hutcheson's approach to nativism and the issue of diversity in Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 150-119. He touches on the relevance of principles in relation to Locke and Thomas Burnet and Hutcheson, 167, and he also discusses the relationship of sense and judgment in Hutcheson, 165-166. These issues are discussed at some length in Chapter 4.

known. But this debate was focused very tightly on the comparison of Hutcheson's ideas of moral sense in relation to Locke's ideas of primary and secondary qualities.⁴⁵ I believe that the analysis I provide of Hutcheson's treatment of his moral sense, using features of epistemological logics of ideas in general, together with other aspects of Locke's approach, delivers some fresh insight into an old debate about the nature of Hutcheson's realism. In addition I discuss the ontology of Hutcheson's ideas from moral sense, as they are discussed in his texts on *Metaphysics* and *Logic*. I believe that the nature of Hutcheson's realism is far better understood once his texts on *Metaphysics* and *Logic* are read alongside his other works composed in Dublin in the 1720s. As far as I am aware there has been no substantial treatment of the arguments presented in both these texts in relation to this issue, although reference has been made to them.

The third aim

Lastly, I suggest that the theistic metaphysics that secured virtue for Hutcheson and his rationalist interlocutors may not have been as different from each other, as Hutcheson's contemporaries or later commentators have assumed. I will examine Hutcheson's appeal to the communicability of God's attributes and the substance of Hutcheson's response to Clarke on this issue, and the response of Burnet, Balguy and Gay to Hutcheson here. Again, I do not believe this part of Hutcheson's moral theory, or the responses to it have been considered in sufficient detail.

I make no apology, if anyone expects it, for the absence of a discussion about Hume in this thesis. The choice to focus on Hutcheson's work of the 1720s, and the earlier response to it, was made in order that I might avoid any overlap with Hume's entrance into the debate. I wanted to investigate the ways in which the paradigm that had been set by earlier approaches to the philosophy of mind influenced the debate between the philosopher's selected. The degree to which

⁴⁵ David Fate Norton, "Hutcheson's Moral Realism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 397-418. Kenneth P. Winkler, "Hutcheson's Alleged Moral Realism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 23 (1985): 179-94 and "Hutcheson and Hume on the Color of Virtue," *Hume Studies* 1 (1996): 3-22.

Hume subsequently did, or did not, occasion a paradigm shift is not my concern here. I should, however, offer an apology for leaving out Shaftesbury, who was very obviously a figure of interest and/or influence to the authors considered here. Shaftesbury is one of the deists who were the target of Clarke and Balguy's attack upon the ability of natural reason to deliver sufficient moral knowledge. His influence on Hutcheson's method and theory remains a topic of great interest. My only justifications are first, insufficient space, and second, that Shaftesbury's primary concern was not to embed his moral theory in an especially detailed theory of mind, and it was the detail of moral judgment that I wanted to examine here, across the work of all the selected authors.

In the next section some of the relevant background material on the seventeenth century is provided. I will look first at the reasons for the focus upon moral experience at the beginning of the eighteenth century. I will then provide a reasonably detailed account of Locke's general theory of mind and its relation to other logics of ideas.

Background material

Early in the eighteenth century, the Dutch physician Bernard Mandeville vivified a denial of the reality of virtue in his *Grumbling Hive*, later *Fable of the Bees*. Mandeville's disquieting promotion of both psychological and ethical egoism was intended as a particular provocation to supporters of Shaftesbury's view of universal benevolence as a constitutive force in both divine and human nature.⁴⁶ One of the problems for those early eighteenth-century moralists who wished to defend the reality of virtue against the conventionalism of Mandeville or indeed Hobbes, or Locke and Pufendorf, was the depleted store of explanatory resources with which to meet a sceptical challenge.

In Britain, this scarcity of conceptual assets was a distinctly post-Lockean phenomenon. It was brought about by a shaken confidence in the ability of our reasoning abilities to demonstrate, or even follow a demonstration, of the

⁴⁶ See John Colman, "Bernard Mandeville and the Reality of Virtue," *Philosophy* 47 (1972): 125-139.

content of divine legislation or eternal conceptions of the good. Locke had not only failed to make good on the promise of the *ECHU* of a rational deduction of moral law, he had also voiced the firm opinion in the *Reasonableness of Christianity* that the inadequacy of our unassisted reason entailed the necessity of Revelation, and the regular teaching and reading of Scripture. The text was published anonymously in 1695, but if there was doubt as to authorship this was clarified in a codicil to Locke's will.⁴⁷

Moreover, the difficulty with following long and difficult deductions of our moral duties that Locke had pointed to was of critical importance. This was because of the non-negotiable requirement, for Anglican and dissenting moralists alike, that belief or knowledge arise out of one's own reasoning process. It would not suffice, for a Protestant God, that we simply adopt principles rather than taking active responsibility for supplying the contents of individual conscience. Everybody had a moral duty to understand his or her moral duties.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the argument of book three of the *ECHU* had suggested that natural language ought to be viewed with some apprehension. Words were seen as a source of unavoidable error in the social arena because the terms that represented complex ideas were thought to be characterised by an inherent semantic instability. The rules for the formal manipulation of terms laid down by logicians were at least commonly understood, if not always agreed upon, within the community of those educated into its principles. There was no such guarantee offered by Locke, who understood our use of terms, which were supposed to signify our complex moral ideas, to have been occasioned by a voluntary, arguably arbitrary, blend of our own ideas. This threatened successful communication between speaker and listener and writer and reader. So for example, the successful translation of moral terms across languages looked doubtful. Indeed Locke's concern, and he was far from alone in this, was that any

⁴⁷ John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures*, in *John Locke Writings on Religion*, ed. Victor Nuovo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 85-211. Henceforth *Reasonableness*.

⁴⁸ For example, see Brian Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 25, on Locke and the need for 'an inward persuasion of the mind' to save in matters of religion.

form of public discourse about moral, theological or political matters could serve only to create mutual misunderstanding and might even foster civil unrest, unless it could be stringently managed via the establishment of an agreed understanding of the relevant mix of ideas behind the words in use.⁴⁹

Perhaps more significantly, throughout the seventeenth century universally available 'certitude of mind' had been supplied either by innate ideas, or by self-evident logical truths, or by common notions (those ideas that received universal assent).⁵⁰ In the immediate post-Lockean period, a 'naive' appeal to implanted ideas and principles of both speculative and practical kinds was also ruled out. Locke had, with some success, also deemed the 'dispositional' approach to nativism argumentatively vacuous. Here he had pointed to the absence of any meaningful delineation between the power, or ability of reason to grasp an externally held moral truth, and the divine implantation of that truth in an implicit form, which then required the very same cognitive power to realise it.⁵¹ Locke had also insisted that there were no self-evident moral principles. We might always, and reasonably, ask why any candidate moral rule should be accepted as a rule.⁵²

In the early part of the eighteenth century, doubts about the sufficiency and universality of our powers of rational deduction, in the context of a widespread adoption of Locke's basic complaints about innatism, drove some early eighteenth-century moral philosophers in England and Scotland to examine our experience of moral judgment. After Locke, the discussion of what might legitimately be considered innate to us required careful management, but the

⁴⁹ On this aspect of Locke and language see Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 129-154 and John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 353-355.

⁵⁰ Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 29.

⁵¹ John W. Yolton, *Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁵² Locke, *ECHU* 1:3:1 and 4, 66 and 68.

discussion about our natural resources was very much subject to reformulation, rather than having been brought to a close.⁵³

It was Shaftesbury who turned from language to appeal to our moral experience, in terms of the reality of the pleasures it afforded us, in an effort to defeat scepticism. All the authors considered in the following chapters agreed that our *experience* of moral evaluation was universal, however misguided these evaluations may have been. Whatever the original source, or sources of the term, all agreed, however grudgingly, that the experience of moral judgment was loosely (if not properly) described by the term ‘moral sense’ – in terms of non-voluntariness, immediacy, certainty and an affective quality that feels like approbation or condemnation. Whatever faculty of mind actually supplied this experience, it was agreed that basic moral judgment does not require the ability to undertake or follow complex deductions from the nature of man, or the extensive analysis of moral terms. The argument between Hutcheson, Burnet and Balguy and Gay was one about what lay beneath our experience of an often immediate and non-voluntary moral judgment. What were the natural principles, that produced our experience of this response?

The argument of the following chapters is based upon an understanding of Locke’s way of ideas, and similar logics of ideas, such as that of the Port Royal theorists, Arnauld and Nicole. In order to support this argument, I will briefly discuss features of such logics and then outline Locke’s own theory. The point of this section is to provide an account of how the focus on the first act of perception or reception of simple ideas became the focus of attention within logics of ideas and how the boundary between this and the second act of judgment was not fixed. This is supposed to go some way in providing the context for the various explanations of a moral sense of concern in this thesis.

⁵³ See James A. Harris, “Innateness in British Philosophy (c. 1750-1820),” *Eighteenth Century Thought* 4 (2008): 203–227, on speculative principles. See also George Watson, introduction to *Remarks on John Locke by Thomas Burnet with Locke’s Replies*, ed. G. Watson (Doncaster: Brynmill Press, 1989), 18. See Hans Aarsleff, *Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 159, on the assumption of uniformity of natural and ‘original’ principles.

The study of logic, from the twelfth century up until the latter half of the seventeenth century, was conceived of as a science of language.⁵⁴ The concern of the medieval logician was to identify rules of inference that could legitimise, or discredit, a proposition or a series of propositions, expressed either in a natural language, or as Ockham had proposed, in a mental proposition. Later, humanist complainants vilified formal logic for (among other things) being alien to natural thought processes, structurally incompatible with natural grammatical expression and incapable of delivering novel information. Despite a rejection of the formal, inferential nature of the medieval approach, humanist logicians retained the linguistic conception of logic. Humanist logic was the art of argument, rather than the scholastic science of dispute, but it was still very much a language game.⁵⁵

The method of Descartes and Locke, Hobbes, Gassendi and, to some extent, the Port-Royal team of Arnauld and Nicole departed from both medieval and humanist approaches.⁵⁶ Descartes and Locke moved away from the formal (rule-governed) manipulation of terms that both legitimised and constrained medieval formalism. In their place, and in stark contrast to humanist approaches, they introduced naturalised accounts of cognition where psychology, theories of mental faculties and epistemology were called upon to explain and to justify where and how we might find truth. Logic became focused on the legitimacy of

⁵⁴ I am indebted to the following for the content of this part of introduction. Gabriel Nuchelmans, "Logic in the Seventeenth Century: Preliminary Remarks and the Constituents of the Proposition," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 103-117, and "Proposition and Judgment," *ibid.*, 118-131. Gabriel Nuchelmans, *Judgment and Proposition: from Descartes to Kant* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1983). Claude Panaccio, "Ockham and Locke on Mental Language," in *The Medieval Heritage in Metaphysics and Modal Theory 1400-1700*, ed. R. Freidman and L. O Neilson (Netherlands: Kluwer, 2003): 37-52. James G. Buickerood, "The Natural History of the Understanding: Locke and the Rise of Facultative Logic in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Philosophy of Locke: New Perspectives*, ed. Peter Anstey (London: Routledge, 2003), 229-268. Paul Schuurman, *Ideas, Mental Faculties and Method: The Logic of Ideas of Descartes and Locke and Its Reception in the Dutch Republic, 1630-1750* (Netherlands, Brill, 2004).

⁵⁵ Frederick S. Michael, "Why Logic Became Epistemology: Gassendi, Port Royal and the Reformation in Logic," in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Patricia A. Easton (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing, 1997), 3.

⁵⁶ Nuchelmans, *Logic*, seems not to view Locke's work as logic, 'Others, like Descartes and Locke, left it to their followers to apply the new insights to the field of logic', 105. But see the convincing argument of Buickerood *Facultative Logic*, and Schuurman, *Logic of Ideas*, that Locke's *ECHU* and *The Conduct of the Understanding* (planned as a chapter of the *ECHU*) were viewed and taught as 'logics' well into the eighteenth century.

our ideas, rather than on the legitimate use of terms. There was, moreover, a manifestly remedial or therapeutic air about many of these new logics of ideas, as they sought to dictate the proper conduct of our understanding and to proffer advice upon the improvement of our mental faculties.⁵⁷ It was to our management of the flow of information through our understanding that Descartes and Locke turned.⁵⁸

Despite widespread disparagement of the Aristotelian logical tradition, these seventeenth-century schemes frequently kept to its organisational conventions. Knowledge was held to share a structure with language, so that at each level a linguistic entity (a word, a sentence, or a piece of discourse) was paired with a psychological event or the exercise of a specific mental operation (perception or conception, judgment and discourse).⁵⁹ The presentation of subject matter typically blended traditional formal structure with the sort of psychologism that was, and still is, held to have subverted the practice of logical enquiry for much of the early modern period.⁶⁰ In fact, logics structured with reference to mental acts were found frequently in humanist logics.⁶¹ It is the case, however, that there were no accompanying theories of concept formation within any humanist logic.⁶² It was the theorised progression of the 'concrete' perception through a hierarchy of mental acts or operations to its termination in a meaningful utterance that characterised 'logics of ideas'. The emphasis had shifted from a primary concern with the linguistic entity within the pair, to focus attention on

⁵⁷ Gary Hatfield, "The Workings of the Intellect: Mind and Psychology," in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Patricia A. Easton (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing, 1997), 30

⁵⁸ Hatfield, *ibid.*, 30. Descartes and Locke in particular, had much to say about the duty and practice of the 'cognitive virtues' within the conduct of the understanding.

⁵⁹ Jaap Maat, "Language and Semiotics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Desmond Clark and Catharine Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 272-294.

⁶⁰ To take just one example, for Bochenski (quoted in Michael, "Why Logic," 2) logic from the mid 1500's to the mid 1900's is 'poor in content, devoid of all deep problems, permeated with a whole lot of non-logical philosophical ideas, psychologist in the worst sense.'

⁶¹ Michael, "Why Logic," 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*,

its purely psychological counterpart - the cognitive operations of perception, judgment and reason.⁶³

The application of the new philosophy to logical theory was presented in several widely used textbooks and manuals. Arguably the most successful and durable pedagogic tool of this kind was '*Logic or the Art of Thinking*'. Published anonymously in 1662, its title proved controversial.⁶⁴ Logic, critics claimed, was conventionally and properly the art of reasoning well and did not reflect the brute act of thinking per se. All subsequent editions carried a reply to that objection (the 'second discourse') in which its authors Arnauld and Nicole insisted that

the purpose of logic is to give rules for all the actions of the mind, and for simple ideas as well as for judgments and inferences there is practically no other word which covers all these different acts. Certainly "thinking" includes all of them, for simple ideas are thoughts, judgments are thoughts, and inferences are thoughts.⁶⁵

The scope of concern of logic had been broadened to include the simple apprehension, or perception of ideas. The focus upon the analysis of the origin and perception of our first ideas was fundamental to the philosophy of the Port-Royal theorists' predecessor, Descartes, and also to Locke.

Both Descartes and Locke, however, went much further than Arnauld and Nicole, and eschewed reliance upon the publicly available deductive proof delivered by the syllogism. Truth was to be accessed via the proper governance of our mental faculties as they manipulated foundational 'simple' ideas. Proof, moreover, for Descartes and Locke was ascertained by means of an inward 'feeling' of certainty that arose within an individual whenever she introspected and examined the content of her own ideas (or the perceived connexions between them.) For both

⁶³ See also, Jill Vance Buroker, "The Priority of Thought to Language in Cartesian Philosophy," in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy* ed. Patricia A. Easton (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing, 1996), 99-102.

⁶⁴ The editor of the 1996 English edition claims it as "The most influential logic from Aristotle until the end of the nineteenth century", see Jill Vance Buroker, introduction to *Logic or the Art of Thinking* by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, trans. and ed. Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xxiii.

⁶⁵ Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole, *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, trans. and ed. Jill Vance Buroker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

Descartes and Locke, certainty about the truth of one's own thoughts was available on a purely intrapersonal basis.

Self-evident knowledge, and the experience of certainty with which it coexists, was said to be a matter of either the intuition of a proposition, or the perception of the natural connection, or disconnection between ideas, which is a proposition. For Descartes, the process of acquiring knowledge began with an episode of rational insight. Clear and distinct perceptions were made 'manifest by the natural light'.⁶⁶ For Locke, knowledge resulted from the certain perception of agreement or disagreement between just two ideas (intuitive knowledge), or between pairs of ideas that were linked, chain like, by successive intuitive episodes (demonstrative knowledge). Locke also insisted on sensitive knowledge (of the 'existence of anything without us').

The operation of logic under the reign of ideas then, became a descriptive, naturalised account of the workings of the mind, where truth (where it could be found) was a matter of successful cognition. In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries critics protested that this logic of ideas was predicated upon a naturalistic fallacy. Their complaint was that a naturalistic description of the workings of the mind did not, and could not, guarantee the validity of the truths produced by such a mind. Our cognitive faculties in the early modern period though, were God given and, as such, they were underwritten by divine guarantee as being capable, correctly used, of discovering truth. An individual's moments of intuitive certainty gave her potential access to that part of external reality that God wishes us to comprehend. However, although certainty was a matter of individual phenomenological experience, we could be mistaken and correct ourselves by reasoning further.⁶⁷

So, the focus on the origin and perception of simple ideas was fundamental to the way of ideas. Just as fundamental was the insistence upon our awareness of the progression of these 'concrete' perceptions, through a hierarchy of mental acts to

⁶⁶ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. John Cottingham. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 28.

⁶⁷ Hatfield, "Workings," 21-46.

a termination in knowledge or belief. For Descartes, the Port-Royal Group, Locke and Berkeley, the cognitive operations of perception, judgment and reason were performed by a unified, *conscious* mind.⁶⁸ This entailed that for these authors, that the workings of the mind could be viewed clearly through the process of introspection. At each stage, the progression of information from the sense reception to rational discourse was available to consciousness.⁶⁹ Individual ideas must enter (or occur to) the mind via an act of apprehension or perception, unmodified by an act of judgment or inference. Yet the fulfilment of these twin obligations, to full conscious awareness of mental operations and the passage of information through a rigid hierarchy of mental acts, was a challenge in the field of perception.

For example, in visual perception the task was to explain the gap between the impoverishment of the visual stimulus represented on the retina relative to the complex nature of our visual phenomenal experience, where a sensory idea may not be legitimately modified until it has been compared or associated with another idea, inside of conscious awareness. The problem was how to account for the *phenomenal* experience of the three-dimensional field. An explanation was needed for our experience of the size, shape, distance and motion of objects, given what appears on the retina, and that introspection would lead us to believe that we do not reason ourselves into our visual phenomenal experience.

The solution that Descartes and Locke came up with was to propose that our phenomenal visual experience is the result of our making a succession of unconscious, or rather *unnoticed*, inferences. They hypothesised that we make a series of judgments, which, because we make them so frequently, become habitual and therefore go unnoticed. Berkeley rejected inference as the cognitive

⁶⁸ I am indebted to Gary Hatfield for this summary of the account of the process in the work of Descartes and Berkeley. Locke's struggle with unnoticed inferences in three-dimensional visual field was first noticed by Condillac and is discussed by Stephen K. Land, *The Philosophy of Language in Britain: Major Theories from Hobbes to Thomas Reid* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 73.

⁶⁹ See Gary Hatfield, "The Sensory Core and the Medieval Foundations of Early Modern Perceptual Theory," in Hatfield *Perception and Cognition: Essays in the Philosophy of Psychology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2009), 384. See also Hatfield, "Perception as Unconscious Inference," in *Perception and the Physical World: Psychological and Philosophical Issues in Perception*, ed. Dieter Heyer and Rainer Mausfeld (New York: Wiley, 2002), 115-144.

process by which we judge necessary connections between the content of ideas and instead proposed that phenomenal experience arises from the repeated co-occurrence of cues, which are not themselves content-sensitive. These association or suggestions, however, still took place outside of conscious awareness.⁷⁰

The relationship between perception and judgment in Locke is of interest in other respects too. Locke grounded all speculative reasoning on the perception of self-evident propositions. These are those propositions, mental or verbal, which provoke our immediate assent provided that we understand the terms or ideas that they contain. Locke argued that whilst truth was properly a matter for propositions and not ideas, we could form as many self-evident propositions as we have distinct ideas. For example, 'that white is white and not black', is a proposition that we form when we attend to our perceiving of the colour white.⁷¹ In this way then Locke seemed to flout the convention that a non-verbal idea from sense could not also be a judgment or proposition. Locke claimed that

when we make any propositions within our own thoughts, about white or black, sweet or bitter, a triangle or a circle, we can and often do frame in our minds the ideas themselves without reflecting on the names.⁷²

Locke's account of the perceptual nature of reason also gave rise to certain problems of terminology, not the least of which was the fact that the ideas that resulted from the first act of perception or conception were simple and sensory in nature - despite some of them deriving from an external sense and others from the operation of the mind upon the ideas received from external sense. In 1728, Zachary Mayne objected that Locke had not distinguished between the acts of sense perception and acts of understanding. Mayne wanted our ideas from sense to be understood as images or copies of those things that our senses perceive. Our *understanding*, or our intellect, he insisted, gave rise to notions. Hutcheson's discussion of the ontology of his ideas from moral sense also spoke

⁷⁰ Hatfield, "Sensory Core," 384. See also Rebecca Copenhaver, "Perception and the Language of Nature," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James A. Harris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 107-127, for Berkeley on this process.

⁷¹ Locke, *ECHU*, 4:7:3 and 4, 591.

⁷² Locke, *ECHU*, 4:5:4, 575.

directly to this issue, as we shall see, but it was contained in his texts on *Logic* and *Metaphysics*.⁷³ Balguy too had something to say to Locke about this issue. I have already outlined the ways in which Locke's simple ideas of reflection (which gave us ideas of various modes of mental experience such as thinking, doubting, willing) were under-specified, especially with respect to their differentiation from our more general conscious awareness or sense of mind. This will be a topic of interest in the chapters on Hutcheson and Burnet and Balguy.

The question of conscious awareness was also central to claims made about the operation of practical principles. A particular part of Locke's attack on dispositional nativism relied upon his rejection of the operation of implicit principles in the mind, because it contravened his principle that we be aware, or have been aware, of everything that takes place in the mind. This principle is intended to cover both the content and operation, or actions of the mind. With respect to propositions, Locke said, 'No proposition can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knew, which it was never conscious of.'⁷⁴ Locke, therefore, rejected the argument of Descartes and Leibniz that these general implicit principles (e.g. 'something cannot both be and not be') could be used to understand a particular proposition (e.g. 'white is not black'), on the grounds that we did not use these principles to judge consciously by.⁷⁵

I leave the account of the implications of this material for the individual chapters. To close the introduction I present a brief summary of the content of the remaining chapters.

Chapter 2: This chapter examines the nature of Clarke's rationalism and interrogates his views on the relationship of that rationalism to obligation and motivation. I offer a partial corrective to certain readings of Clarke on this issue.

⁷³ Timothy Stanton, "Locke and His Influence," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James A. Harris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21-40.

⁷⁴ Locke, *ECHU*, 1:2:5, 50.

⁷⁵ Locke, *ECHU*, 1:2:22, 60. See also De Rosa, *Locke Question Begging*, 86.

Chapter 3: This is first of two chapters on Hutcheson, whose overriding aim is to consider the nature of his realism. In the first I examine the position of Clarke and Hutcheson with respect to God's communicable attributes and our cognitive access to essences. I look at the intended practical effect of Hutcheson's adoption of introspection as a methodology and examine the intended function of obligation for Hutcheson. I then consider the nature of Hutcheson's commitment to moral realism. I discuss why Hutcheson's commitment to an implanted, natural benevolence, which rested upon a divine decision to communicate that virtue, was unlikely to have been intended by Hutcheson as a species of voluntarism. I argue that Hutcheson's texts on *Metaphysics*, and *Logic* reveal that Hutcheson did not view God's decision to communicate benevolence to us as reflective of any sort of contingency.

Chapter 4: This chapter presents a detailed consideration of Hutcheson's moral epistemology. I explore three ways in which Hutcheson may have understood his ideas from moral sense as capable of delivering a judgment as to the moral value of an action. First, I argue that the direction of Hutcheson's thought may have reflected the weakened boundary between sense or perception and judgment. Second, I suggest Hutcheson both re-examined the role of reason in the stages prior, and subsequent to, the emergence of an idea of moral sense, and I discuss the ways that Hutcheson shifted the epistemic burden back onto reason. Third, I consider the ontology of Hutcheson's ideas of moral sense. An overall assessment of Hutcheson's moral realism is presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5: This chapter examines the response of Clarke's defenders Burnet and Balguy to the appearance of Hutcheson's moral sense theory. I explore the experiential priority that Burnet and Balguy assigned to reason over sense, and discuss the influence of Locke's perceptual account of reason here. I then consider whether Burnet and Balguy can be said to have upheld Clarke's position with respect to the motivation of moral actions. Finally, I discuss their understanding of the nature of God's moral perfection and their quarrel with Hutcheson over his commitment to God's benevolent nature as the foundation of moral goodness.

Chapter 6: This chapter looks at the ways in which Gay responded to the work of Clarke and his defenders and Hutcheson, with respect to the three themes that the thesis is concerned with: the relationship of rationalism to obligation and motivation, the relative roles of sense and judgment in moral knowledge (and the demand that motive, ideas, principles, propositions and judgments be available to conscious awareness), and the theistic metaphysics used to support arguments about realism (with particular emphasis on God's communicative attributes).

Chapter 7: Conclusion.

Chapter 2

Samuel Clarke and the 'mighty motives'

The chapter aims to examine the nature of Clarke's rationalism and to inspect his views on the relationship of that rationalism to obligation and motivation. To this end, I will introduce Clarke's approach and compare his account of reason with that offered by the Cambridge Platonists. This is followed by a detailed account of the argument of the second of Clarke's Boyle Lecture series. I then introduce and counter some of the claims made by recent commentators with respect to Clarke's account of motivation. I also draw attention to similarities between the arguments made by Clarke and Locke in the *Reasonableness of Christianity*. The chapter finishes with an exploration of Clarke's views on conscience in relation to obligation.

Introduction

By 1704, Clarke, Voltaire's 'veritable thinking machine', was sufficiently well established in English intellectual life to be made Boyle lecturer. Boyle had instituted the lectures in 1692 to call attention to the harmony between the new natural philosophy and Scripture, in order to defend the Christian religion. Hobbes' moral conventionalism and, more especially, various deist claims for the sufficiency of natural reason in the attainment of moral and religious knowledge were the targets of several of the early lectures.⁷⁶

Clarke's first series of lectures was published as *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God. More Particularly in Answer to Mr Hobbs, Spinoza and Their Followers*.⁷⁷ Clarke's aim was to reveal the power of natural reason to discover both the necessary existence of God and, perhaps more importantly for Clarke, to demonstrate the necessity of his possessing various attributes. Clarke deemed the demonstration of certain divine attributes to be central to the understanding of a God who continued to display an interest in, and exercised power over

⁷⁶ On the Boyle Lectures, see James P. Ferguson, *An Eighteenth Century Heretic Dr. Samuel Clarke* (Kington: The Roundwood Press, 1976), 23-34.

⁷⁷ Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and Other Writings* ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Henceforth *Being and Attributes*.

human affairs and the operation of matter. Clarke made both a priori and a posteriori arguments for the existence of God. The distinction between the two referred to the direction of argument running between cause and effect rather than its relation to experience. He made a priori arguments for the necessary existence of a self-existent God possessed of the attributes of independence, immensity, immutability, omnipresence and infinitude, and a series of a posteriori arguments for the necessity of God's omniscience, the liberty of his agency and his moral attributes.⁷⁸

Clarke himself, it seems, was not especially fond of the argument a priori, or 'metaphysical reasoning', which made his reputation, but he believed it to be indispensable for the proof of three of God's attributes - his immensity, eternity and unity. Clarke's preferred weapon of choice in the popular war against deism was, according to William Whiston, the more easily comprehended argument from design. Clarke believed that the ease of comprehension of this argument offered a better safeguard against scepticism for the majority.⁷⁹ Nevertheless his 'numberless mathematics' was initially very well received and his method was promoted at Cambridge for about twenty years according to his critic Edmund Law, 'till at length certain flaws being discovered in the Doctor's celebrated argument a priori.'⁸⁰ One of the flaw finders was Law himself, who was part of a wider anti-Newtonian group within Cambridge that included Daniel Waterland and Phillips Gretton.

Clarke's reputation as an ethical rationalist stems, in part, from his defence of the ability of natural reason to discern, or at least to recognise, the truths of rational arguments for the existence of God and his attributes. It was the content of his

⁷⁸ See James P. Ferguson, *The Philosophy of Dr. Samuel Clarke and its Critics* (London: Vantage Press, 1974), for an overview of Clarke's approach, including the various criticisms by Clarke's commentators as to the 'a priori' of his arguments in Chapter 2. See also Vailati, introduction to *Being and Attributes*, xiv-xviii, and Timothy Yenter and Ezio Vailati, "Samuel Clarke," *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/clarke/>.

⁷⁹ See Vailati, introduction, xiv -xix. See also Samuel Clarke, "The Answer to a Seventh Letter Concerning the Argument A Priori" in *Being and Attributes*, 118-123.

⁸⁰ Cited by John Stephens in "Edmund Law and his Circle at Cambridge," in *The Philosophical Canon in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. G. A. J. Rogers and Sylvana Tomaselli, (Suffolk: University of Rochester Press, 1996), 165.

second series of Boyle lectures however, delivered the following year, which did most to promote an understanding of Clarke as a rationalist in moral epistemology and in practical morality. Clarke was, and still is, deemed to have held the intellectualist position that a natural understanding of the good is sufficient to move us to virtue.⁸¹ The second lecture series, *A Discourse on the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, however, delivered Clarke's defence, in fifteen propositions, of the necessity of Christian revelation for a successful moral life and the conformity of the content of Christian revelation to natural reason.

After the publication of Hutcheson's *four treatises* proclaiming the existence of a moral sense, Clarke became the standard bearer for a brand of ethical rationalism. I suggest that Clarke's concern to emphasise the ineffectiveness of unassisted reason in governing human conduct became detached from his wider position partly as a result of the intense focus in the later debate between Hutcheson and other opponents on the workings of *natural* moral knowledge. Clarke's defender, Gilbert Burnet, fought Hutcheson on Hutcheson's terms as they both sought to account for the operation of natural reason alone in the production of moral behaviour. I will argue that another of Clarke's followers John Balguy in fact took Clarke's approach in accounting for the motivation of moral action, but that there has been far less consideration of his work in the secondary literature.

Clarke was, and often still is, taken to have put forward the claim that natural reason alone is sufficient to motivate moral action. That is, Clarke is deemed to have claimed that reason is sufficient not only to discover *all* the moral truth necessary for our purposes, but further that this knowledge creates an obligation, the rational perception of which can then move us to moral behaviour.

I will suggest that Clarke's rationalism extended no further than the assertion that God, through moral (i.e. freely imposed) necessity, directs himself in his

⁸¹ See for example, Darwall, *Internal Ought*, 10.

creative endeavours by his understanding of eternal law, that we have some shared access, through natural reason, to this law, and that this knowledge is our formal obligation (of which more later).⁸² Clarke, it is true, also argued that a few ancient moralists might have been able to reason themselves to the knowledge of an omnipotent God who will distribute justice to us in a future state, and that this knowledge may have been able to move them to moral action (on occasion). What Clarke did not claim however, was that this motivation derived from formal, or moral obligation.

I will argue that Clarke's broader moral psychology spoke entirely against the interpretation of his thought as the position that rational understanding of right and wrong, or the fitness or unfitness of actions *alone*, was (post-Fall) sufficient to carry anyone to virtue. It will be argued that Clarke's rationalism, at least so far as it was argued for in the Boyle Lectures, sat in the context of his primary practical concern, which did not lie with the details of moral cognition, but was rather to demonstrate the practical necessity of revealed truths to the living of a moral life. Virtue was only made practically possible, according to Clarke, when we were supplied with the confidence that just reward and punishment in eternity would be the definite consequence of actions in this world, and when we used the thoughts of these consequences to ourselves to motivate our actions. These indeed were Clarke's 'mighty motives'.

To begin with I would like to make a few remarks about Clarke's general account of reason, its relationship to divine understanding, and our motivation for virtue. Beiser views Clarke as part of a later seventeenth/early eighteenth-century tradition of English ethical rationalism birthed in Cambridge by the Cambridge Platonists and giving rise to the work of Clarke, Wollaston, Balguy and Gilbert Burnet, amongst others.⁸³ As Harrison points out though, there are substantial differences between the accounts of reason offered by English Platonists, by 'deists' and by 'Enlightenment rationalists in general'. Harrison's concern is the Platonists and deists and he (wisely) does not elaborate on the position of

⁸² See Clarke, "Sermon XVI On the Justice of God," in *Being and Attributes*, 144.

⁸³ Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 266 and see also chapter 7, 266-232.

‘enlightenment rationalists in general’.⁸⁴ Here, in order to explode further the characterisation of the philosophy of ‘British moralists’ as a set of bilateral negotiations held between rationalists and sentimentalists, I will outline briefly some of the differences between the versions of rationalism presented by the Cambridge Platonists and by Clarke.

It is undoubtedly the case that there were substantial similarities in outlook between Clarke and the Cambridge Platonists. Both abhorred all forms of voluntarism that grounded the difference between good and evil purely in divine command. The moral order, or eternal law, existed prior to divine creative activity and prior to any law made by God. The difference between good and evil existed, as Clarke put it, ‘antecedent to will and to all arbitrary or positive appointment whatsoever’. This difference could not be altered, even by the absolute power of God’s will, which could not act inconsistently with the reason of things.⁸⁵ The *content* of any moral obligations was held to be found in our comprehension of the essential difference between good and evil. It was found ‘eternally, necessarily, and unchangeably in the nature and reason of things’.⁸⁶

Clarke also took the Latitudinarian position that God’s natural and moral attributes are identical in kind with those found in human beings, although they are infinite in the divine case and radically curtailed in ours.⁸⁷ However, while Clarke was committed to the idea that there is common access for God and ourselves to the rational order of things, his understanding of human reason was very different to the one advertised by the Cambridge Platonists. The rationalism of both the Cambridge Platonists and Clarke was modulated, to a significant degree, by the need to demonstrate how the possibility of consistent moral behaviour, sufficient to please God, could come about - but their approach to practical morality was very different.

⁸⁴ Harrison, *Religions*, 31.

⁸⁵ Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 83.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 83. See also Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 269.

⁸⁷ Vailati, introduction, xv. See also Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 282.

The Cambridge Platonists worked from a model of shared access to the divine mind based on the 'deiformity' of our created nature, which could ascend in order to partake of, or participate with, the divine nature through the joint exercise of thought and love. They worked from an understanding of moral knowledge as issuing from an active participation with the divine mind.⁸⁸ Natural knowledge of God is knowledge of his goodness, not of the metaphysical necessity of his other attributes.⁸⁹ They held not only that the successful communication of this knowledge results in a life of consistent virtue, but further that living virtuously brings about this knowledge. Religion, as Harrison's thesis claims, was a moral matter for the Cambridge Platonists and not a question of assent to propositions or the performance of ceremonial rites. John Smith, to take but one example, wrote that

this indeed is such a deification . . . in the highest powers of the soul by a living and quickening spirit of true religion there uniting God and soul together on the unity of affections, will and end.⁹⁰

According to the Cambridge Platonists our moral abilities, both epistemic and motivational, derived from the affective quality of reason in both the human and divine case. When functioning veridically, that is practically, reason is love or 'intellectual love'. Their epistemology was grounded in, and realised by, innate sensory and affective elements in the human case. Their view of human reason itself was profoundly practical, based on the founding notion of a self-determining agency comprising intellect, will and desire, which came supplied with a variety of innate provisions.⁹¹ Reason in the human case was either planted with innately given sensory 'praecognitia' or 'instincts' (Cudworth), or was crowned by a boniform faculty (More), or was seen as the organ of 'divine sense', pregnant with spiritual truths (Whichcote), all of which led our understanding to both appreciate and love the good and motivate its performance. For the Cambridge Platonists, the intimate proximity of love and

⁸⁸ See Jennifer A. Herdt, "Affective Perfectionism: Community with God without Common Measure" in *New Essays on the History of Autonomy: A Collection Honoring J.B. Schneewind*, ed. Natalie Brender and Larry Krasnoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30-60.

⁸⁹ This is Harrison's point, *Religions*, 46.

⁹⁰ C. A. Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 176.

⁹¹ Tod E. Jones, introduction to *The Cambridge Platonists: A Brief Introduction*, ed. Tod E. Jones (Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), 21.

the source of reason within the divine being, and echoed in our own nature, facilitated dual routes into our participation with that being – we could learn through love, hence their identification of virtue with reason. Loving obedience to scripture, far from being a servile adherence to the law of a superior, actually facilitated participation within divine understanding. They saw obedience to scripture as the beginning of an epistemic route to moral and spiritual understanding and as the route to *present* and future happiness.

Clarke's God created the world according to the 'abstract nature of things'. His benevolence, or goodness along with his justice and equity, led his creative will to act (freely) in a manner consistent with his understanding of the 'reason of things'.⁹² In general, Clarke, as we will see, expressed a far more pessimistic view of human nature and of our real world cognitive abilities than did the Cambridge Platonists. Clarke did not advertise human participation in the divine mind. For Clarke, while we may appreciate and be grateful for divine love, there is no emotional resonance between our minds and God's that can deepen our rational understanding of our obligations. We do not reach an epistemic awareness of the moral good of beneficence, for example, through any affective component of reason itself. Clarke had us proceeding from the self-evident comprehension of eternal relations that exist between things, to an evaluation of the moral worth of actions. Clarke did allow a role for affect in the comprehension of duty. Like the Cambridge Platonists, Grotius and Hutcheson, Clarke insisted on the existence of natural affections towards others which did not derive from the utility of sociability. Clarke maintained that reflection upon our natural 'uncorrupted' loving affections towards each other (parental affection towards our young, for example) was key to understanding ourselves as 'part and member of that one universal body or community, which is made up of all Mankind' and thus that we were 'born to promote the public good' and obligated to do so. 'Tis evident every man is bound by the Law of *his* nature' (my emphasis).⁹³ Our affections, *once reflected upon*, reveal to us that we are obligated to help all other members of our community and that benevolence is an eternal 'fitness', or moral principle.

⁹² Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 86-89.

⁹³ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 208.

Clarke also excluded implanted or innately given ideas, propositions or principles, as a source of understanding. His model of human moral reasoning excluded entirely any instinctual sensory apprehensions to drive universal assent to moral principles, which would naturally push us towards moral action. His view of reason was entirely theoretical or speculative. Its deliverances are founded upon rational intuition into the eternal relations that specify the moral worth of actions. This understanding provides us with a formal obligation, but does not contain any motivational component beyond the understanding that an action is 'fit' or correct to be, or to have been, performed.

Both the Cambridge Platonists and Clarke appealed to Scripture. But the Cambridge Platonists viewed practical obedience to the dictates of Scripture both as a route to epistemic development and as an immediate and on-going hedonic reward (i.e. in the increased joy and love experienced when performing a moral action). Clarke, on the other hand, assigned a direct motivational role for the rational belief in the specific revealed truth of a future state of divine justice. Revealed truth, according to Clarke, fulfils our 'natural hopes and expectations' and provides us with the requisite emotional ballast – that is, the thoughts of our *future* happiness – needed to keep us virtuous in a world where virtue frequently goes unrewarded and the vicious appear to escape censure and even to thrive.⁹⁴

For the Cambridge Platonists Scripture was an 'after-revelation' in that it post-dated natural reason, and its contents were comprehended and assessed by natural reason. But reason, for the Cambridge Platonists, was capable of receiving spiritual truths as well as discovering natural ones.⁹⁵ Clarke shared the view that virtue, not ceremonial action or belief in specific Christian doctrine, was the criterion by which we would eventually be judged, and he too upheld the fundamental rationality of the content of scripture.⁹⁶ But as we shall see, Clarke did not see the reach of natural reason extending to the grasp of all the spiritual truths necessary for leading a *consistently* moral life. He understood belief in

⁹⁴ See Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 317, for example.

⁹⁵ See Harrison, *Religions*, 33, on the break that this represented.

⁹⁶ See Beiser, *Sovereignty*, on the Latitudinarian position on good works, 284-289.

particular revealed doctrines (a future state and the immortality of the soul) to be vital in motivating us to be virtuous. The vital practical import of these two truths to us, and the historical fact of our failure to grasp their truth using our natural cognitive abilities, led to their Revelation as recorded in Scripture. Clarke did not see the charms of virtue alone as sufficient to get us through the demands of this life, behaving well.

I will now turn to the detail of Clarke's argument as he presented it in his second Boyle lecture series.

The argument of the second Boyle lectures

In terms of our practical ability to behave virtuously, this chapter argues that Clarke insisted that knowledge of revealed truths, which contained truths about the hedonic consequences of divine justice in a future state, could not now be reached by natural reason alone, in a way that could consistently lead us to virtue.⁹⁷ I argue further that Clarke did not claim that the rational perception of the fitness of an action and the formal obligation that such a perception gave rise to were sufficient, post-Fall, to move us to action. This chapter questions, therefore, those readings of Clarke, such as Schneewind's, that have him assert that a naturally acquired knowledge of our moral obligation *alone* is capable of motivating us to moral behaviours.⁹⁸ Clarke's thoughts on both the conditions under which we are able to understand our obligations, and the relationship of this obligation to behaviour will be explored. Clarke is presented here as someone who shared Bacon, More and Locke's understanding of the 'two parts' of ethics, and who saw a vital and necessary role for the regular and careful promulgation of revealed truths in the development of our practical moral abilities, notwithstanding our natural cognitive encounters 'with the good'.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Clarke allowed that there *may* have been a very few exceptional heathens who had reasoned their way to these truths, but Clarke claimed that without Revelation the force of these reasoned truths in their own minds was insufficient to allow them to live consistently virtuous lives. This is discussed later on in this chapter.

⁹⁸ Schneewind, *Invention*, 318.

⁹⁹ See Darwall *Internal Ought*, 10 and 13, where he delineates two kinds of internalism. One of these, which he says is not his concern in his book, is that of Clarke, Balguy and Price. This is said to be 'as old as the ancients' and refers to a motive for doing good presenting itself in consequence to perceiving or knowing the good.

The chapter will focus largely upon Clarke's moral thought as it was presented in the second Boyle lecture series. Clarke's claims for the existence of God and his natural and moral attributes presented in the first lecture series were the platform from which he launched his defence of Christian revelation. They are summarised at the beginning of *Natural Religion*.

Clarke's second lecture series contained a preface in which he responded to criticism of his *Being and Attributes* (and declared his independence from Locke), and fifteen propositions that Clarke believed would demonstrate the unchangeable obligations of natural religion and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation.¹⁰⁰ Clarke admitted that the same standard of demonstration and mathematical certainty that he thought the proofs of the being and attributes of God delivered were not achievable for his present purposes. Here, matters of fact must be introduced in the form of 'mixt proofs from circumstances and testimony'. Matters of fact were not by their nature capable of a priori demonstration Clarke thought, but 'wise and honest men are always satisfied' with the type of mixed proofs that he would offer.¹⁰¹

Clarke's commentators have shown a preference for engaging with the substance of his attempt to demonstrate our natural understanding of our obligations. That such an obligation is created when our natural reason recognises or involuntarily approves of an action as fit to be done was indeed the substance of Clarke's first proposition. The remaining fourteen propositions however, were dedicated to the task of demonstrating the inadequacy of natural reason to discover many of the truths of natural religion and, therefore, to understand our obligation. Even where an action has been recognised as fit, and thus obligatory, the impotence of that understanding to govern subsequent behaviour was laid bare by Clarke.

¹⁰⁰ 'I neither cited any one passage, nor (that I know of) borrowed any argument from him', Clarke, Preface, *Natural Religion*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 158. Clarke's moral theory is also discussed in *Being and Attributes*, 84, 89-90, and in his *Sermon XVI*, in *Being and Attributes*, 144-45.

In the first proposition Clarke maintained that an act of assent as to the right or wrongness of particular actions is compelled in divine and human understanding by the 'very nature and reason of things'. God always chooses to conform his undetermined will to this understanding, as his nature is both just and benevolent. (Clarke argued that God's natural attributes could not be separated from his moral attributes – to deny his moral attributes, as he understood Hobbes to have done, was to deny his natural attributes.¹⁰²) Clarke's metaphysical commitment to a moral order existing in the nature of things was cashed out in the claim that, from the difference of things which exist, eternal law specifies the relations which hold between those things (which include persons). The necessary 'fitness' or 'unfitness' of actions is determined by their conformity or non-conformity to the eternal relations that hold between things.

To convey the rudimentary analytic nature of the judgment of the relations that hold between things, Clarke used examples such as the following:

That God is infinitely superior to man is as clear as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment.¹⁰³

Clarke frequently drew an analogy with geometry. We recognise the essential differences between geometric figures in the same way as we recognise that 'that God is infinitely superior to man' and that there are differences between people ('the qualifications of persons'). Clarke argued that the specification of eternal relations derives from the same rational ordering principle at work throughout existence. Just as there is consonance and dissonance between different geometrical figures, which flows from their essences, and gives us the content of basic axioms that we must observe as successful geometers, so we must observe the rules of a kind of moral geometry that governs relations between the different essences of God, and ourselves, and of other people if we are to act as successful rational creatures.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 164.

¹⁰³ Clarke *Natural Religion*, 177.

¹⁰⁴ See Gill, "Math or Beauty," on the analogy with mathematics and beauty in moral thinking.

These eternal truths are not innate, they exist in the ‘reason of things’, but our assent to them is involuntary, even in cases where more protracted reasoning process is needed to reveal or to reach them.¹⁰⁵ Like mathematical first principles they are seen as necessary, in the sense of our not being able to contradict them as truths.¹⁰⁶ From our understanding of an action as fit or unfit to be performed (whether or not it respects the eternal relations between things) an understanding of our obligation to determine our wills to this understanding arises. We ought always to behave as we see fit, Clarke believed. God always performs his obligation, which is to say that he always conforms his actions to his understanding, but we, for a variety of reasons, do not.¹⁰⁷ It is important to emphasise, as Clarke did, that the obligation created for us, by our understanding of relations between beings or persons, derives in the first instance from the very ‘nature of things’. Moral values just are fundamentally present in the relations between things, prior to any divine command for us to act in conformity to this understanding.¹⁰⁸

Moral principles are ‘eternal fitnesses’ because they describe the correct relationships between things. Clarke identified equity, piety, justice, sobriety, or prudent self-love, and benevolence as the moral principles. Clarke’s first proposition, then, explained our natural understanding of our natural obligation to act according to eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses, specified by eternal law. It described our original, natural ability to discover the truth about the existence of God and his attributes, and to reason our obligations to him and one another.

Throughout the text, it is important to pay attention to the difference in cognitive process that Clarke specified, which allows us either to discover a truth for ourselves, or more simply to recognise the truth of a proposition that is explained to us.¹⁰⁹ An important part of the later text saw Clarke baldly state the

¹⁰⁵ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 192.

¹⁰⁶ Slawomir Raube, “Morality and Reason. Samuel Clarke’s Rationalist Ethics,” *Studies in Logic, Rhetoric and Grammar* 15, no. 28. (2009): 138.

¹⁰⁷ See Clarke’s first proposition *Natural Religion* 176 – 241.

¹⁰⁸ On Clarke’s metaphysics, see Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 272-275.

¹⁰⁹ See also Thomas “Reason and Revelation,” 125-128, on the difference between discovery and teaching in Clarke and the place of revelation in Clarke’s broader epistemology.

difficulty of the reasoning involved in *discovering* unassisted certain knowledge of the whole truth that contains our obligation:

And how can man be sure he should have made so good improvement of his reason, as to have understood it perfectly in all parts, without such help? . . . But suppose he could, and by strength of reason he could demonstrate to himself these things with all clearness and distinctness; yet could all men do so? Assuredly all men are not equally capable of being philosophers though all men are equally obliged to be religious.¹¹⁰

Given that, however unequal our cognitive abilities are, we are all equally obliged to 'be religious', which means understanding the whole truth of God's existence and the proper governance of human behaviour, Clarke wanted to explain how the less gifted amongst us may understand our obligations. This would be achieved through the 'particular' teaching of scripture that meets a residual ability in the 'generality of men' to understand the truth of what is being said to them.¹¹¹ It is the teaching of particular doctrines, understood as issuing from an authoritative source that will

enforce and inculcate upon men's minds with so strong an impression, as to influence and govern the general practice of the world.¹¹²

Indeed, the remainder of the work was devoted to establishing that our natural knowledge of our obligation is insufficiently motivating to us in our present condition, and further, that most of us are not capable of discovering our obligations in the first place. Clarke argued that it was only the truth of Christianity, acknowledged as a practical force, which made it possible for us now to be virtuous. He maintained that everything contained in revelation is consistent with what we understand to be reasonable. The motives that its doctrines supply are reasonable and the way in which it 'urges' these motives is reasonable. Clarke believed that this is what justifies Christianity to us. But, he thought, we have not been able, at least since the Fall, to reason our way to discover *all* of the truth that we need to govern ourselves in accordance with what reason dictates (supported by the evidence of the fact of miracles, signs,

¹¹⁰ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 314.

¹¹¹ See Ferguson, *Heretic*, 30, on our ability preserved ability to recognise truth.

¹¹² Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 154.

etc.). It is worth summarising Clarke's remaining propositions, with fairly extensive quotations, in order to see the direction and force of his argument.¹¹³

Clarke went on:

ii) Though this 'eternal moral obligation' is universally binding on rational creatures and was derived by God from the metaphysical structure of existence ('the abstract reason of things), *'that which most strongly confirms and in practice most effectually and indispensably enforces them upon us'* is that God has made these moral obligations his commands. As such *'in obedience to his supreme authority'* we should observe that which our reason tells us is the right thing to do (my italics).

iii) That compliance or disobedience to his will are necessarily rewarded or punished by God.

iv) That God, in order to establish the 'difference between the fruits or effects of virtue and vice', had arranged matters so that virtue makes the virtuous happy and vice upsets the vicious, but through the original effects of the Fall we are now ruined creatures and justice in this world is perverted. Through

some great and general corruption and depravation, (whencesoever that may have arisen; the particular original whereof could hardly have been known now without revelation,) since, I say, the condition of men in this present state is such, that the natural order of things in the world is in event manifestly perverted, and virtue and goodness are visibly prevented in great measure from obtaining their proper and due effects in establishing men's happiness proportionate to their behaviour and practice.

This is so clearly contrary to God's design and the natural order of things that there must be (and there is) a future state where justice is reasserted.

v) Though natural reason was, in theory, capable of discovering the moral obligations of natural religion *and* the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishment, we had destroyed our natural abilities to discover these truths, and

¹¹³ These are summarised by Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 150-157, and see these pages for the following quotations.

now require instruction to comprehend and perform even the most basic of moral duties.

Such is the carelessness, inconsiderateness, and want of attention of the greater part of mankind; so many the prejudices and false notions taken up by evil education; so strong and violent the unreasonable lusts, appetites and desires of sense; and so great the blindness, introduced by superstitious opinions, vicious customs, and debauched practices throughout the world; that very few are able, in reality and effect, to discover these things clearly and plainly for themselves: but men have great need of particular teaching, and much instruction; to convince them of the truth, and certainty, and importance of these things; to give them a due sense, and clear and just apprehensions concerning them; and to bring them effectually to the practice of the plainest and most necessary duties.

vi) That although throughout history there had been a very few 'wise, brave and good' heathens who had attempted both to discover moral truth and live by it, and went to some lengths to try to check the 'extreme superstition and wickedness of the nations wherein they lived', none of them had been able to reform the world with 'any considerably great and universal success'. The heathen moralists (and Clarke had great admiration for a few of them) were altogether ignorant of some doctrines, and doubtful and uncertain about others 'necessary to bring about that great end'. What they did know, they could not prove and explain clearly. Where they could prove and explain things clearly, they did not have sufficient authority to

enforce and inculcate upon men's minds with so strong an impression as to influence and govern the general practice of the world.

vii) Divine revelation was needed to redeem mankind.

viii) No other religion but Christianity is tolerable to reason. If Christianity is not true then there is no revelation of the will of God to mankind

ix) The Christian religion 'considered in its primitive simplicity' and in Scripture supplies all the 'marks and proofs' of being a divine revelation that anyone could want.

- x) The practical duties required by Christianity contain all the 'wise and true precepts' of all other philosophies (and does not contain any of the absurd and superstitious ones.) As such Christianity is thoroughly conducive to our happiness and wellbeing.
- xi) The motives by which Christianity 'enforces the practice of these duties' are consistent with God's wisdom and man's natural expectations.
- xii) The ways in which Christianity 'enjoins' our duties and 'urges' these motives is reasonable.
- xiii) Many truths of Christianity are not discoverable without revelation (by reason alone) but are found to be 'agreeable' to reason and moreover, 'every one of them has a natural tendency and a direct and powerful influence to reform men's lives and correct their manners.' These truths are a more 'consistent and rational scheme' than is found in heathen philosophy or promoted by 'modern unbelievers'.
- xiv) Revelation is recognised by reason as truth, but signs, miracles, fulfilled prophecies and the testimony of Christ's followers is the most 'credible, certain and convincing' evidence of fact that exists.
- xv) Those not convinced by Clarke's argument would not be convinced by any other argument or evidence.

What are we to make of Clarke's apparent undermining of the claims for natural reason to derive our obligation, and for that obligation to move us to action? The rationalism for which Clarke is now, and was in the years following the publication of the lectures, most famous, refers to our natural ability to discover these truths for ourselves, hold them in mind as we make a moral judgment, and in his grounding of their justificatory power in the 'reason of things'. Michael Gill makes the particularly helpful point that rationalism or, 'the claim that morality originates in reason alone' actually contains three claims that can be clearly

delineated. These are: the metaphysical claim that morality consists in reason (the values present in the universe), the epistemological claim that moral knowledge is acquired solely through reason, and the practical claim that reason alone can move us to moral action. Gill believes that Cudworth ‘along with most of the other ethical rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ made all three claims and rarely distinguished between them.¹¹⁴ We have seen that the epistemological claim can be justifiably claimed in relation to Cudworth only with some accommodation being made for innate sensory affective ‘praecognitia’ operating within reason. I don’t think Balguy can be said to make all three of these claims straightforwardly either, but this will be discussed in a later chapter. Clarke, as we have seen, certainly held to the metaphysical claim that moral value consists of and exists in the ‘abstract reason of things’. Clarke also made the epistemological claim, although here his psychology of knowledge acquisition and belief formation included such considerations as the difference between an ability to discover a truth for ourselves, and to recognise that truth once it has been taught to us by someone we recognise as having sufficient authority. However, the practical claim may only be said to have been made by Clarke with two qualifications. First, as we shall see, Clarke does not claim that a rational perception of the fitness of an action alone is sufficient to motivate the performance of that action. If reason is understood as the rational perception of the fitness of actions *and* the naturally reasoned truths of eternal life and divine reward and punishment, then Clarke does say that it is possible that for a few gifted ancients natural reason may have been able to motivate action – in an indirect way, or a way in which Clarke did not make clear – in these few cases, and on occasion. Clarke’s argument against the Deists though, is that we are not able, in the main, to reason ourselves to these truths, or use them to motivate ourselves consistently where we have reasoned ourselves naturally to them. Second, even a natural appreciation that God’s authority entailed that his justice would be applied in a future state, does not obligate us. It might motivate us, if we were in fact able to discover it for ourselves, but it would not obligate us *morally*.

¹¹⁴ Gill, *British Moralists*, 273. See also Beiser *Sovereignty*, 267, who outlines similar tripartite ambitions for English rationalists.

I will now move on to look at the accounts of Clarke's thoughts on motivation that are found in the recent secondary literature.

The treatment of Clarke in the recent secondary literature

I do not believe that Clarke did make the practical claim in an undifferentiated form, although his some of his contemporaries may have understood him to have done so, and it is the practical claim that Clarke has received much attention for in present day philosophical circles. Clarke is supposed to have claimed that speculative reason is sufficient to motivate us to perform an action we believe to be morally 'right', via our perception that something being morally right is obligatory for us. Korsgaard has Clarke, Balguy and Price believing that 'the perception of an action as right, or what they took to be the same thing obligatory, is a motive to do it.'¹¹⁵ Irwin says that

Clarke, however, *takes bare awareness to motivate us*. He believes that the simple grasp of a moral principle motivates a well-ordered will to choose the right action. *A sound understanding necessarily grasps the true moral principles and a sound will necessarily acts on them.*¹¹⁶ [My emphasis.]

Schneewind argues that we 'are able to be moved by the fitness of things' and that

Clarke is trying to think his way to the view that it is our rational agency that makes moral principles binding on us and enables us to be moved by them.¹¹⁷

Schneewind also claims that Clarke held that the obligation to act in conformity with our understanding of what is right and wrong, or fit or unfit, 'need not, at least in principle, be backed by sanctions.'¹¹⁸

The practical claim is interpreted by these authors to entail that our rational comprehension of our obligation is sufficient *alone* to motivate us, at least in a small number of cases, in however few people. It is important to emphasise that

¹¹⁵ Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Analysis of Obligation: The Arguments of Foundation 1," *Monist* 72, no.3 (1979) 311-340.

¹¹⁶ Irwin, *Development*, Vol. II, 387.

¹¹⁷ Schneewind, *Invention*, 318-319.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 318.

this is *not* the claim that what we have discovered to be true by using our reason is capable of motivating us. Clarke was clear that a very few respectable heathen moralists were able to discover the truths about the existence of a future state, in which the compliance or non-compliance with an all-powerful divine will (acting on an understanding of what is right) would be met with the force of his justice. This though, amounts to a reasoned understanding of the hedonic consequences of our action in a future state. This knowledge might help motivate us, and Clarke said that it did, but it is not part of our knowledge of our *obligation*, which is caused by the reason of things, and Clarke did not claim that it was. Clarke clearly made the argument that self-interested concern with the pains and pleasures of eternal life motivates us to behave virtuously (and in fact he terms rewards and punishments 'secondary obligations'.) Ferguson notes the implications of the change between the argument of the first proposition and the remainder, i.e. that at first Clarke said that our awareness of our obligation motivates us and that he then switched to the position that thoughts of our happiness motivate us.¹¹⁹ I don't believe there was a change - that is, Clarke never claimed that, in practice, post-Fall, the comprehension of rational obligation alone is a sufficient motive for action (although it ought to be). If the obligation sat within a framework of belief acquired naturally, which included knowledge of God and a future eternal state in which justice would be apportioned, then this would motivate us. The thought of God's justice in a future state is a motive for action – natural religion understood by reason in *its entirety* can obligate and motivate us to be virtuous. The natural understanding that an act is obligatory because it is 'fit' in and of itself, however, will not, by itself, now move us to perform it in the absence of an additional motivational impetus.

Clarke's moral principles included equity piety, justice, sobriety or prudent self-love and benevolence. We might, as Schneewind argues, see the eternal fitness of obeying and worshipping God.¹²⁰ We may see that it is rational and fit for God to govern us and distribute justice, and that the expected rewards and punishments are reasonable, but I suggest that Clarke does not argue that it is the perception

¹¹⁹ See Ferguson, *Samuel Clarke*, 89.

¹²⁰ Schneewind, *Invention*, 317.

of these particular fitnesses, derived from moral principles which moves us – rather that it is the thought of the experience of punishment or reward, which is necessary for the actual performance of the action. Clarke in fact stated the following:

The dread of superior power and authority and the sanctions of reward and punishment; however *absolutely necessary* to the government of frail and fallible creatures, and truly the most effectual means of keeping them in their duty; is yet really in itself only a *secondary and additional obligation* or inforcement of the first. ¹²¹[My emphasis.]

If it is an ‘absolute’ (presumably logical) necessity for God to use our dread of power and associated sanctions to govern us, then yes, this secondary obligation may be said to derive from God’s comprehension of eternal law, but it is not only, or simply, our perception of the fitness of secondary obligations that moves *us* surely? It is the obligatory force of the thought of the actual dread or the anticipated pains and pleasures of a future state.

Schneewind insists that for Clarke, ‘sanctions have no role in obligating’.¹²² I agree that this is true of what Clarke terms ‘formal’ obligation, but Schneewind, as we saw, also says that Clarke argued that formal obligation ‘need not, at least in principle, be backed by sanctions.’¹²³ Schneewind does not quote Clarke here but provides a single reference after this statement (‘Works, I, p.614’).¹²⁴

In this edition, on page 614 we find Clarke insisting that the wills and actions of ‘all rational creatures’ ought to be constantly determined by the ‘eternal rule of right and equity’ and that

the justice and conscience of a man’s own mind, concerning the reasons and fitness of the thing that his actions should be conformed to such or such a rule or law; is the truest and formallest obligation; even more properly so than any opinion whatsoever of the authority of the giver of a law or any regard he may have to its sanctions by reward and punishment.

¹²¹ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 191.

¹²² Schneewind, *Invention*, 315.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹²⁴ *The Works of Samuel Clarke: Sermons on Several Subjects*. (London: Knapton, 1738; repr., New York: Garland, 1978) 614. The corresponding page number in the edition I have used is 191.

Clarke here, I believe, just argued that formal obligation is more proper than secondary obligation, but not that it is possible, even in principle (post-Fall), to act without knowledge of secondary obligation, or enforcement 'of the first'. This passage is followed by Clarke's views on the self-condemnation of conscience and then immediately the quotation above concerning sanctions and secondary obligation.

At the end of the page Clarke goes on to say that God, who has no superior, always obliges himself to govern the world according to his understanding of the reason of things (and is not made happier or less happy by doing so). Clarke goes on:

And the more excellent and perfect, (or the freer from corruption and depravation) any creatures are the more cheerfully and steadily are their wills always determined by their supreme obligation, in conformity to the nature, and in imitation of the perfect will of God. [My emphasis]

Clarke, as we have seen, made his views on our current (intellectual and moral) corruption and depravity completely clear. He talks here of 'creatures' rather than human beings per se (and at the beginning of this section says 'all rational creatures' are obliged by the eternal rule of right and equity and that this covers 'Men'.) Given the prevalence of the view of the more perfect understanding and natures of angels, and the less perfect understanding and natures of men and then of animals, I suggest that the more perfect creatures referred to here are angelic. Clarke's follower Balguy referred to angelic natures and their moral abilities in a similar fashion in relation to our need for religion. Balguy argued that those

*purser beings, which are of an order superior to human nature, need not perhaps any other rule than the internal one of reason or virtue; but our frail and faulty species wants both another law, and a legislator, to curb their follies and vices, and keep them in some measure within the bounds of their duty.*¹²⁵ [My emphasis.]

I think that Clarke's statement refers to a sliding scale of ability in all 'creatures' to govern their wills by formal obligation alone. In the very next sentence Clarke

¹²⁵ Balguy, *Second Part*, 43.

reverts to stating that ‘men’ ought to govern their will by the reason of things as ‘indispensably” as their assent is governed by it. My reading of this page is that we are under a formal obligation to act according to our own judgment of what is right – but Clarke does not say that we are under an obligation to act from this formal obligation *alone*, or that we can do – we are just under an obligation not to act against it.

So, with respect to the practical claim, I agree that Clarke held that purely rational motivation is possible where that rational motivation includes the rational comprehension of eternal rewards and punishments (secondary obligation). Clarke said that we are formally obliged to govern ourselves according to the reason of things, but I do not believe that he argued that, even in principle, that human beings (post-Fall) could do this without an appreciation of both our formal and secondary obligations.

Clarke then, did not hold, as Irwin claims, that ‘bare’ speculative reason could motivate us, unless that reason contained an understanding of an hedonically tinted promise or threat. Clarke repeatedly told us that it couldn’t. He did, however, repeatedly tell us that we are *obligated* by reason and that we could understand our formal obligation by reason. This is just one example:

So far therefore as men are conscious of what is right and wrong, so far they are under an obligation to act accordingly – it ought to govern men’s actions as it cannot but necessarily determine their assent.¹²⁶

Irwin claims that Clarke believed that

A sound understanding necessarily grasps the true moral principles and a sound will necessarily acts on them.¹²⁷

This is perhaps fair comment as long as Clarke is understood to have maintained that first, neither our understandings, nor our wills have been sound since the Fall, and second that ‘bare awareness’ must also grasp the truths about our continued existence in a future state and dread the punishment or look forward to the reward that will be ours in that future state.

¹²⁶ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 191.

¹²⁷ Irwin, *Development*, Vol. II, 387.

The entire point of the second lecture series was to deliver bad news to the four different kinds of present day deists condemned by Clarke as ‘vain pretenders to reason.’¹²⁸ Clarke counted as deists those who understood God to have created the world, but then to have opted out of any involvement with it; those who maintained that God continued to maintain his creation, but did not recognise the basis for the moral judgments made by his creatures; those who believed that God is possessed of natural and moral attributes, but who did not believe in future state for immortal souls, and finally those who held that natural reason is capable of discovering the religious truth including moral truths, and who denied a *necessary* role for revelation in this process.¹²⁹ The bad news that Clarke was keen to impart was that only Christianity, as revealed in Scripture, is able to provide the appropriate psychological conditions for us to be good. For Clarke, the practical force contained within Revelation is the means by which God has made it possible for us to be good. Revelation was needed because of the historic fact of our wilful failure in the ‘past trial’ to put our natural reasoning abilities to their proper purpose in order discover all of the moral truth we needed in order to behave.

At this point we can notice the similarity between Clarke’s argument and Locke’s claim in the final chapter of the *Reasonableness* that natural or unassisted reason is incapable of discovering and keeping us to our duty sufficiently (hence the need for Christ). Locke argued that God had provided all of us with a natural reason (the ‘candle of the Lord’) through which (by the ‘light of reason’) he revealed to us his existence (‘through the works of nature’), his power and his goodness, and that as his creatures we were under a law that specified both our duties and various ways to reconciliation should we fail in those duties.¹³⁰ So Locke asked, given that this knowledge was at least in theory accessible, ‘What need was there of a Saviour? What advantage have we by Jesus Christ?’

¹²⁸ Ibid.,150.

¹²⁹ See Ferguson, *Heretic*, 28, for this summary.

¹³⁰ Locke, *Reasonableness*, 190-191. There is also an interesting discussion on Locke’s position here in relation to Spinoza in Andrea Sangiacomo “Locke and Spinoza on the Epistemic and Motivational Weaknesses of Reason: *The Reasonableness of Christianity and the Theological-Political Treatise*,” *Intellectual History Review* 26, no. 4 (2016): 477-495.

Locke then proceeded to work his way through the historical reasons for Christ's appearance. Either blinded by 'sense and lust', or by 'a careless inadvertency', we had failed to use our natural reason to look at the works of nature that clearly 'evidence' a benevolent deity. Fear and suspicion of a superior being had led us into the clutches of false polytheistic priests, who led us further into darkness, ignorance, vice and superstition, through 'wrong notions and invented rites'. Our natural reason was at this point of no use, since reason had been driven from religion and was 'judged to have nothing to do in the case'. Fear and superstition reigned within our minds and reason, which would have informed us of the existence of 'the one invisible true God', except that through our own misuse reason now lacked sufficient authority within our own minds to 'prevail upon the virtuous'. Lacking a true idea of God, we also lacked proper knowledge of our duty.¹³¹ The Mosaic Revelation was contained within that community and did not spread. Locke asserted that

natural religion in its full extent, was no where, that I know of, taken care of by the force of natural reason. . . . 'tis too hard a task for unassisted reason, to establish morality in all its parts upon its true foundations; with a clear and convincing light.¹³²

Deducing our certain duties required 'such trains of reasonings' that it made the task too difficult for most. Revelation by Christ was the 'surer and shorter way' for God to disclose our duties with sufficient authority to that the 'mass of mankind', who lacking will, ability, education or time, could then be brought to obedience. The task of discovering all the parts of the moral law that pertained to us is so difficult, Locke argued, that even the learned Christian philosophers had failed to realise the debt they owed to revelation, which provided the seeds of a rational account of Christianity. Here, Locke made the distinction between the discovery of truth and rational reception to truth once it is promulgated:

Native and original truth, is not so easily wrought out of the mine as we who have it delivered, ready dug and fashioned into our hands, are apt to imagine.¹³³

¹³¹ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 192-94.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 195.

¹³³ *Ibid.*,

As for the ancient philosophers - the 'wise heathens' - Locke's conclusion was that

'tis plain in fact, that human reason unassisted, failed men in its great and proper business of morality. It is never from unquestionable principles, by clear deductions, made out an entire body of the law of nature. And he that will collect all the moral rules of the philosophers, and compare them with those contained in the New Testament will find them to come short of the morality delivered by our saviour, and taught by his apostles.¹³⁴

Even, Locke maintained, if we were to allow that these philosophers had made out all the rules by which we were to live life (and he stressed they had not), then this rulebook would still fail as a guide to practical morality, as it would not have been backed by sufficient authority to place us under an obligation. We could accept or reject it at will because our obligations to conform to its dictates had not been made out. The law of nature is not a complete system of morality without a demonstration of its obligatory nature, which is, Locke insisted, the power of the law maker to make or destroy our happiness in a future life in which the 'great rewards and punishments, for those who would, or would not obey him' would become manifest.¹³⁵ Locke argued that the rewards for virtue in our earthly existence were insufficiently tied to its performance and without *certain* knowledge of a future realm where this state of affairs would be remedied, the motivation for moral behaviour was too weak.¹³⁶

Clarke too was pellucid on the degeneration of our natural ability in the 'generality of men' to correctly identify that which is fit or unfit to be done. The reasons for this (which compound the results of our original Fall) are given as our carelessness and lack of attention, false notions supplied by an evil education, and the effect of sensual desires and appetites, where debauched practice destroys our ability to think properly or to want to think properly about moral duty. We all now require particular instruction to give us accurate moral ideas and to convince us of their truth, certainty and importance. There is a reciprocal effect of ignorant thought and vicious practice upon one another, such that

¹³⁴ Ibid., 196.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 199

¹³⁶ Ibid., 203-204.

vicious customs and actions, reciprocally increase the blindness of their hearts, darken the judgments of their understandings, stupefy and sear their consciences so as to become past feeling, and by degrees extinguish wholly that light of nature in their own minds, which was given to them originally to enable them to discern between good and evil.¹³⁷

Clarke disagreed with Locke that the obligation for moral behaviour derived from its status as a command from an all-powerful lawmaker. For Clarke, formal obligation derived from the conformity of an action to a value specified in eternal law by the relation of object, things or persons to one another. For Locke, in this text, obligation had motive force because the belief in a command made by an omnipotent lawmaker (even where it is a command made, by a benevolent lawmaker with reference to an eternal and immutable law that states what is good or evil), was accompanied by, or bound up with, the motivating belief of likelihood of associated rewards and punishments attached to compliance or non-compliance. For Clarke, obligation derived from values present necessarily, eternally and immutably, and not by the command per se of a lawgiver referring to these values. Motivation, for Clarke, was extrinsic to the obligation, but it was indispensable for the fulfilment of obligation. This is what an understanding of the New Testament provided. Clarke also thought, like Locke, that unassisted reason failed to deliver a complete moral law because of the weakness of our minds and will, and the lack of authority that rational deliverance on its own carried within our fallen natures. This meant that virtue alone was insufficiently attractive to us to motivate performance, but the remedy of revelation here spoke to motivation and not obligation itself.

It is also important to emphasise that Clarke thought that the 'wise and good laws' made for us and commanded by God, if followed, would lead to our happiness. They 'tend to the good of mankind'.¹³⁸ Clarke was absolutely clear though, that the obligatory force of our moral ideas derived from what is fit or unfit to be done, and not from the good that virtue may accrue us. I believe that Clarke argued that we need to have a full and complete understanding of that part of God's ordained law for us, which he freely chose to conform to eternal

¹³⁷ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 277.

¹³⁸ Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 90.

law, and which includes the law of nature, in order for it to be possible for us to effectively fulfil our moral duties. This full and complete understanding was revealed in Scripture to us, because we had failed to derive it from our natural comprehension of the law of nature.

Clarke did not go so far as to claim that nobody ever had been able to understand and fulfil any moral obligation without knowing and accepting the whole of the Christian revelation, but he said that ‘those few of’ the heathen philosophers who may have done so were exactly those who had reasoned their way to a confident belief in a future state. That is, they fulfilled their obligations, motivated by the thought of future hedonic consequences. Clarke did not directly state that this was their motivation but he stated that belief in a future state had been discovered by ‘those few’ through natural reason alone and that (some of) the ancient moralists had ‘indeed a consistent scheme of deism as far as it went’. They were ‘very brave and wise men, *if any of them could keep steady and firm to it*’¹³⁹ (my emphasis). Clarke clearly doubted here the ability of these men to be consistently virtuous, and claimed that part of their wisdom was to see the necessity for revelation. This was a necessity also foreseen by God, and met partly by the revelation of the commandments to Moses, but mainly by the coming of Christ.

Nowhere in the text of the second lecture series did Clarke claim that *fulfilment* of an obligation from natural religion could occur without the natural understanding that that obligation is also the commandment of an all-powerful God who will expose us to his justice at some point. He made the opposite claim, thus:

All the great things that modern deists affect to say of right reason as to its sufficiency in discovering obligations and motives of morality; is only a pretence.¹⁴⁰

Virtuous action, where it resulted from natural religion, was made possible by our knowledge of the other tenets of natural religion. It did not come about from

¹³⁹ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 172.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

the reasoned belief or knowledge that an action is right. It might have come about as the results of our natural reasoning of other religious truths, but this is not the claim that the 'bare awareness' of the fitness of an action, which is understood as an obligation, can motivate us. It also entails that even if the practical claim is interpreted as including religious truths, then these truths include the certainty of future reward and punishment to be meted out to us. A bare awareness of certain eternal damnation would motivate us. It does not obligate us, but then the performance of a moral action or the forbearance of a degenerate one does not arise from the obligation, but from the fear or hope engendered by the thought of acting against or in accordance with that obligation. Clarke, throughout the text, sets 'obligations and motives' apart. Indeed in proposition (xi) Clarke described the ways in which the motives supplied by Christianity are consistent with reason, and in proposition (xii) Clarke says that the way in which Christianity 'urges' our motive to perform our duties is reasonable and refers to the setting before men of their duties but also the great dangers involved in neglecting them.¹⁴¹

Looking hard for any evidence of the claim that Clarke believed that obligation is ever sufficient to motivate us, we might look at the following quotations cited in the secondary literature in support of the practical claim:

1) The fitness of men's governing all their actions by the rule of right or equity: and also that this assent is a formal obligation upon every man, actually and constantly to conform himself to that rule.¹⁴²

This again is simply the understanding that assent results in obligation. There are frequent examples of this claim in Clarke's text, some of which we have already seen.

The following passage is also offered in support of the idea that understanding fitness alone as an obligation is practically sufficient to move us to that action:

2) And by this understanding or knowledge of the natural and necessary relations, fitnesses and proportions of things, the wills likewise of all intelligent beings are constantly directed, and must needs be determined

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 344.

¹⁴² Ibid., 199.

to act accordingly; excepting those only, who will things to be what they are not and cannot be; that is those, whose wills are corrupted by particular interest or affection, or swayed by some unreasonable and prevailing passion.¹⁴³

Clarke claimed that assent '*constantly directs*', by which we might understand that it counsels, or points towards or issues an order to the will. Clarke argued elsewhere, that moral necessity does not imply physical or absolute necessity. Our understanding as to what is fit could issue a command but our liberty is such that we might reject this and select another (less reasonable) reason for acting.¹⁴⁴ Clarke did, as Schneewind says, argue in a later sermon that when we act we always act with 'some view' in mind, but this view could also be that given to us by 'the brutal guidance of mere appetite and passion'.

Schneewind argues that Clarke's view of rational agency entails that we are 'unable to escape being moved by reasons *at least to some extent*'¹⁴⁵ (my emphasis). The trouble is that the 'at least to some extent' makes the claim trivial, in the moral case. Obviously, I might well have a view of my obligation to repay a debt and a view of my finances being better served by not repaying it. My will may be 'directed' by both views. Schneewind admits soon after in the moral case that

in doing so he runs afoul of a problem that he barely touches on. We can, regrettably know what we ought to do and yet not do it.¹⁴⁶

This is presumably why Schneewind starts the sentence with 'Clarke is trying to think his way to the view that it is our rational agency that makes moral principles binding on us and enables us to be moved by them.' There is, though, very little evidence that that is what Clarke did think. Clarke, on the contrary argued for the 'necessity of rewards and punishment' in the 'practice of virtue'.¹⁴⁷ Given the immediate rewards that vice seems to offer and where

¹⁴³ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 186.

¹⁴⁴ See James A. Harris, *Of Liberty and Necessity: The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth Century British Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46-53, for Clarke's view of liberty,

¹⁴⁵ Schneewind, *Invention*, 318.

¹⁴⁶ Schneewind, *Invention*, 318-9.

¹⁴⁷ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 223.

virtue is often threatened with great calamities, losses and sometimes even death itself, Clarke maintained the following:

This alters the question and destroys the practice of that which appears to be so reasonable in the whole speculation.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, Clarke claimed it was 'the error of the Stoics', to assume that the rightness of virtue made it 'entirely self-sufficient'.

For though virtue is unquestionably worthy to be chosen for its own sake, even without expectation of reward; yet it does not follow that it is therefore entirely self sufficient, and able to support men under all kinds of sufferings, even death itself, for its sake; without any prospect of future recompense. Here therefore began the error of the Stoics; who taught that the bare practice of virtue, was itself the chief good, and able of itself to make a man happy, under all the calamities in the world.¹⁴⁹

Clarke did not 'run afoul of a problem he barely touches upon' as Schneewind suggests. On the contrary knowing what do to and yet not doing it is at the forefront of Clarke's attempt to privilege an understanding of revealed truths as the only source of knowledge that can lead us to a virtuous life. Schneewind finds Clarke's account of the weakness of the will, based, as it is on our corrupted nature, 'hardly philosophically satisfying'.¹⁵⁰ But this is akin to the complaint that sees Hutcheson's moral theory is not 'recognisably realist' to present-day readers.¹⁵¹ Plainly neither Clarke, nor Hutcheson, was attempting to satisfy or interest philosophers who exclude the workings of divine providence. Both thinkers sought to offer solutions to the problems of a Christian moral life lived in the round and not to satisfy the Whiggish demands of later histories of autonomy or moral cognitivism.

Schneewind doesn't use quotation (2) (Irwin does) but perhaps he ought to have, because the second phrase in the sentence that 'the wills likewise of all intelligent beings are constantly directed, and *must needs be determined to act accordingly*' (my emphasis) is more problematic. The phrase is not problematic if

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 223.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Schneewind, *Invention*, 319.

¹⁵¹ Peter J. E. Kail "Hutcheson's Moral Sense: Skepticism, Realism, and Secondary Qualities," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (2001): 77.

‘must needs be’ is read as ‘should’ or ‘ought to’ be determined to act accordingly, but could ‘must needs be’, be read as ‘*are*’ determined to act accordingly?

The passage is taken from a section of Clarke’s argument that God always determines his will according to his perfect understanding. Clarke continued that it is also ‘very unreasonable and blame-worthy in practice’ that rational creatures gifted with faculties of reason and will, which allow us to identify good and evil (reason) and choose good and reject evil (will) act viciously. But he then said, ‘if we suppose no future state of rewards it will follow that God has endued men with such faculties’, and has

put them under a necessity of approving and choosing virtue in the judgment of their own minds; and yet has not given them the wherewith to support themselves in the suitable and constant practice of it.¹⁵²

So, if we read that either our wills, or we as the intelligent beings ‘must needs be determined to act accordingly’ as meaning that we do act accordingly, or our wills are determined to act accordingly, by our knowledge of fitness and unfitness, then this makes nonsense of Clarke’s understanding that we need the thought of certain future rewards or punishments to bring ourselves to be virtuous. A resolution might be suggested by looking at Leibniz’s response to Clarke’s position on the liberty of the will, but it should be noted that Clarke’s various statements on liberty do not seem to have been reconciled in a manner that anyone other than Clarke has found satisfactory.¹⁵³

Clarke’s position (or one of them) was that it is impossible for the last judgment of the understanding to move an agent to act since judgment is a passive occurrence and cannot move us to act. At one point, in a later letter, Clarke claimed that

there is no connection between approbation and action, between what is passive and what is active. The spring of action is not the understanding, for a being incapable of action might nevertheless be capable of perception.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 225.

¹⁵³ See Harris, *Liberty*, 52-53.

¹⁵⁴ Clarke, “Clarke’s Answer to Bulkeley’s First Letter” in *Being and Attributes*, 26.

Clarke maintained that, in fact, the ‘spring of action is the self-motive power which is (in all animals) spontaneity, and (in rational ones) we call liberty.’ An agent then is always moved to act on something other than the last judgement of the understanding. Harris though, understands Clarke’s notion of freedom to entail a further liberty. That is, the liberty to *choose* to perform a different action than the one that our last judgment has approved (where this liberty is still a freedom to choose and not a freedom to act). Leibniz, in an exchange with Clarke, may be seen as having understood Clarke this way, and saw the problematic implications of this for the motive force of reasons. Clarke’s manoeuvring around the various senses of necessity, Leibniz argued, dissociated ‘the mind from the motives’ in such a way as we are left needing a second-order motive to choose to choose the last judgment of the understanding.¹⁵⁵ So then Clark’s account of freedom does not simply claim that we are not moved to action by an act of the understanding, but further that the understanding does not determine which action it is that we end up choosing.

It is possible that Clarke’s account of liberty left the space between the last judgment of the understanding that an action was fit or unfit and the election of that action, in order that the motives supplied by Christianity might have a role in moral conduct (not covered by the judgment that an action is fitting or unfitting). The power to choose differently, after the last judgment of the understanding has been issued, is captured by the passage where Clarke talks about the unfairness of the situation where without knowledge of just rewards and punishment being handed out in a future state, we would be

under a necessity of approving and choosing virtue in the judgment of their own minds; and yet has not given them the wherewith to support themselves in the suitable and constant practice of it.¹⁵⁶

Clarke insisted that, in practice, we need further motives to help us to choose to choose what our understanding has put us under a ‘necessity of approving and choosing’.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Harris, *Of Liberty*, 53.

¹⁵⁶ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 225.

This also helps to understand why a rationally derived obligation to act is not ever seen by Clarke as having the power to motivate us. The correct reading of *must needs be determined to act accordingly* in quotation 2 is that our wills should or ought to be directed by our understanding to act accordingly by the force of moral necessity which does not imply a loss of freedom to ignore the dictates of reason.

That Clarke understood obligation and motive as independent entities, to be derived independently is also alluded to here:

All the great things that modern deists affect to say of right reason as to its sufficiency in discovering obligations and motives of morality; is only a pretence.¹⁵⁷

Clarke, however, also said that

every man, because of the natural liberty of his will, *can and ought* to govern all his actions by some certain rule and give a reason for everything he does.¹⁵⁸ (My emphasis.)

Which certainly suggests a more compatibilist reading of Clarke's view of freedom, but it is not my aim here to offer a full treatment of Clarke's views on freedom. My point is that Clarke's wider argument was that in our present fallen state we need revelation to help us truly believe that there will be future consequences to our actions. Clarke admired those very few ancient heathens who managed to reason the existence of a future state, but he was sceptical of their ability to be consistently virtuous, especially, as we saw in his rebuttal of stoic claims of the self-sufficiency of virtue, in the face of misfortune and tragedy. Just because we could, and should govern our actions according to a rule, does not imply that we must only use knowledge of the judgment of fitness or unfitness to practically govern our actions.

I now turn to look at Clarke's account of conscience in relation to obligation.

Clarke, conscience and obligation

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 314.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 273.

At this point we can press Clarke still harder on the question of the foreseeable hedonic consequences of breaking or complying with a rule. As we have seen, Clarke insisted that the

judgment and conscience of a man's own mind concerning the reasonableness and fitness of a thing, that his actions should be conformed to such, or such a rule or law, is the truest and formallest obligation.¹⁵⁹

We have already seen that obligation for Clarke consisted in the reason of things. The knowledge of rewards and punishments in the next life were characterised by Clarke as 'secondary obligations' or the 'most effectual means of inforcement'. Clarke, however, sometimes said that our assent to the fitness of an action just is the obligation and at other times he indicated that obligation derives from the involuntary assent to a further principle; this is the principle of the

fitness of men's governing all their actions by the rule of right or equity: and also that this assent is a formal obligation upon every man, actually and constantly to conform himself to that rule.¹⁶⁰

Here, obligation derives from our involuntary judgment that it is right to do what we believe is right, and not solely from the judgment that something is right. So, for example, when Korsgaard says that for Clarke, Balguy and Price 'They believed that the perception of an action as right, *or what they took to be the same thing obligatory*, is a motive to do it' (my emphasis), this is not quite accurate. Conscience would seem here to be a formal obligation, but Clarke did not elaborate on what he meant by formal obligation (or 'formallest'). Raube takes him to mean that obligation is a 'logical consequence' of the perception of the fitness of an action, and that the obligation to govern one's actions according to the perception of what one takes to be right is the 'primary', or presumably foundational, obligation from which obligations to specific actions derives.¹⁶¹

If this is what Clarke has in mind, it entails that it is not the basic perception of an act as fit to be performed that motivates us, but rather the hedonic consequences of performing or not performing an action we know to be right.

¹⁵⁹ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 190-191.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁶¹ Raube, "Morality and Reason," 138-9.

For whoever acts contrary to this sense and conscience of his own mind is necessarily self condemned; and the greatest and strongest of obligations, is that which a man cannot break through without condemning himself.¹⁶²

Indeed, Clarke made plain the hedonic consequences of this self-judgment.

There is no man, who at any time does good and brave and generous things, but the reason of his own mind applauds him for so doing; and no man at any time does things base and vile, dishonourable and wicked, but at the same time he condemns himself in what he does, the one is necessarily accompanied with good hope, and expectation of reward; the other with continual torment and fear of punishment.¹⁶³

Clarke then can be said to have argued that we are able to act according to our moral judgment and according to our obligation *only* where there is some additional hedonic motivation, from conscience or from other foreseeable hedonic consequences. When we act on this additional motivation, our *obligation* is from the reason of things (the metaphysical claim) and the reason of our own minds (the epistemological claim). It could even fulfil the practical claim (that reason alone can motivate) if by this we understand this reasoning to include reasoning of hedonic consequence of our action. But then we have not acted solely from the fitness of the action but from the additional reason of the consequence to ourselves.

It is important to note that Clarke's theory of why parts of revelation work so well upon us as motivating tools is that we come equipped with 'natural hopes and expectations'. Despite his refusal of innatism, Clarke believed that we are created needing to be reassured that these natural hopes and expectations are valid and will be met. Having failed our trial at managing our own behaviour guided by natural reason alone, revelation was provided. A good piece of textual support for this interpretation is derived from Clarke's observation of the frequent dissociation between our understanding of what is required of us (where we also have an appreciation of the attractiveness of virtue) and our performance of the action.

¹⁶² Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 191.

¹⁶³ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 272.

Men may be pleased with the beauty and excellency of virtue, and have some faint inclinations and even resolutions to practice it; and yet at the return of their temptations, constantly fall back into their accustomed vices; if the great motives of their duty be not very frequently and very strongly inculcated upon them, so as to make a very deep and lasting impression upon their minds; and they have not some greater and higher assistance afforded them, *than the bare conviction of their own speculative reason.*¹⁶⁴ (my emphasis)

The aim of this chapter was to bring out the implications of the wider context of Clarke's second Boyle lectures for the understanding of his ethical rationalism. I will return to the subject of rationalism and motivation in chapter 5 when I look at the position of Clarke's defenders, Gilbert Burnet and Balguy.

In the next chapter I move on to compare the theistic metaphysics of Clarke and Hutcheson and examine their respective positions on essences. This will be the first of two chapters on Hutcheson, whose overriding aim is to consider the nature of his realism.

¹⁶⁴ Clarke, *Natural Religion*, 282.

Chapter 3

Hutcheson's method and God's communicable attributes

It is an easy thing for men to assert anything in words; but our own hearts must decide the matter.

Hutcheson *Inquiry*¹⁶⁵

The aim of this chapter and the next is to offer an account of the nature of Hutcheson's realism. The present chapter focuses upon the way in which Hutcheson sought to secure the reality of virtue – his theistic metaphysics, and the way in which he intended to prove that reality to his readers – his method. I will argue that Hutcheson's theistic metaphysics may not be as far apart from a figure like Clarke as might have been imagined. The chapter proceeds as follows: First, I briefly outline some of the approaches to the interpretation of Hutcheson's work in the secondary literature. I will then introduce the comparison of Hutcheson with Clarke on the matter of method and God's communicable attributes. I move on to discuss Hutcheson's adoption of introspection as a method. Hutcheson's teleology and his views on the purpose of moral obligation are then discussed. I finish with a comparison of the meta-ethics of Clarke and Hutcheson. A detailed inspection of Hutcheson's moral (and aesthetic) epistemology is reserved for the following chapter.

Approaches to Hutcheson

Hutcheson's first major works in moral science, his *four treatises*, were composed in the 1720s in Dublin. His Latin treatise on moral philosophy, possibly based on his earlier Dublin lectures and given as his Glasgow private lectures, the *Philosophiae Moralis Institutio Compendiaria* was published in 1742, revised in 1745 and then translated into English and published as *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy* in 1747.¹⁶⁶ His *System of Moral Philosophy*, circulated amongst friends from 1737, and probably given as his public Glasgow

¹⁶⁵ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 98.

¹⁶⁶ See Luigi Turco, introduction to Francis Hutcheson, *Philosophiae Moralis Institutio Compendiaria, with A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, ed. Luigi Turco, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Press, 2007), ix-xi.

lectures, was published posthumously in 1755.¹⁶⁷ His Dublin course notes on metaphysics were first published without his permission. Hutcheson published his own version in 1742 as *A Synopsis of Metaphysics Comprehending Ontology and Pneumatology* (revised in 1744). Student notes from his Dublin courses on logic were circulated, and eventually published after his death in 1756, as *A Compend of Logic*.¹⁶⁸

One prominent debate in the secondary literature concerns the relationship between Hutcheson's *four treatises* and his later published works, the *System* and the *Short Introduction*. In the *four treatises* Hutcheson had opposed any legislative basis for moral judgment and behaviour. Hutcheson denied both that moral judgments are made with reference to a known law (revealed, natural or civil) and that the motivation for moral action arose from the foreseeable consequences of deviation or compliance with a law. Hutcheson insisted upon the natural occurrence of a distinctively moral motivation (a kind affection towards others), and a natural sense of the difference between virtue and vice, which responds to the presence of benevolent intention in an actor's motivational set (a moral sense). In the *Inquiry* and the *Essay* Hutcheson described both the moral sense and our primary impetus towards securing good for others as *instinctive*.¹⁶⁹ Prudential concerns, according to Hutcheson, even those surrounding divine justice in a future state, do not drive or govern what we count as moral behaviour. Neither is the motivation to perform an action simply to satisfy God, what anyone counts as moral in a motivation.

The debate in the secondary literature over the cohesion of Hutcheson's work centres upon the degree of conformity in the later published works to traditional aspects of the curriculum – those that dealt with natural and civil law (especially the *System*), and the Reformed scholastic doctrine that taught that moral motivation properly consisted of a specific intention to please, or appease, God

¹⁶⁷ Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy. Collected Works*, Vols. v-vi, (Hildesheim: George Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1755, 1969).

¹⁶⁸ Moore, introduction, *LMNSM*, xxii-xxiii.

¹⁶⁹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 112, 133. *Essay*, 23-24.

(especially the *Short Introduction*).¹⁷⁰ James Moore originally argued for a ‘two system’ reading of Hutcheson whereby the later published works are to be understood as teaching materials that were not primarily intended to advance, or promulgate his own philosophy.¹⁷¹ Moore has more recently argued, in the introduction of his editions to the *Logic* and *Metaphysics*, that these were clearly pedagogic and probably composed initially in Dublin. Moore claims that both of these works and the *Short Introduction* and parts of the *System* can be seen as part of a ‘textbook tradition’ whereby the author offered commentary on a variety of opinions on the topics under consideration, the choice of topic and structure having been set by authors of previous texts.¹⁷² Moore now takes care to emphasize the points in the *Logic* and the *Metaphysics* where Hutcheson introduces his own theories into these discussions. This is seen most especially in the *Metaphysics*, a work in which Moore sees Hutcheson presenting ‘his own distinctive theory of concomitant ideas’ in order to offer a Lockean style rebuttal of Berkeley’s denial of external reality.¹⁷³ Moore also links this work to Hutcheson’s *Logic* and appears to find support for moral concomitants there too. These are, says Moore, ‘the principle point of connection between his logic and his writings on aesthetics and morals’.¹⁷⁴

Knud Haakonssen and James Harris both oppose Moore’s initial ‘two system’ interpretation. Haakonssen offers a particularly trenchant rebuttal of Moore’s position. He reads Hutcheson as a moral realist and a cognitivist, where virtue is a naturally existing quality in motivation, which is judged, correctly or incorrectly, as such by a natural moral sense, our natural abilities both cognitive and motivational being the result of divine benevolence. In addition the moral sense is able to lead us to an understanding the role of divine benevolence at work in the natural world, which includes our own natural moral abilities.

Haakonssen suggests that natural religion is the bridge between moral sense and

¹⁷⁰ See Haakonssen, *Natural Law*, 65 -67, and Harris, “Religion,” 205-222.

¹⁷¹ James Moore, “The Two System of Francis Hutcheson: On the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 37-60. See also James Moore, “Hutcheson’s Theodicy: The Argument and Context of *A System of Moral Philosophy*,” in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation*, ed. Paul Wood (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 239-266.

¹⁷² Moore, introduction, *LMNSN*, x.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹⁷⁴ See Moore, footnotes 3 and 4 of *Logic*, 12-13.

natural law for Hutcheson.¹⁷⁵ Harris finds, against Moore, for continuity across texts in Hutcheson's treatment of religious belief, seeing them as offering a *supportive* motivational aid for providentially instituted natural moral abilities.¹⁷⁶ Crowe both follows Harris, and goes further, to argue that Hutcheson was in fact an early champion of a psychological approach to religion, which is founded upon man's moral and aesthetic abilities, and that this approach is evident across the entire span of Hutcheson's work.¹⁷⁷

Hutcheson's thought, of course, developed over the span of his writing career, differences in intended audiences notwithstanding. Other commentators have taken a purely chronological view of the shifts in thinking evident in the texts and revisions. Scott, Hutcheson's first biographer, and Bishop, both present 'four-stage' models of Hutcheson's work, structured chronologically over the *Inquiry*, then *Essay and Illustrations*, *System* and the *Short Introduction*.¹⁷⁸ Both examine the changes in each of the texts in the way that Hutcheson conceptualised the moral sense and its relation to motivation.

By far the most popular approach to Hutcheson though, is to confine the analysis to the *four treatises*, and sometimes to the changes between the first two treatises and the second two. This tack, where it is justified, is sometimes taken on the grounds that Hutcheson's *four treatises* were the ones that his contemporaries responded to, or which his reputation came to rest upon, or that they represent a 'purer' statement of his moral philosophy. To a great extent though, Hutcheson presents his readers with a moving target, as his views develop across the texts and the earlier works are revised, at least to some

¹⁷⁵ See Knud Haakonssen, "Natural Law and Moral Realism: The Scottish Synthesis," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 61-85. Haakonssen, *Natural law*, 63-98. Knud Haakonssen, "Moral Philosophy and Natural Law: From the Cambridge Platonists to the Scottish Enlightenment," *Political Science* 40 (1988): 97-110.

¹⁷⁶ Harris, "Religion," 205-222.

¹⁷⁷ Benjamin D. Crowe, "Hutcheson on Natural Religion," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, vol. 4 (2011): 711-740.

¹⁷⁸ They disagree about the order of composition between the *Short Introduction* and the *System*. William R. Scott, *Francis Hutcheson; His Life Teaching and Position in the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900; repr., Forgotten Books, 2012). John D. Bishop, "Moral Motivation and the Development of Francis Hutcheson's Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, No. 2 (1996): 277-295, and *The Moral Philosophy of Francis Hutcheson*, (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1979).

extent, to reflect his subsequent thought. The important point about the interpretation of Hutcheson is well captured by Gill, in his *British Moralists*, where he describes his own analysis of Hutcheson as a ‘snapshot’.¹⁷⁹ Any explanation will likely hold good only for a period of Hutcheson’s thought and, moving between texts, because of later revisions and certain dating difficulties, is something of a high-wire act.

In this chapter and the next, I will concentrate on the period up to and including Hutcheson’s *inaugural lecture* at Glasgow in 1730 (*On the Natural Sociability of Mankind*), mainly because the subsequent chapters in the thesis look at responses to the *four treatises*. I will, however, include Hutcheson’s *Logic* and *Metaphysics* and the text of the *inaugural lecture*.¹⁸⁰ These texts were either not circulated, or not widely circulated in Hutcheson’s lifetime, but I believe, as Moore has indicated, that they offer valuable information for an assessment of Hutcheson’s thought in the period up to 1730. Reference will also be made to Hutcheson’s correspondence with Gilbert Burnet, an introductory letter to the ‘*Inquiry*’ published in the ‘*London Journal*’ as ‘*Reflections in our Common Systems of Morality*’ in 1725, and ‘*Hibernicus’s Letters*’ published in the ‘*Dublin Journal*’ of 1725.¹⁸¹ Hutcheson’s *Metaphysics* and the *Logic* have yet to receive a comprehensive treatment in the secondary literature and this is not the aim here.¹⁸² Nevertheless, in this chapter and the next, parts of both these texts will be analysed. With regard to Hutcheson’s realism, I argue in this chapter that first, Hutcheson’s theistic metaphysics indicate that moral good was a mind independent property in so far as moral goodness was a property of the divine nature, and was understood by God to be an eternal and immutable good. Second, Hutcheson clearly argued that this part of the divine nature had been communicated to us, and that we could recognise it as a good via our natural

¹⁷⁹ Gill, *British Moralists*, 155. This is also Darwall’s approach to Hutcheson in *Internal Ought*.

¹⁸⁰ I’ll note revisions made to the four treatises in 1738 and 1742 and to the *Metaphysics* in 1744

¹⁸¹ “Correspondence” in *Illustrations*, 195-247. Francis Hutcheson, *Francis Hutcheson: Two Texts on Human Nature*, ed. Thomas Mautner (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Henceforth *Two Texts*. Francis Hutcheson, *Opera Minora, Works*, Vol vii (Hildesheim: George Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1971).

¹⁸² Although see Emily Michael, “Francis Hutcheson’s *Logicae Compendium* and the Glasgow School of Logic,” in *Logic and the Workings of the Mind: The Logic of Ideas and Faculty Psychology in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Patricia A. Easton (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing, 1977), 83-96.

affections and sense of morality.

In the next section, I will introduce a comparison of the approach of Clarke and Hutcheson on the matter of God's communicable attributes and method.

Clarke and Hutcheson

Hutcheson was opposed to Clarke's 'a priori' method because he thought that rational demonstration was inadequate as a tool to defeat scepticism in the general population. This, however, was not just because of the difficulty of following the argument, but also because Hutcheson did not believe that God's moral goodness could be proven to us (i.e. to all human beings) to follow from his other attributes. More fundamentally Hutcheson did not believe that rational insight into eternal law was the starting point for moral cognition. He argued that our original idea of virtue derived necessarily from a sense.

There was no disagreement between Clarke and his defenders and Hutcheson over Hutcheson's assertion that virtue, defined as benevolence, is real in the following two ways. First, Hutcheson maintained that benevolence exists as a quality in our present motivational set and was not completely obliterated by the events surrounding the Fall. Second, he insisted that the experience, or feeling of benevolence, does not supervene upon a more fundamental wish to serve our own best interests. Clarke and his champions were in agreement with the reality of virtue understood in both these ways.¹⁸³

While the epistemological channel for our ideas of virtue was an issue that Clarke's supporters clashed with Hutcheson over, they rarely engaged in any depth with one another over metaphysics. Indeed, Hutcheson kept most of his metaphysics well away from his *four treatises*.¹⁸⁴ Beiser argues that Clarke himself and his supporters were rhetorically unwilling to be clear about the debt

¹⁸³ This is what Gill terms his 'anti-egoist' reality. See Gill, *British Moralists*, 296, for example.

¹⁸⁴ See Moore, introduction LMNSM, xvii, footnote 28. Moore suggests that Hutcheson, after Shaftesbury, found metaphysical reasoning to be an unnecessary distraction in the imparting of his wisdom to gentlemen, rather than scholars, the former being the intended readership of his *four treatises*.

that their vision of nature owed to scholastic essentialism.¹⁸⁵ It is Beiser's thesis that Hutcheson (and Hume) both ignored the metaphysical meaning of nature that underpinned, but was not always declared by, figures such as Clarke, Burnet and Balguy.¹⁸⁶ Hutcheson furthermore is supposed by Beiser to have taken 'moral values out of the universe and placed them within the realm of human consciousness alone'.¹⁸⁷ I will argue that this is not an accurate statement of Hutcheson's position, and neither is the charge of contingency levelled at Hutcheson, in different forms, by his contemporaries and by a line of later commentators running from Frankena, to Winkler, to Michael Gill.¹⁸⁸

The teleology of Hutcheson's account of nature is undeniable and is present in his *four treatises*, but it receives its fullest and clearest statement in his *inaugural lecture* of 1730 and his *Metaphysics*. Haakonssen and Cuneo present Hutcheson's realism as lying in the providentially instituted fact of our benevolent affections as a distinctively moral motivation. This is a necessity that issues from God's benevolence at work in his creative activity.¹⁸⁹ I believe though, that Hutcheson went further than this. I will argue that it is not just that Hutcheson believed that God had opted to abide by the specifications of eternal law, when he chose to create as he did, because of his goodness. Both Hutcheson and Clarke agree that God acted as he did to secure our (eventual) happiness. I argue that Hutcheson's commitment to realism was stronger even than this. It was located in the eternal and immutable moral good of benevolence, which could not be overturned by God in his creative activity, as its essence lies in this divine attribute. (Although, as discussed a little later, God might *potentially* have retained the power to ignore it.) I will argue in the next chapter, moreover, that our ideas from moral sense derive from this eternal and immutable realm, at least as it existed in the divine mind. (Whether these ideas from moral sense are comparable with any

¹⁸⁵ Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 274.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁸⁸ William Frankena, "Hutcheson's Moral Sense Theory," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16 (1955): 356-375. Kenneth P. Winkler "Hutcheson's Alleged Realism" *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 23 (1985): 170-194. Kenneth P. Winkler, "Hume and Hutcheson and the Color of Virtue," *Hume Studies* 22 (1996), 3-22 and Gill, *British Moralists*, "Notes to Chapter 13," footnote 2, 295-301.

¹⁸⁹ Haakonssen, "Natural Law and Moral Realism," 63-65, Haakonssen, *Natural law*, 63-85, Terence Cuneo, "Reason and the Passions," 233-234.

present day understanding of moral realism, or cognitivism, is not my concern, but the nature of the evaluation offered by Hutcheson's moral sense, and the nature of the ideas it produces, will be the subject of the following chapter.)

One early critical response to Clarke's Boyle lectures came from the young Francis Hutcheson. In 1717 Hutcheson wrote to Clarke to protest at the nature of Clarke's a priori proof of the existence and attributes of God offered in his Boyle lectures. Neither Hutcheson's original letter, nor a substantive account of its contents survives, but Hutcheson later told his friend William Leechman that he had expressed reservations about the feasibility of a certain demonstration of such matters, the failure of which would engender yet more scepticism in the reading public.¹⁹⁰

Hutcheson's concerns about rational demonstration of the existence of God (and some of his attributes) derived from the conviction that the nature of the creative force upon which any moral system ultimately rested, could not be demonstrated in the way that he believed Clarke to have attempted to do so. The *Inquiry*, Hutcheson's first publication, from the first edition of 1725 to the fourth edition of 1738, closed with the guarantee that our natural moral abilities are the result of providential institution by a benevolent Deity who is keen to secure our happiness. These abilities could have been different abilities, 'there is nothing surpassing the natural power of the Deity', Hutcheson admitted, but the goodness of divine nature dictated that our happiness is his aim and that any implanted abilities would have to service this aim.¹⁹¹ The 'great agreement of mankind' over divine benevolence itself, however, Hutcheson noted, did not derive from the idea of a necessary and original, self-existing being. It was conceived of as an 'abundant probability' that was 'deduced' from observed effects in the natural world back to cause.

It has often been taken for granted in these papers. "That the deity is morally good;" tho' the reasoning is not at all built upon this supposition. If we enquire into the reason of the great agreement of mankind in this opinion, we shall perhaps find no demonstrative argument a priori, from

¹⁹⁰ Scott, *Hutcheson*, 15-16 and Beiser, *Sovereignty*, 308.

¹⁹¹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 197.

the idea of an independent being, to prove his goodness. But there is an abundant probability deduced from the whole frame of nature, which seems as far as we know, plainly contrived for the good of the whole; and the casual evils seem the necessary concomitants of some mechanism designed for vastly prepollent good.¹⁹²

Hutcheson did not actually claim here that God's goodness could not be demonstrated from his independence, but rather that the general agreement with the idea of his goodness derives from our observation of the world. He was making an empirical claim about the general source of our agreement.

That Clarke did not actually claim that God's moral attributes were necessary in a metaphysical sense seems to have escaped Hutcheson. The substance of Clarke's argument was that God's goodness was a moral necessity (by which he meant it was not compelled by the force of divine understanding), but Clarke did not argue that God's goodness was necessary in the same way that, for example, his independence or infinity were.¹⁹³ God's independence, in Clarke's account, referred to his being uncaused.¹⁹⁴

With respect to God's goodness, Clarke argued that like his liberty and his other moral perfections, this was a communicable attribute. The scholastic distinction between God's communicable and incommunicable attributes referred to the difference between those attributes that we shared some part of, and so could understand by enlarging them in order to have some view of their perfection in God (his goodness, liberty and power, for example), and those that lay outside of our experience and must be demonstrated in a different way, if at all (his self-existence, independence, omniscience and omnipresence, for example.) Clarke made the contrast between the incommunicability of God's self-existence and absolute independence and the communicability of his other attributes explicit:

No powers are impossible to be communicated but only those which imply self-existence and absolute independence.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Ibid., 197-198.

¹⁹³ See Vailati, introduction, for the difference between Clarke's senses of necessary, xiv-xv.

¹⁹⁴ Jonathan Bennett, Glossary "Independence,"

www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/clarke1704.pdf#glossary.

¹⁹⁵ Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 61.

Clarke argued first, that God was infinitely good because he was ‘necessarily happy in the eternal enjoyment of his own infinite perfections’, and so could not have any other motive for creating creatures other than to communicate his own perfections to them and, secondly, that God was ‘necessary all-sufficient’ (he didn’t want for anything, nor depend on anything else for anything) and so was ‘infinitely removed’ from any ‘cause or temptations of doing evil’, and that his power was not limited by another superior will.¹⁹⁶ God’s goodness did not derive from his being uncaused, or independent in the way that Clarke outlined the argument for independence. For Clarke, God’s causal independence was an incommunicable attribute. His goodness and power (his self-sufficiency) had been communicated. This was Clarke’s position:

In particular, the supreme cause must in the first place be infinitely good, that is, he must have an unalterable disposition to do and to communicate good and happiness because, being himself necessarily happy in the eternal enjoyment of his own infinite perfections, he cannot possibly have any other motives to make creatures at all but only that he may communicate to them his own perfection . . . That he must be infinitely good appears likewise further from hence, that being necessarily all-sufficient, he must consequently be infinitely removed from all malice and envy and from all other possible causes or temptations of doing evil, which, it is evident, can only be the effects of want and weakness, of imperfection or deprivations.¹⁹⁷

In his text on *Metaphysics*, composed in Dublin in the 1720s, Hutcheson discussed God’s attributes and referred the distinction between those that are communicable and those that are incommunicable. God’s independence is incommunicable to us in the sense, Hutcheson argued, that we cannot infer that he is self-caused. God’s independence rather, entailed only that he is subject to no other will.¹⁹⁸ This was not Clarke’s understanding of independence, but it was, as we have just seen, one of his arguments for God’s *goodness*. God’s moral attributes and his unfettered power are, under Hutcheson’s scheme, both communicable attributes. In fact a little later in the *Metaphysics*, Hutcheson

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 84.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 84.

¹⁹⁸ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 163.

produced exactly the same arguments ‘which show that God is good’ that Clarke had used. We infer that God is ‘wholly good and benevolent’ because

it is praiseworthy in itself and the supreme excellence and perfection of an intelligent nature, the very sense of which brings joy to such a nature, but also because no temptation to a contrary course could occur to a superior nature which needs nothing for its own sake.¹⁹⁹ [My emphasis]

On the question of the nature of the necessity that characterises God’s goodness then, Clarke and Hutcheson did not in fact disagree. I will argue that both Clarke and Hutcheson argued that God’s creative activity was caused by the goodness of his nature in a way that could not be considered an abridgment of his freedom. For Clarke and Hutcheson, the necessary fact that God could not be other than happy about his own moral perfection derived, in the first instance, from the fact that God’s goodness was good ‘in itself’. Moreover Clarke, like Hutcheson was an anti-essentialist when it came to the matter of God’s being.²⁰⁰ I do not believe that Hutcheson intended that God, given his other attributes, in practice retained the ability to impose values on his creation that were at odds with his understanding. I believe that the charge of voluntarism or contingency thrown at Hutcheson by Gilbert Burnet and Balguy, or later commentators was, and is, ill-judged. The problem has been that we really need Hutcheson’s *Metaphysics* (and his *Logic*) to see why. I will return to this subject in the last part of the chapter.

Burnet, and Balguy especially, did understand and object to Hutcheson founding God’s goodness in his benevolent nature, as opposed to the rectitude of his will, which was also Clarke’s broader position. This will be discussed in Chapter 5. They all (Clarke, Hutcheson, Burnet and Balguy), however, believed that God’s goodness was communicated to us in such a way as we could discover an analogous, imperfect residue of the particular nature of God’s goodness in ourselves. According to Hutcheson, we did this by introspection, and not by rational demonstration from an uncaused being (however mistaken Hutcheson may have been about Clarke’s actual argument here).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰⁰ Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 29-31.

In the next section, I will examine the nature of Hutcheson's introspective method. His use of introspection relied upon the assumption that we be aware of a difference in the quality of motive behind actions and that we be able to trust in the reality of a motivation to do good for others, rather than resolve this back into an original impetus of self-love or self-interest.

Hutcheson's method

The accuracy of his reading of Clarke notwithstanding, Hutcheson was convinced that our etiolated powers of reason meant that our consensus over the goodness of God did not derive from the 'demonstrative argument a priori'. Since the consensus did exist from whence did it derive? Hutcheson joined Shaftesbury in the attempt to reinstate legitimate enquiry into what could be considered 'natural' to us. Hutcheson's longer argument – the purpose of his first two *Inquiries* – was to assert that by looking at 'the whole frame of nature' we could observe the existence of a sense of beauty and a moral sense. These had been provided by providence as the foundation of our understanding of the existence of a wise and benevolent God (although we did not need to realise the existence of that God in order for them to operate in the first place). Ultimately, Hutcheson argued in his first treatise on beauty, if we governed our minds well enough, our sense of beauty would inform us of the presence of an intelligent designer whose purpose was our happiness. It did so by guiding us towards the observation of regularity in nature and mathematics – the uniformity amidst all the variety.²⁰¹

In the second treatise, he argued that our ability to detect the presence of a quality in motivation that was recognised as a distinctively moral good (either in God or in each other) was provided by our moral sense. What this entailed was that our being able to have the very idea of *moral* good as something that was found in our own motives or God's motives, depended in the first instance on our having a special sense of virtue. Hutcheson argued that we just could not have an idea of goodness (or evil) as a *moral* quality without this. Any attempt to argue (a priori or a posteriori) to the *goodness* of God depended, in the first instance on

²⁰¹ See Crowe, *Natural Religion*, for a thorough and convincing examination of the importance of Hutcheson's sense of beauty in his religious thought. See Haakonssen, *Natural Law*, for the argument, also made later by Crowe, that religious belief is the completion of our morality, 72.

our original idea from this sense - that is, it depended upon our knowing that there is such a thing as *moral* good, or least a good that is distinctively different from natural good. This is the substance of Hutcheson's empiricism and it will be examined further throughout this chapter and the next.

Just as fundamental to Hutcheson's approach, though, was his claim that our benevolence or kind affections, as perceived by our moral sense, are real in themselves. Hutcheson meant that kind affections do not derive from a more foundational self-love and neither do they instance the workings of delusional pride upon a corrupted, fallen nature. In his *four treatises*, Hutcheson launched his inquiries proper into both our natural moral cognitive powers and our natural sociable inclinations. To discover these truths about ourselves, Hutcheson insisted that we did not require any particular knowledge (natural or revealed), or an intellectual ability beyond the capacity to introspect and reflect upon what we observe about ourselves.

To discover truth on these subjects, nothing more is necessary than a little attention to what passes in our own hearts, and consequently every man may come to certainty in these points, without much art or knowledge of other matters.²⁰²

Would men reflect upon what they feel in themselves, all proofs in such matters would be needless.²⁰³

An appeal to the introspected experience of moral motivation and judgement was Hutcheson's chief method in his *four treatises*. This approach required observation of our own experience of social interaction, in terms of our own aims and motivations and our responses to the actions of others, and our reactions to hearing or reading about the thoughts and actions of characters in history and abroad. It was, however, premised upon the understanding that our benevolence is real and understood by us via our experience *because* it is a communicable attribute of God (although we do not need to understand this to recognise the different qualities of motives). James Moore thinks that Hutcheson's adoption of the distinction between God's communicable and non-

²⁰² Hutcheson, *Essay*, 4.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5.

communicable attributes indicated a policy of appeasement towards those readers who expected to see aspects of Reformed scholasticism on the curriculum. Haakonssen too, thinks that although Hutcheson's use of it is blunted by an absence of other supporting theories on the nature of the Trinity, it still represented a considerable concession.

Haakonssen's missing Trinitarian theories, I suspect, were those found in reformed accounts of the operation of the Trinity, such as Turretin's, whereby the communication of God's goodness is achieved by participating, or sharing directly, in divine love itself, through the grace giving activity of the Holy Spirit. Our benevolence, for Hutcheson however, is only analogous to God's.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, I suggest that the distinction between God's communicable and incommunicable attributes was central to Hutcheson's arguments about the ways in which we may have moral knowledge.

Our moral attributes are supposed to be analogous in kind, but not scope, to those of the Deity. By looking at the 'whole frame of nature', Hutcheson argued, we might observe our own sociability and concern for the good of others. The goodness of our own nature, our 'universal benevolence and a social temper', will, if put into practice, give us great pleasure on reflection and ultimately lead to our own happiness - as God had intended and Shaftesbury had advertised. Hutcheson insisted however, that even if we enjoy this pleasure and realise that our own interests are best served by acting for the good of others, acting from primary 'kind affections' is not reducible to acting from self-interest.²⁰⁵ If we pay attention to 'what passes in our own breasts' we will understand the reality of the difference between the two. Once this has been understood, we might

²⁰⁴ See William J. Danaher, "Jonathan Edwards, Francis Hutcheson, and the Problems and Prospects of Civil Society," in *A World for All? Global Civil Society in Political Theory and Trinitarian Theology*, ed. William F. Storrar, Peter J. Casarella and Paul L. Metzger (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 181, on the difference between Hutcheson's use of the distinction between communicable and incommunicable virtues, and the more traditional understanding of this division that occurred in the context of metaphysical Trinitarian arguments in Turretin, for example.

²⁰⁵ See Bishop, *Moral Motivation*, on how, in Hutcheson, the appreciation of the relative roles of pleasure from acting virtuously and acting from other directed affections sharpen Hutcheson's concern with moral motivation from the *Inquiry* to the *Essay/Illustrations*. See also Henning Jensen, *Motivation and the Moral Sense in Francis Hutcheson's Ethical Theory*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

enlarge and perfect this notion of moral goodness to comprehend the goodness of God.

The Cambridge Platonists had framed the claim that there were principles of human nature, which constituted our moral abilities, but that were not entirely exhausted by the appeal to our ultimate self-interest lying in virtue. That is, that the exercise of those abilities might lead to our benefit in important ways, but that they did not originate in our concern for our own well-being. This claim found itself beleaguered on several fronts at the turn of the eighteenth century. Hobbes had of course stepped forward to propose that the natural condition of man was that of a being, desirous only of its own survival, self-gratification or pain relief, and driven into society solely in pursuit of these ends. Pufendorf had claimed that sociability and social affections had a real existence within us, but analysis revealed that they were driven ultimately by a more fundamental principle of self-love. Locke's *tabula rasa* had left us officially without innate ideas of either moral good or evil to guide action in either direction, but he also thought that our natural motivational apparatus, left unguided, naturally disposed us to vice rather than original neutrality. For Locke, moral knowledge, for the individual actor, was knowledge of the content of a law and the correspondence of an action to that law. Moral motivation was a matter of self-concerned compliance and was effected through the foreseeable consequences of compliance or non-compliance with that law. Clarke did allow that we possessed un-derived, original, natural affections towards others, reflection upon which allowed us, in theory, to derive the other-directed duties of natural law. In practice though, as we saw, Clarke argued that we were so corrupted that we needed continuous instruction in a future state of rewards and punishment to motivate us effectively to do what we thought was right. Moreover, orthodox Reformed theologians continued to insist upon a post-lapsarian corruption so thoroughly wrought upon our natural state that even the willing performance of actions commanded by God were displeasing to him unless they were performed with the assistance of grace.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ See Mautner, introduction, *Two Texts*, 11.

In the early eighteenth century, those British moralists who wished to insist that our moral thoughts, affections and actions were reflective of something other than the operation of self-interest, found themselves provoked repeatedly by Bernard Mandeville. Mandeville's disquieting promotion of egoism was intended as a particular provocation to supporters of Shaftesbury's view of universal benevolence as a constitutive force in human nature. According to Mandeville, however, we were both deceived and self-deceiving where we trusted in our experience of natural affections towards others.²⁰⁷ Mandeville's theories were unsettling because they further undermined our experience of moral agency. Hobbes had, at least, allowed us sufficient self-understanding to knowingly herd together for material benefit, and Pufendorfian sociability, although ultimately a matter of self-love, was held to be a 'real' enough experience that we were able to deduce our duties from one another by reflecting upon it.

The response of Francis Hutcheson to Mandeville, to Hobbes, and also to the reformed theological understanding of our compromised moral abilities, rested upon a turn to introspective psychology in the effort to anchor the reality of virtue.²⁰⁸ I suggest that Hutcheson's assumption was that we could, by turning inward and reasoning analogously (rather than by the special action of grace), know that benevolence was God's moral perfection. In addition, and this is most important, our natural moral goodness could not, within the framework of communicable attributes, be utterly different in kind to God's – so that self-love could not be the foundation of our moral abilities and be something quite other in God.

Accounts of the operation of species-wide, uniform, natural principles deemed foundational for mind and nature come to the fore in this bid to explain and to validate moral experience.²⁰⁹ Natural principles of mind and nature were held to set the conditions for the possibility of virtue, as they structured an understanding of the relationship between moral thought and behaviour.

²⁰⁷ Colman, "Bernard Mandeville," 125-139.

²⁰⁸ See Gill, *British Moralists*, for his thesis on the importance of views on human nature in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century.

²⁰⁹ Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure*, 158-163.

Deductions from the ‘nature of man’ to the specification of our duties had a long history in the natural law tradition of the early modern period. Clarke, as we saw, had agreed with Pufendorf and Cumberland that, in principle, we may deduce our duties to others from our social affections. After Clarke, though, the debate moved away from the derivation of *duties* to focus more directly on attempts to identify and describe the hierarchy of natural principles at work in the production of action. As Hutcheson explained in 1730,

though many recent writers have taken the position that sociability is the source of nearly all our duties, *they do not seem to have sufficiently addressed the general question of what those things are which are to be called natural to man.*²¹⁰[My emphasis.]

Whilst Clarke offered no detailed moral epistemology beyond an underdeveloped appeal to intuitive insight into self-evident principles, Hutcheson followed Clarke’s tactic of exploring what seems immediate and certain to us in moral judgment. Experience of moral judgment was legitimised as a field of inquiry because, alongside the assumption of uniformity, a principle of awareness had become central to the philosophy of ideas. This asserted that the workings of mind, its contents and ‘the principles of actions’ were transparent and available to us.²¹¹ In combination these two assumptions validated introspection as a method for the investigation of moral thought and behaviour. As we shall see in the next chapter, the legitimacy of an appeal to declarative (conscious, or explicitly held) and non-declarative (non-conscious or implicitly held) principles is a complex part of Hutcheson’s moral sense or judgment and one with which he struggles. I raise this now because Hutcheson relied on the appeal to *introspectively available* features of our motivation and affections in order to make his most fundamental claims about what virtue consists in and how we may be brought to behave virtuously.²¹²

Hutcheson’s work up until the 1730s was preoccupied by the need to defeat orthodox Calvinist claims about the ruination of our natural abilities and egoist

²¹⁰ Hutcheson, *inaugural lecture*, 194-195.

²¹¹ This claim is discussed in much greater detail in the next chapter.

²¹² See also Gill, *British Moralists*, on Hutcheson’s appeal to benevolence as an ‘observable phenomena’ to counter the ‘egoists’ circuitous psychological stories’, 146-147.

accounts of virtue that have us moved solely by self-love. Explanations surrounding the various natural principles at work in the explanation of sociability were the focus of Hutcheson's arguments in his war on egoism. Hutcheson's responses to Hobbes, Mandeville and Pufendorf are significant because Hutcheson rebuffed their explanations of the 'protean' working of self-love on the grounds that the moral actor is not aware of selfish motivations when she acts. Hutcheson wanted us to be able to *trust* the experience of wanting to do something good for someone else because this feeling is of epistemic relevance to us in practical morality. If we reinterpret it as supervening on a more fundamental motivation of self-love then we will, or at least might, override our natural judgment that these benevolent affections really are the moral good and, in so doing, destroy our natural moral abilities.

Whether a principle must be consciously available to us in order for it to play an active role in our motivation or cognition is an important question, given Hutcheson's use of introspection to justify his assertions about our motivation and our moral responses. It also underpinned his claims about the practical import of moral philosophy. Hutcheson, like his contemporaries, saw one of the great tasks of moral philosophers to be to show how acting virtuously is to our own best advantage – but this was not the end of his claims about the practical duties of moral philosophers.²¹³

Hutcheson thought that in order to develop our natural moral potential it was necessary, in a practical sense, to trust in the reality of our experience of our moral responses and motivation. The development and continued operation of these natural abilities, however, was at risk from current moral teaching itself. This complaint went far wider than his claim that a priori demonstration was likely to lead to scepticism. Hutcheson's concern with correcting our views of human nature was primarily practical. This is a position he kept to throughout his works, even where subsidiary motivational factors such as future state considerations or laws are entertained. Like Clarke, with his insistence on the need for regular and careful instruction in relevant revealed truths, Hutcheson

²¹³ On the practical purpose of moral philosophy for Hutcheson, see Kate Abramson, "Sympathy and the Project of Hume's Second Inquiry," *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie* 83 (2001): 45-80.

recognised the need for a naturally existing disposition to virtue to be cultivated. Being left to our own moral devices was not an option for Hutcheson, despite the natural origin of our potential moral abilities. His later published works are far more concerned with the cultivation and practice of virtue by a variety of means, and the way he understands naturalness changes.²¹⁴ At the beginning of his career though, Hutcheson's concern was with the damage that holding incorrect views about our own nature is likely to do to our moral ability.

Here I would like to discuss some of the material that Hutcheson presented in his earliest publications, a series of letters also published in 1725, the year of the first edition of the *Inquiry*, as his concern about the practical implications of the beliefs that we hold about our motivation and divine intention are illustrated well here and they reflect important aspects of the argument presented in the *Inquiry* and the *Essay/Illustrations*.

The first is a letter published in *The London Journal* that served as a preamble to the 1725 first edition of his *Inquiry*. Set out in it is Hutcheson's belief in the practical power of holding the right beliefs and the corrupting power of mistaken beliefs about the nature of our natural moral abilities and the nature of God. Hutcheson asked whether the impotence of recent improvements in our wisdom to effect behavioural change were the result of natural corruption, or had we in fact been led astray by these 'leading principles of science'?

Are all the efforts of humane wisdom, in an age which we think wonderfully improved, so entirely ineffectual in that affair, which is of the greatest importance to the happiness of mankind? Shall we lay it on a natural corruption in us, growing stronger, the more opposition it meets with? Or may we not rather suspect, there must be some mistakes in the leading principles of science; some wrong steps taken in our instruction which make it so ineffectual for the end it professes to pursue?²¹⁵

Hutcheson then revealed his own pragmatic theory of moral knowledge. It is pragmatic in the sense that the test of its truthfulness is to be found in its practical effect upon us.

²¹⁴ See Thomas Arnhert "Francis Hutcheson and the Heathen Moralists," *The Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 8, no.1 (2010): 51–62.

²¹⁵ Hutcheson, *Two Texts*, 97.

All virtue is allowed to consist in affections of love towards the Deity, and our fellow creatures, and in actions suitable to those affections. Hence we may conclude, 1st, "That whatever scheme of principles shall be most effectual to excite these affections, the same must be the truest foundation of all virtue: And 2^{dly}, Whatever rules of conduct shall lead us into a course of action acceptable to the Deity, and the most beneficial to mankind, they must be the true precepts of morality".²¹⁶

The truth of any moral system is to be assessed by the degree to which it excites loving affections towards God and other people, since they are what virtue consists in. If the scheme works to excite these affections then it must be true, Hutcheson insisted. Whatever 'scheme of principles' it is that best inspires affections towards God and one another, this 'must be the truest foundation of all virtue'. The test of the truth of any system of moral knowledge is the degree to which its principles, inculcated in our minds, raise these particular affections in us.

In this early text, Hutcheson looked to the cultivation of positive beliefs about our nature and the nature of the Deity as the foundation of our practical moral abilities. To bolster his argument, Hutcheson then pointed to Bayle's observation about the failure of men to do what they know to be right:

This is the reason of what a very ingenious writer justly observes, viz. that mens [*sic*] practices are very little influenced by their principles. The principles he means, are those which move men to virtue from considerations of interest.²¹⁷

Hutcheson pointed out a variety of moral failings in unnamed individual thinkers, whose lamentable conduct is the result of their failing to be moved to virtue by the 'nice distinctions' supplied by their own principles of self-love. His observation here was that holding faulty views of what constitutes a moral principle can result in an inability to raise kind affections towards God, and other people. Hutcheson then asked us to 'observe how our moralists inculcate these great foundations of all virtue, the love of God and of our neighbour' in their followers. Their scheme failed, Hutcheson argued, because appealing to the

²¹⁶ Ibid., 97.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 98.

principle of self-interest, in the form of threats or promises, cannot make us approve a vice or hate virtue because

Some qualities of mind necessarily raise love in every considering spectator, and their contraries hatred; and when these qualities don't appear we in vain attempt to purchase either love or hatred.²¹⁸

Our natural kind affections are the true practical principles behind morality, and we feel love towards those who display them. Our loving esteem or complacence, which is raised only by the perception of benevolence in others, is not under our voluntary control.²¹⁹ Any effect on the will of potential reward or punishment is impotent in the raising of those kind affections.

As Harris has pointed out, Hutcheson allowed that the thoughts of reward and punishment in a future state could act as subsidiary motivational aids.²²⁰ But for Hutcheson, the practical sufficiency of our primary, natural, other-directed affections is threatened when we ignore the promptings of our own kind affections, because moralists have taught us they are false or misguided. Hutcheson lamented that 'Many of our moralists, after Mr Hobbs' misrepresent human nature as corrupted and entirely self-interested and fail to draw our attention to our kinder instincts, natural sociable affections and a love of virtue in others and of being honoured for our own virtue. They compound this error when they attempt to get us to do good for others by threatening the pains of divine sanction.

Hutcheson also took aim at Pufendorf for suggesting that the utility of a belief in God establishes its truth.²²¹ He moved on to criticise those who, though 'ashamed' of this type of argument, go on to give us 'rational arguments for the existence and power of the Deity' and misrepresent the divine nature as 'fond of glory, jealous of honour, sudden in resentment of affronts, and resolute in

²¹⁸ Ibid., 98.

²¹⁹ See Luigi Turco, "Sympathy and the Moral Sense," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1999): 79-101, on complacence in Hutcheson.

²²⁰ Harris, "Religion," 210.

²²¹ Hutcheson, *Two Texts*, 98 and see Mautner, in the same, on the unfairness of this remark, 92-93.

punishing every transgression of his laws'.²²² Hutcheson believed that emphasising the 'boundless goodness' of God was a far more effective way to lead a mind to the love of God, which in turn will lead us to have confidence that our own benevolence issues from his nature. As for our duties to ourselves, Hutcheson noted that we are given many ways to check our passions. He argued though, that it does not help us to govern our passions, if we are led to believe that having them is a sign of a corrupted nature. The proper way for us to restrain vice is to let us see that we are 'good natured, yet weak and fallible' and to rectify other false beliefs that lead us to anger, jealousy, fear, sorrow, cowardliness, and ambition.

Unless just representations be given of the objects of our passions, all external arguments will be but rowing against the stream; an endless labour, while the passions themselves do not take a more reasonable turn, upon juster apprehensions of the affairs about which they are employed.²²³

A proper understanding of our own nature, verified and proven by introspection into our own experience was Hutcheson thought, the best way for the majority of us not gifted with Newtonian powers of ratiocination to counter the scepticism promoted by Hobbes and Mandeville. The reality of a virtue understood to be natural to us was underwritten by the notion of God's communicable attributes.

In other letters of 1725, published in the *Dublin Journal*, Hutcheson addressed the campaign to have self-love recognised as the sole principle upon which we are capable of acting or responding to anything at all. In several of these letters, Hutcheson responded to Hobbes' account of laughter, in which Hobbes argued that laughter arose uniquely from a sense of superiority within us, which was tickled into action by the presentation of the reduced abilities or status of others. Hobbes's self-enhancing superiority principle was supposed to be responsible for us finding anything at all funny. I will not go into the details of Hutcheson's response to Hobbes, but one of his objections was that we are just not aware of this superiority when we laugh at something. How then, Hutcheson asked, can it provoke a response from us? Hutcheson noted that Hobbes, Pufendorf and those

²²² Hutcheson, *Two Texts*, 99.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 104 -105.

of an Epicurean bent such as Lucretius, suggested that our true motives remain hidden from us.

We go to our closets often to spin out some fine conjectures about the principles of our actions which no mortal is conscious of in himself during the action; thus the same authors above mentioned tell us, that the desire which we have to see tragical representations is, because of the secret pleasure we find in thinking ourselves secure from such evils.²²⁴

This is the awareness principle spelled out. Hutcheson thought that we should be able to trust our natural affections towards others. These immediate affections were the basis of our actions and they did not require post hoc reinterpretation by the light of other principles that we were not conscious of experiencing.²²⁵

Hutcheson, delightfully pre Freudian, asked how a motivation or a feeling that we were unaware of could move us? What we experienced was immediate and primary in terms of explaining behaviour, or at least it could not be contradicted by opposing non-conscious principles. Hutcheson makes the same argument in both the *Inquiry* and the *Essay/Illustrations* about the appeal to contorted and non-conscious aspects of self-love to account both for the standard by which we approve actions *and* the basis for their motivation, against those who would 'rather twist self-love into a thousand shapes, than allow any other principle of approbation than interest.'²²⁶ In the *Illustrations* he complains that

men are conscious of no such intentions or acute reflections in these actions. Ingenious speculative men, in their straining to support an hypothesis, may contrive a thousand subtle selfish motives, which a kind and generous heart never dreamed of.²²⁷

It should be mentioned though, that Hutcheson resorted to exactly the same type of argument when he explained our approval of other qualities such as courage, where there is no immediate beneficiary. In such cases 'it is upon some secret apprehension of a good intention in the use of it'.²²⁸

²²⁴ Hutcheson, *Opera Minor*, 110.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

²²⁶ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 93.

²²⁷ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 135.

²²⁸ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 102.

This then was the basis of Hutcheson's use of introspection into our moral experience. Five years after the appearance of his first publications, Hutcheson was appointed to the chair of moral philosophy at Glasgow. In his *inaugural lecture* he was ready to foreground the particular emphasis on the naturalness of our moral abilities, both cognitive and behavioural, within the context of a full blown providential teleology.²²⁹

I will outline Hutcheson's teleology in the next section, because it gives us an understanding of one form of the sort of providential guarantee that Hutcheson put forward to secure the reality of our moral abilities. I suggest, in the last section of this chapter, that Hutcheson goes a little further than a providentially instituted naturalism in his realism, and I offer an interpretation of his argument in the *Metaphysics* to support this claim. In between these sections I also discuss Hutcheson's changed views on the nature of our moral obligation. I suggest that practical effect of moral obligation, in the (re) formulation it received in the *Essay/Illustrations*, is to lead us to an appreciation of the existence of God and his communicable attributes.

Hutcheson's naturalism and his teleology

Hutcheson's *inaugural lecture* was intended to comprise 'a rather more careful consideration of human nature'.²³⁰ This time Locke was named (and to a certain extent shamed):

I do not know how it happened, but since the famous Locke and other writers demonstrated to the satisfaction of many, among them men both illustrious and honourable, that there are no ideas of things in the human mind from the very beginning, no conception of things, no judgements, whether theoretical or practical (which alone they are determined to call innate), these men have virtually abandoned investigation into natural ideas, apprehensions, judgements, and the natural sense of anything whatever.²³¹

In the lecture, Hutcheson says that he will restrict himself, on the topic of human nature, to discussing 'those parts of the human mind which make us sociable'.²³²

²²⁹ See also Harris, "Religion," on the role for providence in Hutcheson across all texts, 205-222.

²³⁰ Hutcheson, *inaugural lecture*, 193.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

²³² *Ibid.*, 194.

Hutcheson acknowledged that many have taken the view that sociability is the source of ‘nearly all our duties’, but he argued that there had not been a proper discussion of what it is which is natural to us, what our ‘sociality consists in’ and which part makes us seek out and be fit for social life, with or without the presence of civil government.²³³

Does a desire for social life, and for good to accrue to the ‘mass of mankind’, originate in our equally natural ‘want, weakness and indigence’? Hutcheson said that Pufendorf adopted this Epicurean position in order to argue that God implanted this desire because we need to pull together in order to survive, and that he also created us weak in order that we might discover our moral selves. Sociability makes us happy and provides us with benefits, and we are led into company by a desire for happiness, not aware that our best interests are served by doing so. Rather than invoke an appeal to introspection here, since Pufendorf agreed that we experience social affections, Hutcheson had to move the argument on to consider the order of our natural principles. God intends both our benevolence and our ‘indigence and weakness’, but does the self-preserving motive underpin the desire to act for others? Hutcheson’s answer was to see Pufendorf (and Cumberland’s) gloss on ‘natural’ as amounting to an understanding of social life as ‘natural in a secondary sense and certainly as necessary’.²³⁴ This is fine as far as it goes, says Hutcheson, better than fine in fact (‘correct’, ‘perceptive’ and ‘profound’), but Hutcheson wanted to insist that human nature is sociable ‘for its own sake’, ‘in itself, immediately and primarily kind, unselfish and sociable without regard to its advantage or pleasure’.²³⁵ We also did not need first to exchange services with someone in order to raise their tender feelings towards us.²³⁶ For,

such is the structure of the human mind, that when certain images of things come before it, certain affections arise under the sole guidance of nature, without any art or deliberation, indeed without any command of the will . . . when images of other men and their fortune come to our

²³³ Ibid., 195.

²³⁴ Ibid., 203.

²³⁵ Ibid., 205.

²³⁶ Ibid., 210.

attention, they excite public and unselfish feeling, even though there is no prospect of private advantage.²³⁷

Moreover, whatever the faults or flaws that God has allowed to our natures, there is a priority to them. We are inclined to seek the good of all others who are 'harmless', however remote they are to us. Malevolence can only result from 'a conflict of interests, rivalry, jealousy, or by some thoughts of previous injury or cruelty.' This, Hutcheson believes,

seems to demonstrate that benevolence is directly and in itself natural, but malevolence is only secondarily so, and often results from ignorance and accident.²³⁸

In addition to malevolence resulting from misunderstanding, Hutcheson allowed that there are principles or 'weaknesses' within our nature that tend to vice, the 'lower faculties' for example, which are there by divine institution. The moral sense has been implanted to identify vice as being unnatural to our nature. This 'ruling principle' allowed us to distinguish those parts of our nature that God had implanted, but intended us to view as non-natural and to govern as such. Through

that moral sense which we may also call natural conscience, we see clearly that vices are not natural to our nature; we see the faculties which ought to moderate and govern the lower desires. Therefore though the strength and power of this sense or conscience may be so diminished that it is often unable to govern the lower desires, yet we see clearly that by its own nature it is naturally fit to rule. Clearly it is the ruling principle [hegemonikon], to which all things were made subject, and rightly so, in the integral state of our nature.²³⁹

In looking at the natural parts of our 'moral character' Hutcheson's teleology was to the fore. He argued that we might distinguish the natural from the artificial in anything constructed - eyes, teeth, buildings, ships, human nature - by looking at the purpose for which it was designed. What is by deliberate design and what is by accident or external force may be understood by its intended function, just as eyes are for seeing and buildings are for sheltering in. Focusing on the faults is unhelpful. First, we can't discover the intended purpose of a structure by looking at the problems with it, and second, those elements of our nature that seem

²³⁷ Ibid., 205.

²³⁸ Ibid., 210.

²³⁹ Ibid., 199.

unhelpful to us might be there by design and are in some way helpful or necessary for the designer to achieve his vision. We just aren't in a position to appreciate his overall scheme. For example:

The weakness of our nature seem to have been willed by the good and great God in the excellent wisdom of his counsel; yet all our innate desires strive against that weakness and declare that such weakness is not the end of duties, much less the goal which nature has set for our actions.²⁴⁰

Hutcheson's panegyric to the natural rests on his presumption that we are able to identify the goal or end envisaged for us by God, via an implanted desire of which we are introspectively aware.

For a desire implanted by nature is perhaps the only conceivable faculty of an active nature that would allow us to distinguish between natural states or actions and their contraries; particularly if united with that desire is a sense, equally innate, which makes the actions or results agreeable and pleasant.²⁴¹

This is why, Hutcheson argues, we are 'right to call that state which is most highly cultivated the *natural* state of the human race'. It was also, he insists, our original pre-lapsarian state, since even reformed theologians did not deny that 'the original fabric of our nature was, by the divine art and plan, designed for every virtue'.²⁴²

Nor indeed can the true fabric of our nature as God disposed it be restored until conscience, seated on this its proper throne, crushes the bodily desires beneath its feet.²⁴³

The moral sense, for Hutcheson by 1730, is doing far more for us than just providing us with the original idea of virtue – it is now the ruling principle, whose dictates tell us how we ought to be governing ourselves, which of course is how God intends that we ought to govern ourselves, which is our final end.

Hutcheson and the religious purpose of (moral) obligation

I will now look at Hutcheson's thoughts on the relationship of the moral sense to moral obligation as it stood at the end of the 1720s, just prior to his *inaugural*

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 197.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 197.

²⁴² Ibid., 200.

²⁴³ Ibid., 199.

lecture. In the *Essay and Illustrations* Hutcheson had, under the force of some pressure from Gilbert Burnet, expanded the role of reason in correcting or checking the deliverances of the moral sense. He had also advertised a greater role for reason in our move from an instinctive affection towards those we love and admire because of our proximity to them (genetic or otherwise), to our being able to display the sort of universal benevolence required by the New Testament (and required by Burnet and Balguy).²⁴⁴

Furthermore, by this point Hutcheson had also clarified his views on the absence of a role for the moral sense in moral motivation. Darwall neatly summarises three reasons why the moral sense, for Hutcheson, was not practically able to motivate the very behaviour it identified as of *moral* worth.²⁴⁵ First, Hutcheson held that a sense or perception or judgment cannot excite us to action, only desire or passion can move us directly to action. Secondly, our desires (and passions) are all directed towards securing natural goods, either for us or for others – they do not aim directly at obtaining *moral* good. Lastly, since we can only raise desires for natural goods, the moral sense cannot motivate us to a *moral* action. Moral action is counted moral if, and only if, it is motivated by a desire to secure natural goods for others (benevolence). Acting from a desire to experience the natural good of self-approval delivered by our moral sense would not be a motivation that we could approve using this moral sense.

As Darwall has carefully documented, Hutcheson's formulation of moral obligation in the *Essay/Illustrations* (and in some of the *revisions* to the *Inquiry*), reflected his reformulation of the relationship between the moral sense and moral action. Hutcheson, like Clarke, did not understand moral obligation as a rational motive where rational motive is understood as a self-interested reason to act. Instead, in the formulation offered in the *Illustrations* the normative force is applied to an approval of the performance of an action (or disapproval of its not having been performed).²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ See Gill, *British Moralists*, 156-167, for an account of the correspondence between Burnet and Hutcheson.

²⁴⁵ Darwall, *Internal Ought*, 321.

²⁴⁶ Darwall, *Internal Ought*, 233.

When we say one is obliged to an action, we either mean, 1. That the action is necessary to obtain happiness to the agent, or to avoid misery: or, 2. That every spectator, or he himself upon reflection, must approve his action, and disapprove his omitting it, if he considers fully all its circumstances. The former meaning of the word obligation presupposes selfish affections, and the senses of private happiness: The latter meaning includes the moral sense.²⁴⁷

Hutcheson argued that we are morally obliged to an action where everyone who has considered it approves its performance (or where we ourselves approve it after reflection). It is clear that the obligatory *nature* of an action may, in part, be properly determined by the reasoned opinion of others, an opinion of which we may or may not be aware, but which would nevertheless make it obligatory.

Hutcheson's notion of a moral obligation seems to comprise the judgement of the action (and not only the intention) in a thorough manner 'fully in all its circumstances' and this 'latter meaning' only '*includes*' the moral sense.

Hutcheson now suggested that any action, which is obligatory, or approved, is made so by more than just the experience of the non-volitional pleasurable idea of approval *in us*. It must derive from a reasoned assessment of the action in context. To this end in the *Illustrations* Hutcheson gives us more of his moral calculus as an aid to the fulfilment of this task.²⁴⁸ This is not because Hutcheson thought that through reasoning itself we may comprehend eternal relations, in the way that Clarke argued we might, but so that we might properly consider the motives of others and ourselves, and assess the amount of public good achieved or potentially achievable by the action. It also might include our understanding of the wider context of that action in 'all its circumstances'. Hutcheson wanted our natural, instinctive, pre-religious actions to be morally praiseworthy, as the action of our moral sense indicates to us that it is. But Hutcheson also wanted their *obligatory* quality to consist in a reasoned appreciation of the fuller context, as far as we were aware of it. The fuller context, the one appreciated by all properly thinking people, of course included God. Hutcheson's reformulation of moral obligation in the *Illustrations* is, I believe, an indication of his wish to

²⁴⁷ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 146.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

integrate a morality understood naturally *by us* to be something in the quality of persons, within the wider system of natural law.

If the moral sense, at this point at any rate, is not directly able to raise a *moral* motivational impulse in us, does it have any directly practical effect? It does, and I argue that Hutcheson intended that its practical effect is to lead us to an appreciation of the existence of God and his communicable attributes. A sense may raise a desire for a natural good. I suggest that the pleasure of approval arises upon the perception of benevolence, and the pleasures of moral approval delivered by the moral sense incline us to the search for more benevolence, or more about benevolence, in order to experience the pleasure of approval. It raises a selfish desire to experience the pleasure of discovering benevolence (and of course, it means that benevolence itself is naturally desired).

There is no problem, that I can see, with a pleasurable idea of moral approval, being itself experienced as a natural good and thereby raising a particular self-interested desire to experience more of this pleasure, by increasing the amount of time we spend considering the intentions behind actions and the character of moral agents, as long as we do not mix this up with our moral obligation. (So long as we do not mistake the natural good offered by the pleasure of moral contemplation as a moral motivation to be virtuous.)

It might be objected that the pain of moral censure would act as an equal motivational counterbalance to this search for moral truth, that disapproval might stop us inquiring. Hutcheson, from the first edition of the *Inquiry* is explicit that unlike purely benevolent intention, pure disinterested malice does not really exist.

As to malice, human nature seems scarce capable of malicious disinterested hatred, or a sedate delight in the misery of others, when we imagine them no way pernicious to us, or opposite to our interest.²⁴⁹

We never just desire that others suffer or are disadvantaged. Their suffering may be an outcome of our own rapacious self-love, but when we act viciously it is

²⁴⁹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 105.

because we intend to gain something, or do not wish to lose something, and not simply because we wish to cause someone else misery. To this natural imbalance in distribution of benevolent and malicious affections, in favour of benevolence, Hutcheson adds that the moral sense,

if we form true opinions of the tendencies of actions, and of the affections whence they spring, . . . is the fountain of the most intense pleasure.²⁵⁰

Since Hutcheson believes that we are all capable of natural benevolence, that pure malice rarely, if ever, is seen, and that the perception of benevolence provides us with the highest pleasure, we can see him tip the scale towards moral evaluation providing us with more pleasure than pain overall and thus inducing us to search for it.

Hutcheson insisted, with respect to our sense of beauty, that the search for the pleasure, or beauty (guided by the principle of ‘uniformity amidst variety’) would eventually reveal to us the way in which the natural world has been designed. This would lead us to infer the existence, ability, power and the essential benevolence of the Deity in annexing pleasure to uniformity amidst variety.

Now from the whole we may conclude, “That supposing the Deity so kind as to connect sensible pleasures with certain actions or contemplations beside the rational advantage perceivable, *there is a great moral necessity from his goodness that the internal sense of men should be constituted as it is at present* so as to make uniformity amidst variety the occasion of pleasure”.²⁵¹ [My emphasis.]

In the same way, our moral sense has been implanted within us to reveal to us both our own natural benevolence, and God’s own loving nature. For now, the moral sense operates in order that we attend to what we (naturally) find pleasing in an action, and use our reason to fully assess not only the circumstances of particular moral judgments and the likely outcomes, but the operation of principles of our own nature too. Via the pleasure derived from the operation of the moral sense we are *naturally* obliged, or motivated to think about the intention of agents and to seek out their moral excellence. We are

²⁵⁰ Hutcheson, *Essay*, 106.

²⁵¹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 80.

motivated to reason sufficiently about the intention of agents and to identify what it is that we approve in. In this way, we may come to understand the priority that God (in whose existence our sense of beauty has also led us to believe) has assigned to our various natural faculties, as we consider how to behave. This is one of the ways in which the moral sense was understood by Hutcheson in 1730 to function as a 'hegemonikon' or ruling principle. God had implanted this sense, along with our sense of beauty, in the form that they take, because 'there is a great moral necessity from his goodness that the internal sense of men should be constituted as it is at present'.²⁵² I now turn to examine the nature of that moral necessity.

Hutcheson's realism

As discussed at the start of the chapter, Hutcheson, like Clarke, saw God's goodness as necessary, and as necessary in the same way (even if Hutcheson, perhaps, did not see their agreement here.) Moreover, Hutcheson and Clarke both agreed that we did not have knowledge of essences of substances, but that this insufficiency did not mean that we could not know the true attributes and properties of anything, including the Supreme Being. Neither, Clarke argued, could we claim to doubt his existence because we did not know his essence.²⁵³

Clarke claimed, moreover, that there could be nothing essential to the nature of God that could be contradictory to our 'clear ideas'. Though we have no ideas of the substance of God (or anything else),

yet we are as infallibly certain that there cannot possibly be either in the one or the other any contradictory modes or properties, as if we had the clearest and most distinct ideas of them.²⁵⁴

Here is Hutcheson agreeing with Clarke on essences (whether Hutcheson appreciated this agreement, or not)

Hence there may be full knowledge of spirits and bodies alike; the inner nature of both are unknown [but] the properties (*affectiones*) are known.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Ibid., 80.

²⁵³ Clarke's argument is found at 29-31, *Being and Attributes*.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 30.

²⁵⁵ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 117.

This was how Hutcheson saw the operation of our external and internal senses proceeding in the *Metaphysics* with respect to our understanding of God's (communicable) virtues:

What we derive from our external senses is supplemented by arguments from which we rightly infer that there is a God, and that he is endowed with every virtue; no external sense, however, can grasp the virtues of God themselves. *All mental virtues therefore are understood by an internal sense or by internal consciousness of the self and its properties. This is the source from which at least the elements of all the notions which represent the divine virtues are engendered in the mind.*²⁵⁶ [My emphasis.]

A little later, when Hutcheson moved from a discussion of God's incommunicable attributes to his communicable attributes, Hutcheson explained that

we will now proceed to expound upon the virtues, which we know from *that inner awareness of our own virtues* that we mentioned above.²⁵⁷ [My emphasis]

I suggest that Hutcheson's adoption of the division between communicable and incommunicable virtues makes perfect sense in the context of his account of how we come to have an idea of virtue in the first place. The internal sense here is that of consciousness of our self and its (moral) properties.²⁵⁸ As I go on to explain in the next chapter, Hutcheson's use of the term inner sense changes over time, but that internal sense, or consciousness, is also the source of our ideas of moral good.

Hutcheson's commitment to introspection is an argument about how we might best go about defeating scepticism because it is an argument about the ways in which we are capable of grasping or understanding God's goodness. It was also an important part of Hutcheson's (and Clarke's) argument about why our moral good could not derive ultimately from self-interest. For if this were the case then surely God's moral perfection itself would have lain in self-interest? A communicable attribute is one that is found in a perfect form in God, and an

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 162.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 167.

²⁵⁸ Hutcheson's use of the term 'internal sense' does shift in several ways. He used it at first to describe our sense of beauty, and by analogy our moral sense and later to refer to our internal sense of consciousness. This is discussed in the next chapter.

analogous form in us. We know about such attributes because we have ideas of our own distinctively moral motivation. A communicable attribute could not, therefore, be benevolence in God and self-interest in us.

The notion that God's goodness (however it was understood) grounded the operation of our own moral abilities is the substance of the sort of naturalist providentialism that Haakonssen and Gill agree upon. The bigger question though, and the question with which Clarke's supporters, and Clarke himself were most preoccupied, was not the question of the goodness of God's motive in creating the world according to eternal law. Their primary concern was the nature of the power ascribed to God, by the champions of voluntarism, to create the world as he did. The essence of the voluntarist position was that God had been able to denominate moral good and evil at will, potentially at least, in contradiction to their specification in eternal law. Extreme voluntarism was muted in some authors via an appeal to the distinction between God's absolute power and his ordained power.²⁵⁹

The salient point for the discussion of Hutcheson is that God could have chosen to create the world other than he did (his absolute power) but once he had chosen to create as he did (his ordained power), there were natural laws in place which reflected the content of eternal law. Hutcheson himself adverted to this in the *Inquiry*.

If it be here enquired, "Could not the Deity have given us a different or contrary determination of mind, viz. to approve actions upon another foundation of benevolence?" It is certain, there is nothing in this surpassing the *natural power* of the Deity.²⁶⁰ [My emphasis.]

God's natural power, that is I suggest, *not* his moral power, could have had us approving something other than benevolence, just as he could have had us appreciate the beauty of something other than regularity. The reassuring caveat that Hutcheson supplied here was that if God really aims at our happiness then he could not '*rationaly* act otherwise'. Hutcheson went on:

²⁵⁹ On this distinction see Oakley, "Locke, Natural Law and God," 624-651.

²⁶⁰ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 197.

For if the Deity be really benevolent, or delights in the happiness of others, he could not *rationally* act otherwise, or give us a moral sense upon another foundation, without counteracting his own benevolent intentions.²⁶¹ [My emphasis.]

Hutcheson went on to explain why benevolence must be in our own interests, but the point here is that God is free to act and retained the natural power to act as he chose, but that in choosing to make us happy he could not act inconsistently with his own aims and, therefore, his own rationality. As we will see in Chapter 5, Clarke, Burnet and Balguy all insisted that God's goodness lay in the rectitude of his will (his always, freely, conforming his will to his understanding of eternal law). I suggest that what Hutcheson argued, was that God's benevolence led him to exactly the same rectitude.

Hutcheson elaborated on the notion of God's freedom in the *Metaphysics* and he went further in this text.

All ascribe liberty to God, but different kinds of it. However, hardly anyone would say that he could will anything contrary to his own innate virtues or fail to win anything consistent with them. God is not therefore thought to be indifferent to all those things that depend on him, or favourable to both sides; for there is a certain necessary will.²⁶²

God then 'cannot will anything contrary to his own virtues'. A little later Hutcheson stated that 'goodness is the cause of the divine operations'.²⁶³

Haakonssen has associated Hutcheson's providentialism with a strain of realism in protestant natural law that is premised on the sort of compromise advanced by Pufendorf. That is (very briefly), Pufendorf had insisted that God had created a world and imposed moral values upon it, but that the values selected (because God was good) were not arbitrary and his moral rules provided us with proper guidance. The objection to this was to ask whether we ought to obey because God had commanded us or because there is something else in play other than the need to comply with divine command through self-interest?²⁶⁴ The Cambridge

²⁶¹ Ibid., 197.

²⁶² Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 173-4.

²⁶³ Ibid., 180.

²⁶⁴ See Haakonssen, "Natural Law and Moral Realism," 63-72.

Platonists and Clarke and his followers also wanted to know whether God's absolute power extended to his being able to change or alter moral value at will. They agreed that he had not done so, when exercising his ordained power, but did this possibility lie within his absolute power?

One of the objections that Hutcheson sought to answer directly in the *Illustrations* was the question of why God had chosen to create as he did ('to make one constitution rather than another'.) He had already stated in the *Inquiry* that our internal senses were implanted in the form that they were, by God, through 'moral necessity'. The argument of Clarke, Burnet and Balguy was that God acted according to his own understanding of eternal, immutable relations, but that God himself did not have the power to alter eternal law. Furthermore, the immutable and necessary truthfulness of that law, was the reason that God had created as he did.

One of Hutcheson's most prominent arguments in the *Illustrations* was that we cannot be moved or excited to an action by reason alone, but that we require an affective impulse. Hutcheson claimed, against Gilbert Burnet, that unless God had the sort of benevolent affections that we were created with, then he would not have been motivated to create in the first place – hence his essential benevolence is his 'moral necessity'.

'Tis plain if the Deity had nothing *essential* in his nature corresponding to our sweetest and most kind affections, we can scarce suppose he could have any reason exciting him to any thing he has done.²⁶⁵ [My emphasis.]

For Hutcheson, our views about how God might operate are necessarily taken from a reflection upon the workings of various principles of our own nature (and then perfected). We do not have any other natural means of thinking about divine attributes ('we can scarce suppose'). Hutcheson's argument was that if God did not feel benevolently towards us then he would not have had a reason to do 'any thing he has done'. God's own exciting reason was benevolence. In Chapter 5, we will look at Burnet and Balguy's objection to this kind of necessity – a necessity from God's good nature, and their requirement that God's affection

²⁶⁵ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 151.

towards us be assessed by his reason and found reasonable before he would act upon it.

The only real evidence that Hutcheson thought that God could have acted *in creation* to make us approve something other than benevolence (malice, for example) is if God had used his *natural* power without reference to his goodness or his understanding. 'It is certain, there is nothing in this surpassing the *natural power* of the Deity'.²⁶⁶ [My emphasis.] My reading of this passage and those other passages at which he says that it is possible that there might be beings (non humans) who do not possess a moral sense, or that humans might have been created with a sense of malice, is this – that God might possess the natural power to create without reference to his own knowledge of a moral order, but first, he is curtailed in his natural power by his moral attributes, and second, that whilst he may have been able to *ignore* this knowledge, it would mean that he did not act *rationally* if his will was to create with our happiness as an end. Here is the quote again:

For if the Deity be really benevolent, or delights in the happiness of others, he could not *rationally* act otherwise, or give us a moral sense upon another foundation, without counteracting his own benevolent intentions.²⁶⁷ [My emphasis.]

In effect, *in the act of creation*, God's wish to communicate his goodness to us (to make us happy because it makes him happy 'in his own perfection') is causally prior to his understanding of what moral good is, but it did not give him the power to overturn his *understanding* of what moral good is.

Moreover, virtue, as Hutcheson had remarked in the *Metaphysics*, was '*praiseworthy in itself* and the supreme excellence and perfection of an intelligent nature' [My emphasis].²⁶⁸ In this text he referred to the distinction found in the reformed scholastics between knowledge of simple intelligence and knowledge

²⁶⁶ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 197.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 174.

of vision.²⁶⁹ Hutcheson said that the scholastics applied this twofold knowledge to God.

By the former God is thought to view all abstract truths as well as his own nature and necessary virtues; these are all those things which they do not wish even the will of God to be the cause of, since among the eternal ideas themselves in the mind of God are the necessary relations and immutable connections which are expressed in these eternal and abstract truths. *No one could conceive that these truths could be otherwise, or that the nature of things could be changed that such proportions could become false.*²⁷⁰ [My emphasis.]

Interpreting this paragraph is a challenge as Hutcheson gives ownership of the wish (that these eternal truths do not result from the will of God) to the scholastics – ‘they do not wish even the will of God’. Conceivably Hutcheson’s own view may have been that such absolute truths, both abstract and those of ‘his own nature and necessary virtues’ were made, independently of reason, by an act of divine will. This is less likely, I believe, given the last statement emphasised in the quotation above. Hutcheson said here ‘no one could conceive’ the situation where truths could be otherwise and the nature of things be created in such a way as to make them false. Hutcheson, like Locke and Clarke, also claimed that acting in accordance with understanding was no abridgment to liberty.²⁷¹

Hutcheson was no more a voluntarist with respect to the foundation of moral goodness than Clarke was, but Hutcheson believed that everything morally good originated in kind affection and that God’s understanding of this began with an idea from an inward sense.²⁷² Hutcheson in fact argued that God himself was

²⁶⁹ See Moore, in Hutcheson *Metaphysics*, footnote 3, p170

²⁷⁰ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics* 170. On the knowledge of vision refers to divine foreknowledge of the absolute truths of the existence of things and his intentions with respect to them, see Moore, footnote 3, 170.

²⁷¹ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 97-99.

²⁷² Cuneo, on the evidence presented in two passages in the *Inquiry*, at 197-198, says Hutcheson’s remarks on God’s essential benevolence entail that ‘Hutcheson is no subjectivist’ and that ‘these passages clearly imply that, in Hutcheson’s view there are necessary moral facts’, in “Reason and the Passions,” 234. I quite agree. Cuneo does not discuss Hutcheson’s wider arguments about the communicability of God’s benevolence, or the arguments found in the *Metaphysics*, and elsewhere. I attempt to show the nature of the necessity in Hutcheson’s theistic metaphysics, which goes beyond the fact of God’s goodness governing his creative activity.

probably possessed of a moral sense, or something like it by which he came to approve benevolence. Recall that Hutcheson insisted that virtue

is praiseworthy in itself and the supreme excellence and perfection of an intelligent nature, *the very sense of which brings joy to such a nature*, [God's nature] but also because no temptation to a contrary course could occur to a superior nature which needs nothing for its own sake.²⁷³ [My emphasis.]

He also asked the following question:

Why may not the Deity have something of a superior kind, analogous to our moral sense, essential to him?²⁷⁴

Balguy, as we will see in Chapter 5, objected to God's understanding of virtue being premised upon a sense, but this is not what Hutcheson was aiming at. Hutcheson said that virtue is praiseworthy in itself *and* that the sense of it brought him joy. He did not say that God received his ideas of moral good via his sense, only that they brought him joy. God wished to *communicate* his goodness to us because it made him happy (as Hutcheson and Clarke himself had argued). In our minds, Hutcheson, as we have seen, annexed pleasure to our moral ideas in order that we might value virtue. But God, having perfect intelligence, and an unfettered will, does not need to be motivated in this way. He does not need the hedonic clue as to what it is either praiseworthy in itself, or ultimately good for us, and his will is perfectly compliant with his understanding. Virtue makes God happy because it is praiseworthy *in itself*. Hutcheson only supposed God's moral sense to be analogous to ours, not identical to it.

Such is the nature of God's divine ideas that they fall, for Hutcheson, into the communicable category of his 'virtues connected with the understanding'. God does not have sensations, Hutcheson said, or images or any inadequate ideas.²⁷⁵ However, when we look more closely at the nature of ideas from moral sense in our own minds, as Hutcheson understood them, we might see why they might

²⁷³ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 174.

²⁷⁴ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 153.

²⁷⁵ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 169.

not reflect sensations, as Locke understood them, but something altogether more elevated. In fact, for Hutcheson, they amount to 'a third kind of perception.'

In this chapter, I have discussed why Hutcheson's sentimentalism, resting as it did on the ideas of God's communicable virtue, was unlikely to have been understood by Hutcheson as a species of voluntarism, and went beyond an appeal to a providentially implanted naturalism. I have discussed the similarities between Clarke and Hutcheson to this effect. I have also taken care to emphasise the ways in which Hutcheson, from his very earliest letters, to his *inaugural lecture* of 1730, saw our natural moral abilities as leading us to an understanding of God, the nature of his moral attributes (and ours) and finally our place within the system and our final ends. I have also outlined the way in which Hutcheson's introspective method rested upon the assumption of transparency of our thoughts and motives to us. The significance of this assumption will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, as I turn to the matter of the nature of the operation of Hutcheson's sense of beauty and his moral sense.

Chapter 4

Hutcheson and the 'third kind of perception'

The aim of this chapter is to consider Hutcheson's moral epistemology in some detail. I examine various ways in which Hutcheson, conceivably, understood the acts of sense perception and judgment to operate to produce our experience of moral evaluation. I then consider the ontology of Hutcheson's ideas from moral sense, and finish with a discussion of Hutcheson's realism.

There have been discontented murmurings in the secondary literature recently over the prominence given to commentary on Hutcheson's moral sense theory, with appeals to examine its importance within the whole scheme of his work.²⁷⁶ Harris, although clear that the concern with moral epistemology is not (just) a retrospectively fashioned preoccupation, argues that it was not Hutcheson's main concern, or indeed his main contribution to his field. Hutcheson's main aim, for Harris, was to persuade his readers of the naturalness of social life and the naturalness of the virtue that enables social life.²⁷⁷ I believe though, that Hutcheson's epistemology was central to this campaign. Naturalness for Hutcheson, as we saw in the discussion of the moral sense in his inaugural lecture, is something that needs to be achieved through a reflexive appreciation of the order and priority of our various natural principles.

To downplay Hutcheson's moral epistemology is also, I think, to discount the doggedness of his attempt to show how moral thought might be implemented within a natural human mind. From the beginning, Hutcheson's attentiveness to contemporary epistemology offered something new to his readership. This was

²⁷⁶ Harris, "Religion," 206. See also Ahnert, *Heathen Moralists*, 53.

²⁷⁷ Harris, "Religion," 206. This may well be true, but, when Harris says that 'in two of Hutcheson's most clearly programmatic statements of his philosophical ambitions', the 'Reflections' letter (*Two Texts* in this thesis) and his *inaugural lecture*, cited in the previous chapter, that 'the moral sense is not so much as mentioned', he is mistaken. The 'Reflections' letter, it is true, does not mention the moral sense, although Hutcheson did refer briefly to 'qualities of mind' that equate to the moral sense. In his *inaugural lecture* though, as we have just seen, Hutcheson's concern was to describe in some detail, the way in which the action of the moral sense allows us to cultivate our *natural* virtue.

not his appeal to a moral sense *per se*. It was the level of detail with which Hutcheson's moral sense was specified as a natural principle of mind which was novel for an early eighteenth-century audience. Cudworth's treatise on innatist epistemology was not published until 1731 and, in any case, did not concern itself primarily with moral epistemology. Henry More's 'boniform faculty' was more a statement of the contents of a notional moral sense than an attempt to embed that faculty in a natural mind. Similarly, Shaftesbury's striking analogy of morality with harmony and aesthetics and his searching theory of character development was not concerned with the details of a cognitive psychology of moral judgment *per se*.²⁷⁸ Over the course of his lifetime, and often under pressure from critical commentary, it was Hutcheson who sought to provide a natural implementation of moral knowledge within a contemporary theory of mind.

Hutcheson had to tread a careful line between insisting on the original providentially implanted ('natural') character of his moral sense, while still attempting to avoid a direct appeal to innate ideational or propositional content.²⁷⁹ His approach to the notion of a moral sense needs to be read as a very deliberate balance of the epistemological possibilities offered by the term 'sense'. Hutcheson was committed to the Aristotelian/Lockean idea of sense as the original 'inlet' of all our ideas. This was the starting point of his attempt to explain the flow of information about virtue through a human mind. He was though, equally keen to premise our moral cognition on a sense of virtue that provides a kind of inborn guidance that cannot be explained further, at least until we have been led to an appreciation of the existence of God.

One debate about the nature of Hutcheson's moral perceptions, which began immediately after the publication of the first edition of the *Inquiry*, concerned (and still concerns) the question of what Hutcheson's ideas from moral sense delivered to us. There have been various approaches to answering this question.

²⁷⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence Kline (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁷⁹ This is a line that Hutcheson did not tread successfully for his critics such as Gay who accused him of reverting to the use of innate ideas. See Gay, *Dissertation*, xiv.

In the more recent secondary literature, there was an attempt by Norton to defend Hutcheson as holding a realist, cognitivist position because Hutcheson's moral perceptions were said to be 'concomitant ideas' of objective moral qualities of intentions or actions, where other 'concomitant' ideas, such as extension, figure, motion and rest, but especially those of duration and number, provided us with ideas of primary qualities of objects.²⁸⁰ Winkler, following Richard Price, countered that these ideas were better read as ideas of secondary qualities, such as our ideas of colour. As such they did not *directly* represent (to us) any quality inherent in objects themselves (i.e. in actors, their intentions or actions). Rather they reflected a providentially instituted relationship between various qualities in those objects and the human mind. This relationship, however, offered no guarantee that the perception of such secondary qualities represented anything external to our own minds.²⁸¹

This debate was part of an attempt to speak to the question of Hutcheson's moral realism. There are, however, other questions that arise from considering Hutcheson's epistemology in relation to this matter, which issue from the framework of the epistemological logics of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. In the *Inquiry* and the *Essay/Illustrations* Hutcheson made frequent implicit reference to the judging capacity of the moral sense in his use of the terms approbation and condemnation, the approver, approved and so on. The rhetorical tension between Hutcheson's characterisation of our moral responses as a sense – that is a delivery system for the basic idea *of* something – and the ability of those same ideas to offer a moral judgment, was present from the first. Hutcheson's great task was to explain not only how we receive moral ideas, but also how the experience of moral evaluation might constitute a moral judgment. Hutcheson's later published works, his *System* and *Short Introduction*, were manifestly preoccupied with this question, but if there is a suggestion that this tension does not arise before Hutcheson made an overt attempt to integrate his ideas from moral sense within the framework of natural law, then I do not believe this to have been the case. I maintain that Hutcheson was thinking about

²⁸⁰ See Norton, "Hutcheson's Moral Realism," for example

²⁸¹ See Winkler, "Alleged Realism" and "Color," for example.

various possibilities in the relation between sense and judgment throughout his time in Dublin in the 1720s, and that this can be seen in his *four treatises* and, especially, in his *Metaphysics* and *Logic*.

The question is whether or not a sense can deliver a judgment (leaving to one side, for the moment, the matter of the nature of the quality in the object that is being sensed, perceived or judged). This question is pertinent to Hutcheson because, as we saw in chapter 1, there were several ways in which the firmness of the boundary between sense and judgment had been tested in the epistemological logics of ideas. It will be important to bear in mind here that knowledge in the early modern era was characterised as either rational intuition into the truth of self-evident principles, or the indubitable perception of the relationship between two ideas. Knowledge was different in kind to belief.²⁸² Judgment *in knowledge* (*intuitive knowledge*), as opposed to probabilistic judgment involved in belief formation was, as we saw in the introductory chapter, markedly perceptual in character for Locke.²⁸³ In addition, Locke named the ideas produced by the power of an external or internal sense as both perceptions and ideas from sense. Hutcheson too, used both sense and perception to describe the ideas from his moral sense. Hutcheson's contemporaries, his rationalist critics Gilbert Burnet and Balguy, objected to Hutcheson's premising virtue upon the traditional non-epistemic function of a sense, preferring to see the act of judgment in knowledge, however perceptual or intuitive in character, as the proper basis for moral knowledge.

In this chapter I will explore three ways in which Hutcheson may have understood his ideas from moral sense to deliver a judgment as to the moral value of an action. Support for all three is found in Hutcheson's *Metaphysics* and *Logic*, read alongside the *four treatises*. First, I argue, that the direction of Hutcheson's thought may have reflected the weakened boundary between sense or perception and judgment discussed in chapter 1. As we saw in that chapter,

²⁸² See Maria Rosa Antognazza, "The Benefit to Philosophy of the Study of its History," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 23, no.1 (2015): 168.

²⁸³ Belief, for Locke, was a matter of probable judgment and the weighing of evidence. See Locke, *ECHU*, 4:15 and 16, 652-668.

by the late seventeenth century there were a number of ways in which having an idea of sensation (a perception from either an internal or an external sense) might have been said either to involve a judgment, or to function as a judgment, and I will refer to back some of these later in this chapter.

Second, I argue that Hutcheson's response to his rationalist critics, who decried the sensory, and by their definition the non-epistemic nature of the ideas from moral sense, can be seen in the *Essay/Illustrations* (and in later revisions to both).²⁸⁴ Here, Hutcheson both re-examined the role of reason in the stages prior and subsequent to the emergence of an idea of moral sense, and he continued to appeal to the epistemic function of a sense, which is also a judgment. I will argue that Hutcheson shifted the judging function onto our preparatory *conscious* reasoning, but then yoked the operation of the moral sense to the results of that judgment. This entailed that our reasoning either *caused* us to have a moral perception, or that our moral perceptions emerged from this preparatory reasoning. In this case, the boundary between sense and judgment remained intact. I will argue the epistemic burden falls onto preparatory reasoning, but that it does so in such a way as to invalidate Hutcheson's analogy between the moral sense and the sense of beauty, and comes close to invalidating his claim that we do not need a reasoned criterion of moral goodness to judge by. Third, I consider the ontology of Hutcheson's ideas of moral sense. I will argue that these 'internal ideas', got by the operation of a 'reflexive' sense, were held by Hutcheson to deliver to us 'intellectual ideas' of the 'true properties of man'. I will explain the way in which I think Hutcheson claimed that these were ideas of 'true' properties. The chapter closes with a discussion of the implications of the material presented in this chapter for Hutcheson's 'alleged realism'.

In the next section I provide an introduction to Hutcheson's moral epistemology.

²⁸⁴ Gill, *British Moralists*, 156-167, has an account of the ways in which Hutcheson responded to his rationalist critics' comments on the *Inquiry* in the *Essay/Illustrations*. See also Peach, introduction, *Illustrations*, 3-100. In this chapter, I look at the implications of Hutcheson's position in the *Essay/Illustrations* and revisions to the *Inquiry* for the requirement for conscious awareness in the formation of judgments – this does not relate to Burnet's comments, but does it form part of the argument that Gay has with Hutcheson, see Chapter 6.

Hutcheson's sense of beauty and his moral sense

The foundation of Hutcheson's approach was laid out in the *Inquiry*. In it, Hutcheson proposed twin powers of disinterested perception made available through an inner sense, one for the appreciation of beauty, the other for virtue. Hutcheson began with an inquiry into aesthetics to establish that we have a natural, 'internal' sense of beauty. This sense is realised in an innate 'power' to receive an idea of beauty, however,

an internal sense no more presupposes an innate idea, or principle of knowledge than the external.²⁸⁵

There are two types of beauty that we respond to.²⁸⁶ The first is 'original or absolute beauty' that responds to shapes, natural objects, or scenes, and theorems. The second is 'comparative or relative beauty' that responds to the visual arts - paintings, sculpture and so on that depict natural objects and which are found beautiful to the extent that they imitate what we find beautiful in nature. Hutcheson opened with his account of absolute beauty, which is followed by a chapter on the beauty of theorems. He spent fourteen pages explaining our absolute sense of beauty and four on the sense of relative beauty.

We experience the reception of this idea of absolute beauty as a characteristic and specific pleasure, as we encounter 'objects of contemplation', from natural bodies to theorems, which this sense perceives as instancing some ratio or relation of uniformity to variety,

what we call beautiful in objects, to speak in the mathematical style, seems to be in a compound ratio of uniformity and variety.²⁸⁷

Our sense of beauty arises immediately and necessarily on perception of this quality. It is a non-volitional act, which Hutcheson equated with the power to receive ideas from external senses. It is not established by convention. We can

²⁸⁵ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 67.

²⁸⁶ Peter Kivy, *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth Century British Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), is the best account of Hutcheson's sense of beauty. See also Peter J. E. Kail. "Function and Normativity in Hutcheson's Aesthetic Epistemology," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 40 (2000): 441-451.

²⁸⁷ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 29.

neither 'will' ourselves to find an object beautiful, nor to experience the pleasures of beauty. Such exquisite perceptions, moreover, are not caused by our knowledge of the formal aspects of objects.

This superior power of perception is justly called a sense, because of its affinity to the other senses in this, that the pleasure does not arise from any knowledge of principles, proportions, causes, or of the usefulness of the object; but strikes us at first with the idea of beauty: nor does the most accurate knowledge increase this pleasure of beauty.²⁸⁸

Our ideas of beauty do not result *from* our knowledge of, or conscious reflection upon, the principle of uniformity amidst variety. In this way, we find ourselves aesthetically dumbfounded.

But in all these instances of beauty let it be observed, that the pleasure is communicated to those who never reflected on this general foundation; and that all here is alleged is this, "that the pleasant sensation arises only from objects, in which there is uniformity amidst variety:" We may have the sensation without knowing what is the occasion of it; as a man's taste may suggest ideas of sweets, acids, bitters, tho' he be ignorant of the forms of the small bodies, or their motions which excite these perceptions in him.²⁸⁹

Our experience of beauty arises as we receive ideas from external sensation of the complex ideas of bodies, or of shapes or of equations. Like laughter, in Hutcheson's account, our sense of beauty is functional.²⁹⁰ Hutcheson devoted most of his first *Inquiry* (other than the sections which explain the nature of an internal sense) to explaining the function of this sense of absolute beauty. It had been gifted to us in order that we might be motivated to discover the few 'simple general causes' at work in the universe. Were a cruel and deceitful creator to have implanted a contrary love of the irregular object or particular truth, such a 'contrary sense' would have lead us away from understanding the ways in which the universe works.²⁹¹ Providential purpose in granting us a sense of beauty that responded to uniformity in geometrical shapes, natural features of the physical

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 25.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 35.

²⁹⁰ Hutcheson's approach to laughter is teleological, as he looks to the moral good it might do us. He addresses the question of the several functions of ridicule and laughter, for example when it arises good naturedly to arrest our enthusiastic passions of things and, citing Malebranche, to laugh us out of 'smaller vices'. Hutcheson, "Remarks upon Laughter and Remarks upon the Fable of the Bees," *Opera Minor*, 97-170.

²⁹¹ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 80.

world and mathematical theorems, was to excite us to an effective search for knowledge. Discovering all the uniformity amidst all the variety in the world is a source of pleasure to us, and it leads us to the discovery of general truths. We may be aesthetically dumbfounded, as we do not *necessarily* appreciate that this principle is the source of our pleasure. But, even if we do appreciate this fact, this knowledge does not itself *cause* our idea of beauty.²⁹² It is the pleasure we derive from an encounter with uniformity amidst variety, Hutcheson argued, which motivates us to seek out that which is uniform and generally true.

Hutcheson's clear intention was that our sense of beauty and our sense of moral beauty were to be seen as operating in an analogical, if not identical, manner. On the questions of innatism and disinterest, for example, Hutcheson noted the following:

We are not to imagine, that this moral sense, more than the other senses, supposes any innate ideas, knowledge or practical proposition: we mean by it only a determination of our minds to receive amiable or disagreeable ideas of actions, when they occur to our observation, antecedent to any opinion of advantage or loss to redound to ourselves from them; even as we are pleased with a regular form, or an harmonious composition, without having any knowledge of mathematics.²⁹³

Our sense of virtue is experienced in us as an immediate, non-volitional, pleasurable, approval of certain kinds of intentions. We feel approval or have an idea of moral approbation only when we perceive a benevolent intention. Where intentions are mixed, for example if we want to experience the pleasure of moral approval *and* act from kind affections towards others, we respond to the relative proportions of the intentions behind actions. We approve of an actor whenever her intention to increase the natural good others receive, exceeds the benefit she intends to accrue for herself.²⁹⁴ Just as our sense of beauty requires that we use reason to acquire the ideas of the visual scene, object or theorem before us, we also use reason to understand the action and the intention behind it. From this

²⁹² See Peter Kivy, "The Perception of Beauty in Hutcheson's First *Inquiry*: A Response to James Shelley," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, no. 4 (2007): 416-431. See James Shelley, "Aesthetics and the World at Large," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, no. 2 (2007): 169-183, for a contrary view of the epistemic nature of our ideas of beauty.

²⁹³ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 100.

²⁹⁴ See Douglas R. Paletta, "Francis Hutcheson: Why Be Moral?" *Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 9 (2011): 149-159, on mixed motivation.

reasoned analysis of the intention of the actor, which could sometimes be surmised from its results, the ideas of the moral sense take rise.

But in these, and in all other instances of the like, the approbation is founded on benevolence, because of some real, or apparent to the public good. *For we are not to imagine that this sense should give us without observation, ideas of complex actions, or their natural tendency to good or evil: it only determines us to approve benevolence whenever it appears in any action and to hate the contrary.* So our sense of beauty, does not without reflection, instruction, or observation, give us ideas of the regular solids, temples, cirques and theatres; but determines us to approve and delight in uniformity amidst variety, wherever we observe it.²⁹⁵ [My emphasis.]

All our moral *ideas* are acquired first through this moral sense, and not in the first place by reasoning about what the moral good might be. As moral spectators, we simply have the experience of approval or disapproval.

Hutcheson, in the 1729 and 1738 revisions to the *Inquiry*, made it clear that this experience was the result of both an idea *of* something and a feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

The admired quality is conceived as the perfection of the agent, and as such a one is distinct from the pleasure either in the agent or the approver, tho' 'tis a sure source of pleasure to the agent. *The perception of the approver tho' attended with pleasure, plainly represents something quite distinct from this pleasure;* even as the perception. This may prevent many cavils upon this subject.²⁹⁶ [My emphasis.]

In the *Metaphysics*, I suggest, this representation of the 'admired' quality is revealed to be an 'adequate idea' of the 'true properties' of man. This will be discussed later on in the chapter. In the next section, I will examine some of the ways in which Hutcheson might have understood his ideas from moral sense, or moral perceptions, to function as judgments.

The boundary between sense and judgment

So, to begin with, how might Hutcheson have conceived of sensory judgment?

Peter Kail proposes that Hutcheson, in his *four treatises*, used an understanding of the functional role of sensory ideas of natural pleasure and pains found in

²⁹⁵ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 139.

²⁹⁶ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, see Leidhold, textual notes, 222.

Descartes and developed more fully in Malebranche. According to this reading, sensory ideas that give us pleasant and unpleasant experiences, determine us in a brute fashion to pursue or avoid the object that provoked them. The function of a sensory idea is to predispose the agent to pursue natural goods that were beneficial to her health. By providential design, pleasures and pains had been associated, respectively, with that which tended towards our survival and that which was likely to jeopardise it. For example, pleasant tastes inform us of what is in fact good for our body, and unpleasant tastes tell us what should be avoided. As the tastes are pleasant or unpleasant to us they elicit a 'disposition to appropriate behaviour'. This motivational charge, however, and its associated behavioural impulse, as Kail points out, should not be understood as being represented by any *belief* entertained by practical reason. Reacting to a painful stimulus should not, Kail argues, be explained by our beliefs about what is painful, and a standing desire to avoid pain.²⁹⁷ Kail cites a reference in Hutcheson's *Essay* to this account of the role of bodily sensations.

Now our reason, or knowledge of the relations of external things to our bodies, is so inconsiderable, that it is generally some pleasant sensation which teaches us what tends to their preservation; and some painful sensation which shows what is pernicious.²⁹⁸

He goes on to argue that Hutcheson's sense of beauty and moral sense were supposed to function in this way – as a hedonic signal to us of the presence of good or evil in our own intentions (or in the intentions of others) which motivates our actions without our understanding what has caused this – we just sense the good and pursue it. We don't carry out a formal judgment here, rather the judging function is just built into the experience of pleasure or pain.

Kail's account is attractive, the semiotic function of sensory ideas, including pleasures and pains was well attested to in the early modern era, especially with respect to our lower faculties. Kail's view might hold for the notion of a moral sense as Hutcheson presented it in the first edition of his *Inquiry*. It will not hold entirely, or at least it falls down in certain places, if we look at the development

²⁹⁷ Peter J. E. Kail, "Hutcheson's Moral Sense: Skepticism, Realism and Secondary Qualities," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 18 (2001): 62.

²⁹⁸ Hutcheson, *Essay*, 45.

of Hutcheson's thought as it is presented in the *Essay/Illustrations* and the revisions Hutcheson made to the *Inquiry*. Hutcheson's account of moral motivation was developed in the *Essay/Illustrations* from which Kail's quotation is taken. In it (as discussed in the preceding chapter) Hutcheson argued that the moral sense could not motivate us directly to moral action (in the *four treatises*).²⁹⁹ This had to be motivated directly by a desire to achieve good for others and not by the prospect of garnering pleasurable self-approbation. What would move us to an action was, in any case, either a desire or a passion, and *not* an idea from sensation or reason in any form. Desires and aversions, even moral ones, were raised by the perception of *natural* pleasure and pains – in the case of moral motivation, a desire to accrue *natural* good for others. Passions, which *did* involve ideas of pleasure and pain, were a 'brutal impulse of the will' and as such, might preoccupy us to the extent that we are unable to form a true opinion of the natural good and evil, or pleasure and pain. Passions did not have to aim at a *known* good. If Hutcheson had held a similar view of the function of bodily sensations to that of Malebranche and Descartes then our resulting behavioural dispositions would have been passionate in nature. But our *desires* were not passions or appetites, as Hutcheson made clear in the *Essay*.³⁰⁰ Desires were formed on the strength of a *belief* about the extent to which a good is present in an object. Pure or calm desires, for universal benevolence or for our own greatest happiness, lacked any passionate element and were formed for whatever was rationally apprehended as good.³⁰¹ Kail, in his analogous treatment of Hutcheson's sense of beauty, wants to preserve the *non-epistemic* nature of Hutcheson's ideas of beauty, so his theory cannot move us closer to an understanding of Hutcheson's moral sense as issuing in a judgment.

By the time of his *inaugural lecture* in 1730, Hutcheson used the terms moral sense, natural judgments, conscience, and ruling principle interchangeably. In this lecture, and in his account in the *Metaphysics* of a reflexive sense of 'the fitting and the good' that passed judgment 'as from the bench', Hutcheson aimed

²⁹⁹ Darwall, *Internal Ought*, takes much trouble to demonstrate this, 223-237 (although not in relation to Kail's thesis).

³⁰⁰ Hutcheson, *Essay*, 67.

³⁰¹ See Darwall, *Internal Ought*, 225.

explicitly at a combination of the reporting functions of sensory ideas with the epistemic nature of a judgment. Hutcheson blamed Locke, as we saw, for the reluctance to investigate ‘natural ideas, apprehensions, judgements, and the natural sense of anything whatever’.³⁰² Whereas ‘the ancients’, Hutcheson noted,

without exception said that all ideas, apprehensions, and judgments which we form about things under the guidance of nature at whatever stage this may occur, or which are received by any of the faculties of our nature more or less necessarily and universally, are innate.³⁰³

Hutcheson, by 1730, had decided definitively to elevate his native moral sense from the means by which our moral ideas are generated, to the position of Butlerian conscience or Stoic ‘hegemonikon’. This entailed that our moral ideas no longer simply provided us with an ‘instinctive appreciation’ of certain moral qualities in intentions, but now appeared to be capable of regulating our choice, or potential choice, of passions or desires upon which to act. Whatever Hutcheson’s natural judgments were, they clearly did not function simply as a brute provocation to action. Hutcheson had to balance his commitment to the sensory origins of our moral ideas with the judicial pre-eminence he wished to assign to it as the proper governor of the soul.

Hutcheson, however, could never abandon the elements of his account of moral sense that had given him the resources to pronounce our moral reactions universally ‘natural’, by appeal to their immediacy and non-voluntariness and their necessity. He needed to retain these features in order to argue against the idea the will is able to determine judgment. ‘Almost everyone agrees that we do not judge a thing is this way or that way because we so wanted to judge’, he insisted in his *Metaphysics*.³⁰⁴ Natural judgments needed to be necessary, in the sense of their being involuntary, and not made according to our own will, and, as such, could not be altered *directly* by reasoning.

Daniel Carey argues that Hutcheson needed to keep moral judgment coincidental with the ‘moment of perception’ in order to insulate it from Mandevillian social

³⁰² Hutcheson, *inaugural lecture*, 212.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 212.

³⁰⁴ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 124.

corruption and to claim temporal priority (its ‘instantness’) over Clarke’s moral reason.³⁰⁵ The point about Mandeville is well taken. The point about temporal priority will be discussed in the next chapter. The main reason, I suggest, that Hutcheson could not abandon the sensory character of the moral sense was because he continued to deny innate ideas and propositions a role in moral thought in the *four treatises*. Despite his references to natural ideas and judgments in the *inaugural lecture* (and complaints that Lockeans ‘alone’ described them as innate), Hutcheson, in all his revisions to the *Inquiry* and the *Essay/Illustrations* (or in the *System* and *Short Introduction*), never actually revoked his denial that his moral sense operated according to innate ideas, principles or knowledge. This meant that Hutcheson, throughout the 1720s and beyond, had to have had an understanding (or at least hoped to have an understanding) of how a judgment might be natural to us, and yet still not fall foul of the charge of nativism.

I also don’t think that Hutcheson needed a particular target here in order to blur the distinction between sense perception and judgment, or to make them coincident, although I agree completely with Carey that he sought to retain characteristics of both.³⁰⁶ I suggest that Hutcheson’s account of a sense that judged derived from the context of the breakdown of traditional mental act theory which Descartes, Locke, the Port-Royalists, Aldrich and many others retained. The marriage of a mental act structure with the logic of ideas, as discussed in Chapter 1, was put under particular strain in accounts of perception.

As we saw, Locke’s perceptual theory of intuitive and deductive knowledge had already put the traditional demarcation of perception or apperception, and judgment at risk. Locke’s appeal to the self-evident propositions that were formed whenever we made a basic sensory distinction (that white is not black, for example) further breached the banks. The role of unnoticed inference in basic

³⁰⁵ Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson*, 166. See also Daniel Carey, “Francis Hutcheson’s Philosophy and the Scottish Enlightenment: Reception, Reputation, and Legacy,” in *Scottish Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century, Volume 1: Morals, Politics, Art, Religion* ed. Aaron Garrett and James A. Harris (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), 36-76.

³⁰⁶ This is discussed further at the end of the present chapter.

visual perception meant that, at least in the case of three-dimensional visual perception, judgment, in certain epistemological logics, was on its way to becoming a Reidian sense. Berkeley's objections to Cartesian accounts of judgment in depth perception and his psychology of natural signs in which experience works on naturally given cues were also mentioned, although Berkeley insisted that the traditional boundary between sense and judgment be retained.³⁰⁷ Introspective psychology, whether of mental operations or associative connections, though, is no respecter of inferential relations, and the way of ideas could not sustain a strict demarcation between sense, perception and judgment by appeal to the introspection of mental events.

Winkler argues that there were two strains of thought with respect to judgment in the eighteenth century. The first was a move to 'downgrade' judgment to sensation, promulgated by Condillac and Hume, working from a perceptual approach to knowledge and using association or suggestion to account for belief. The second, conversely, was the approach taken by Reid and Kant to 'upgrade' sensation. This entailed either the incorporation of judgment as part of every act of sensation (Reid) or the acknowledgement that the combinatorial function of judgment occurred prior to, or alongside the having of a sensation (Kant).³⁰⁸ According to the first understanding an act of judgment proceeds like an act of perception. According to the second it issues a verdict on a judgment candidate brought before it. Winkler argues that Hutcheson's conception of judgment (*not* moral judgment), as presented in his *Logic*, was clearly 'verdicative'. It was, Winkler maintains, based on Henry Aldrich's logic and as such, was both a mark of his distance from Locke's perceptual account of judgment in knowledge, and of his (Hutcheson's) commitment to a traditional approach to the demarcation of mental acts.³⁰⁹ It is true that in the statement in Hutcheson's *Logic* judgment appears as the second act in the traditional hierarchy of mental acts, which begins with apprehension.

³⁰⁷ See Kenneth Winkler, "Ideas, Perception and Judgment," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 262.

³⁰⁸ Winkler, "Ideas and perceptions," 262-264.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 265-266.

Judgment is an act of the mind by which it forms an opinion about two ideas.³¹⁰

I do not agree with Winkler's suggestion that Hutcheson's notion of judgment is veridicative *because* he sought to maintain the boundary between the first and second mental acts. I believe that Hutcheson was well aware of the various ways in which the boundary between the two might be less than distinct, and that he understood judgment to have been incorporated into sensation, at least with respect to some judgments, moral or otherwise. Reid's later petition to natural language in order to claim that sense always involved judgment simply followed suit. Carey does not refer to early modern accounts of perception but he mentions briefly that Hutcheson had 'effectively adopted [Reid's] line without expressly declaring it'.³¹¹ I think it is just as likely that Reid adopted Hutcheson's line, without expressly declaring it.

Hutcheson's statement on the capacity of the deliverances of the *moral* sense (the sense of 'the fitting and the good') to deliver a verdict was also found in his *Metaphysics*.

Of all these reflexive senses the most notable is the sense of the fitting and the good, which passes judgment as from the bench on all the things men do, on all our pleasures of body or mind, on our opinions, sentiments, actions, prayers, intentions, and feelings, determining in each case what is fine, fitting and good, and what is the measure in each.³¹²

'Reflexive sense' as a term for the moral sense did not appear in the *four treatises*, although the moral sense was considered an internal sense on the model of Locke's internal sense of reflection.³¹³ (The change in terminology will be discussed later on in this chapter.) This reflexive sense passed judgement, here, 'as from the bench' and it clearly assumed an understanding of the sense that involved more than a reporting function. Hutcheson's thoughts may be made clearer here by looking at his formulation of the general act of judgment in the *Metaphysics* in the section '*On the Human Mind*'.

³¹⁰ Hutcheson, *Logic*, 11.

³¹¹ Carey, "Hutcheson and the Scottish Enlightenment," 57.

³¹² Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 119

³¹³ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 16.

Judgment, which is called the second operation of the understanding, can hardly be totally distinct from perception. For an absolute judgment may be said to be the complex perception of a thing existing at a certain time, which is prompted either directly by means of the senses or by the intervention of reason, when one discerns the connection of the thing which is the subject of the judgment with the things which sense shows to exist. Abstract judgments are perceptions of relations which exist between things observed; or, if anyone thinks that judgments are distinct actions of the mind, which nevertheless originate in these perceptions, the act of judgment is represented by a simple idea which cannot be defined.³¹⁴ [My emphasis.]

Here we see that Hutcheson understood that judgment was much closer to perception. The two acts were blurred in the perception of complex ideas ('absolute' judgments) and the perceptions of relations ('abstract' judgments). The alternative, as Hutcheson presented it here, was that judgments were distinct mental acts that 'nevertheless originate' in perceptions. Hutcheson was well aware of the formal difference between ideas linked together provisionally to be presented to judgment for a verdict, as we saw in his *Logic*. Indeed, in the *Illustrations* he refers directly to the 'thema complexum', which is a proposition candidate presented to the judgment for adjudication.³¹⁵ He doesn't seem to have been referring to this process for these two classes of judgment, even if judgment was considered as a separate act of mind. These judgments, Hutcheson said, 'originate[d] in these perceptions'. Might an absolute judgment have been a moral judgment for Hutcheson? Did Hutcheson understand that reason would judge the presence of benevolent intention ('the subject of the judgment') and show its connection to our (probably simple) ideas of moral worth ('the things which sense shows to exist')?³¹⁶

Quite possibly Hutcheson did not intend either of these particular instances of judgments, which were also perceptions, to apply to moral thought, but the statements which appear in the *Logic* and the *Metaphysics* show that he was

³¹⁴ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 124.

³¹⁵ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 161.

³¹⁶ Hutcheson waited until the third and fourth editions of the *Inquiry* (1729, 1738) to state that his ideas from moral sense were 'probably simple ideas, which cannot be farther explained'. See Leidhold, textual notes, *Inquiry*, 217.

more than alert to the blurring of the distinction between perception and judgment as mental acts.

A little earlier in the *Metaphysics* in the section 'On Being' Hutcheson had looked at the difference between internal and external necessity. Internal necessity or absolute necessity finds its necessity in the 'very nature of a thing' and 'does not depend on any will at all'. Both were distinct from external, or subsequent necessity that necessarily follows upon something else that has been posited.

Hutcheson explained that a perception

is said to be necessary if it presents itself to us, whether we will or no; a voluntary [perception], on the other hand, is one which we can change, obstruct or stop. Judgement is necessary; this is either because the nature of the object is such that it cannot be changed for any reason so as to render the judgement untrue, or because the connection or conflict between the terms in the stated position is such as to ensure that the proposition will always be true.³¹⁷

Hutcheson treated perceptions and judgments separately in this passage, but did Hutcheson's comments on necessary judgment provide a model for the kind of judgments that are necessarily determined by the nature of things or the 'nature of the object'? Are they his 'natural' judgments that are 'formed under the guidance of nature' referred to in his *inaugural lecture*?³¹⁸ So that, having been created as we have, we must approve benevolence where we perceive it because the judgment that benevolence is good or approvable is necessary *for us*? Again the evidence is clearly lacking, but perhaps the tendency of Hutcheson's thought might be glimpsed. Both a necessary judgment and an absolute perception (if they apply at all to Hutcheson's moral epistemology) force the mind to judge/perceive that benevolence is good.

What I want to argue is that Hutcheson is working within a framework where the status of the perception of ideas of sense and judgments relating to them as distinct mental acts has broken down. Thoughts can shuttle between acts of

³¹⁷ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 89.

³¹⁸ Hutcheson, *inaugural lecture*, 212.

perception and acts of judgment in the operational details of the different types of perception and judgment that give rise to these thoughts.

Hutcheson also recognised Locke's claim that having a sensible idea could issue in a propositional judgment. As we saw in the introductory chapter, Locke's self-evident propositions were formed when we attend to ideas of sense. Hutcheson too pointed out that universal assent does not imply that an axiom is innate, in the sense of its having been known from birth, since the perception of an idea from sensation can form an immediate self-evident proposition, and yet these ideas are not counted innate (by Locke, one imagines).

For all will assent to any proposition, including a singular proposition which concerns any sensible idea presented to it, when there is an obvious connection or opposition between subject and predicate; yet these authors say that singular and sensible ideas are not innate.³¹⁹

Furthermore, again as discussed in Chapter 1, unnoticed inferences or judgments had long been understood to be necessary for three-dimensional perception given the two dimensional nature of the retinal image. Do we make an unnoticed inference when we sense our moral approval? When we make an unnoticed sensory judgment, we are not aware of it being a judgment, for example, our visual experience just is three-dimensional. In the same way might Hutcheson have understood that we just do experience moral approval or disapproval once we have reasoned about the direction of intention of the motivation of an actor? Hutcheson's insisted throughout the *Inquiry* and the *Essay/Illustrations* that our experience of moral *approval* or *condemnation* arose as the result of a 'fix'd law of nature'. As such, Hutcheson could maintain, our moral perceptions were isolated from the influence of will – we couldn't choose what we approved or condemned. The first two editions of the *Inquiry*, especially, emphasised the affective aspects of our reactions to vice and virtue. I suggest, cautiously, that it is possible that Hutcheson saw the experience of moral spectatorship in a similar way.

³¹⁹ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 75.

The accounts of judgment in visual perception offered by Descartes and Locke argued that these were non-conscious, habitual, judgments. Locke's account of this process is especially pertinent to the present inquiry. Locke, in the *ECHU*, accounted for the occurrence of non-conscious or unnoticed inference in the following way, and extended its operation to hearing and reading.

This is in many cases by a settled habit, in things whereof we have frequent experience, is performed so constantly, and so quick, that we take that for the perception of sensation which is an idea formed by our judgment; so that one, viz, that of sensation, *serves only to excite* the other, and is scarce taken notice of itself; as a man who reads or hears with attention and understanding, takes little notice of the characters, or sounds, but of the ideas, that are excited in him by them.³²⁰ [My emphasis.]

And shortly thereafter:

And therefore 'tis not so strange, that our mind should often change the idea of its sensation, into that of its judgment, and *make one serve only to excite the other*, without our taking notice of it.³²¹ [My emphasis.]

Hutcheson's position is that our ideas from moral sense (and beauty) arise from the work of the mind upon ideas from external sensation (they are reflexive in this sense). For Locke, we initially perform a judgment upon an idea from sensation (in order to judge that a disc is a sphere, or a sound is a word), but this soon becomes habitual so that the presentation of those ideas from sense 'excite' the judgment (sphere or word) and we do not notice that we judge, we just 'sense' or experience a sphere or a word.

On this reading of Hutcheson's account, we may, presumably, first think about an actor's motivation and become aware that we feel pleasure in response to some of these thoughts. At some point, presumably, we *judge* that this pleasant feeling is our idea of *moral* approval (as we saw, Hutcheson made it clear that our moral ideas contain a representational element, which is distinct from the pleasure). In this way, after repeated judgments, the judgment that this pleasant feeling is the experience or sign of our moral approval becomes habitual and unnoticed - thus we simply 'sense' our moral approval.

³²⁰ Locke, *ECHU*, 2:9:9, 146

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 2:2:10, 147

In this section I have examined a number of ways in which Hutcheson acknowledged that the distinction between the acts of sense and judgment was not absolute, so that the act of perception might also involve some aspects of an act of judgment. In the next section I turn to the role of reason in Hutcheson's account. Here, I believe, Hutcheson left the boundary between sense and judgment intact (officially) but has moral perceptions emerging, or arising, from a judgment. This strategy, I suggest, was conceived in order to deal with any charge of innatism, but it contradicted Hutcheson's own commitment to the awareness principle.

Reason, awareness and principles

For Locke, whatever the principles or rules by which our minds are able to sense or judge anything, and regardless of whether we are able to discover them by science, *our explicit knowledge* of these principles will not, in the first instance, cause us to be able to sense or judge.³²² Locke, in the *ECHU*, objected to the use of implicit principles, by which we non-consciously judge, as part of his rebuttal of the dispositional nativism. Locke was opposed to the idea that we might use an implicitly held speculative general principle that we were not aware of (e.g. 'a thing cannot be and not be') in order to judge a particular proposition (e.g. 'that green is not red'). Locke argued his case here on the grounds that we had, as Descartes had agreed, full awareness of all that passed in our minds.³²³ 'No proposition can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knew, which it was never conscious of', said Locke.³²⁴ Locke also, of course, denied the operation of implicitly held practical principles in moral reasoning. Locke insisted that we judged an actor or action with conscious reference to one of three known laws (divine, civil or opinion).

³²² De Rosa provides an excellent account of Locke's rebuttal of dispositional nativism here. It is she who coins the requirement for conscious awareness the 'awareness principle' in "Locke, question-begging," 82-110.

³²³ Locke, *ECHU*, 1:2:22, 60. See de Rosa, *ibid.*, 86.

³²⁴ See Locke, *ECHU*, 1:2:5, 50, for this excerpt and the wider statement of Locke's position.

In 1697 and 1699 an anonymous set of critical 'remarks' upon the *ECHU* was published. They were written by Thomas Burnet, a disciple of Cudworth at Cambridge and friend to Henry More.³²⁵ Burnet opposed the account of moral epistemology offered by Locke. He viewed the 'long and obscure deductions' required for a deductive understanding of natural law as being beyond most of the (largely illiterate) population. Burnet was keen to restore the kind of natural, non-inferential guidance in moral matters that innatism had guaranteed. To this end, Burnet argued for the existence of something termed a moral sense, which he identified with a natural conscience. This amounted to a power or ability to sense the distinction between moral good and evil. Burnet refused to equate his natural conscience with innate ideas or propositions. He preferred to describe it as operating according to natural principles.³²⁶

Locke responded once to Burnet publically, but we also have his marginal commentary on Burnet's third set of remarks. To begin with, Locke would not have the change in terminology.

What this author has to say about natural principles I know not. That which I deny is that practical principles or rules are innate.³²⁷

Locke would not allow Burnet's equation of a faculty, or power, or ability with a *principle* understood as mental content.³²⁸ Conscience is the making of a judgment. It is a mental act, an operation, just like external or internal sensation, it is not a declarative, that is, explicitly held, principle.

Conscience is not the law of nature but judging by that which is taken to be the law.³²⁹

Locke would also not allow equivalence between those instinctive acts of self-preservation and procreation to be counted as duties *prior* to our conscious realisation that they are a duty. We can perform these duties, that is we can

³²⁵ George Watson, introduction to *Remarks on John Locke by Thomas Burnet with Locke's Replies*, ed. George Watson (Doncaster: Brynmill Press, 1989), 9. Henceforth *Remarks*. Carey, *Locke Shaftesbury Hutcheson*, offers a brief treatment of the exchange between Thomas Burnet and Locke in relation to Hutcheson, 166-167.

³²⁶ Burnet "First remarks," *Remarks*, 24.

³²⁷ Locke's marginal comment, *Remarks*, 70.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 68

perform the actions, but conscience cannot judge them (as the fulfilment of a duty) without understanding that they are part of natural law.

Yes, we may do it without the formality of a law, but conscience cannot acquit or condemn us for what we do without a law telling us it is our duty to do or forbear.³³⁰

Locke's problem with Thomas Burnet's moral sense is, of course, that it equates conscience with innate (i.e. implicitly held) propositions that judge for us, since we are not aware of the principle by which we are judging.

Hutcheson argued that that we do not use the conscious appreciation of a reasoned moral principle to judge moral action by. We have also seen Hutcheson's denial that his sense of beauty and moral sense are innate propositions. He did admit that they were 'secret' senses and that their operation was 'occult' in exactly the same way that our understanding of the way in which voluntary action is initiated is unclear to us (although he later removed this remark).³³¹ So how then, are the principles that 'uniformity amidst variety is beautiful' and 'benevolence is approvable and its contrary condemnable' to be understood as being held within Hutcheson's model of mind? Apparently, they were held neither externally to be discovered by reason (and then used to judge by) nor were they held internally, as innate principles or propositions. They were neither declarative nor non-declarative. So, what was the nature of the principles by which Hutcheson's ideas of beauty and morality were produced?

Hutcheson would probably have liked his readers to stop at the thought that moral ideas arose just as our ideas of external sense, or Lockean simple ideas of reflection, did. For Locke, our ideas arose as the result of an encounter with solids, or colours, or us willing or doubting something. Locke did not claim that science would be forever unable to account for the principles underlying our perception (although the essence of substance was permanently unknowable). But in any case, this scientific knowledge would not *cause* a perception or judgment. The problem is that Hutcheson *did* specify the principles by which our

³³⁰ Ibid., 71.

³³¹ Noted by Carey, "Hutcheson and the Scottish Enlightenment," 49. Hutcheson dropped this after the first edition of the *Inquiry*.

minds judge or react to beauty in an object or theorem, and morality in an action. The question is whether or not our implicit knowledge of these principles *causes* our moral ideas (in which case it apparently violates Hutcheson's own commitment to the awareness principle).

Our sense of beauty and moral sense, for Hutcheson, were powers, or abilities or faculties that allowed us to experience beauty or moral approval or condemnation, as there were other powers that produce ideas. Locke had argued that the power by which we perceived something to be solid or red, or gained awareness of our own mental operations, produced our ideas. This was fine, at least at first pass. The problem was, that having specified the propositional content of the principles by which we generate ideas of virtue and simultaneously judge virtue and beauty, Hutcheson needed to account for the operation of these principles with reference to our minds. If we did judge by them, how were they implemented? Hutcheson's principles looked very much like innate implicit propositions which specified the criteria of virtue and beauty, and operated outside of conscious awareness.

Hutcheson was officially signed up to the full disclosure model of mind that Descartes and Locke had insisted upon. It was stated thus in the *Metaphysics*:

The other power of perception is a certain internal sense, or consciousness, by means of which everything that takes place in the mind is known. Each man knows his own sensations, judgments, reflections, volitions, desires and intention; they cannot be concealed from the mind in which they are.³³²

This was a statement that would have underlined Hutcheson's insistence that we must be aware of our motivational tendencies, and could not therefore posit the non-conscious workings of self-love as motivations.

We could at this stage replay Thomas Burnet and Locke's exchange in Locke's marginal notes, (it would do as well as any iteration of the arguments) with Hutcheson stepping in for Burnet.

³³² Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 117.

H: The moral sense is an innate power, like the power of external sensation.

L: Fine, it's an ability then. To sense the moral good? How?

H: Well, it's an ability that works according to a principle.

L: Ok, which principle?

H: The principle that is the criterion of virtue or the criterion of beauty.

L: OK, so it's an innate proposition then?

H: No it's not an innate proposition - it has nothing to do with innate ideas knowledge or practical principles. It is an innate power, like your internal sense.

L: Well, it is illegitimate to call a principle a power - is 'uniformity amidst variety is beautiful', or 'benevolence is the thing that is good in motivation' a power? No. If this is the principle that determines what beauty or the moral good are, then we must have thought about this, or at least be aware of it, if we are going to use it to judge by.

H: No, we don't need to use reason. It's the principle by which we are non-consciously judging.

L: What? I thought we'd both agreed that we need to have access to the ideas, or principles, in our minds, or we can't use them to know anything.

H: Well, we are conscious of the *ideas*, just not the principle that produces them.

L: That would be the innate propositional principle then?

H: No, it's an innate power to produce 'natural ideas . . . natural apprehensions, judgements, and the natural sense of anything whatever'. It's a natural principle.

L: I never mentioned anything about *natural* principles, what are they?

H: They are the principles by which we know whether an action is moral or not. But we don't need to know about them to approve or disapprove of an action.

L: No - a moral action means a law requires the action. We have to know what law it is we judge or are judged by. Its God's law ideally, obviously.

H: What's the law of nature then?

L: A law, which we *know* to be a law, so that when it comes to *moral* actions we can be judged by it!!

H: Well, how do we know what the law is, or that it is a law?

L: We read our bibles, or some of us reason it out.

H: I don't need to. I have a moral sense

L: Francis, we've been through this . . .

And so on

Did Hutcheson have any way out of this that might satisfy Locke, or even have satisfied Gay, who charged him with innatism? That is, can Hutcheson make a convincing case that his moral sense/natural judgments/ruling principle both does not operate according to innately held propositional principles, the content of which we are unaware of, yet still judge by, yet still offers an account of moral thought, which is experienced as a sense and delivers moral ideas, but also involves or reflects a judgment?

I suggest that Hutcheson turned to the preparatory role of reasoning to maintain his commitment to moral principles that are not innate propositions but are 'natural' to us. In fact, I think Hutcheson offered, or might be seen as having offered, two partial solutions of sorts. The first involved distinguishing between the operations of the sense of beauty and the moral sense, according to whether they proceeded with reference to declarative or non-declarative principles. The second involved Hutcheson's moral algebra.

First then: Hutcheson wanted us initially to see our moral sense as analogous to our sense of beauty. When we make a moral judgment we are supposed to be, or at least some of us are supposed to be, morally dumbfounded. This was supposed because, on the analogy of external senses and our internal sense of beauty and harmony, we do not need to know what causes our sensory or aesthetic responses in order to have them. Hutcheson believed that moral principle by which we judge is very probably benevolence, but that this was something that would need to be confirmed by continued investigation. As moral spectators, we simply have a feeling of approval or disapproval, which Hutcheson later made clear was an idea of something other than our own pleasure or displeasure, together with a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. However, Hutcheson in the *Illustrations* went on to clarify the role of reason in the process of moral thought. We use reason, he explained, to judge the outcome of the action for someone

other than the actor *and* the relative mix of benevolence and self-interest that motivates the actor *and* to correct our opinions of these two judgments.

Just so in our ideas of actions. These three things are to be distinguished, 1. The idea of the external motion, known first by sense, and its tendency to the happiness or misery of some sensitive nature, often inferr'd by argument or reason. 2. Apprehension or opinion of the affections in the agent, concluded by our reason . . . 3. Our reason does often correct the report of our senses, about the natural tendency of the external action, and corrects rash conclusions about the affections of the agent.³³³

As Haakonssen notes, a reasoned belief is formed concerning the direction of the intention of the agent.³³⁴ This is cognitive work proper (reasoning), which we do when we think about actions. We have to consider intentions in order to have an idea of moral sense. To answer Locke, the rule by which we judge an action is 'whom does the agent intend to benefit?' We do this consciously. So, in this way, Hutcheson claimed, when we think about actions, prior to the operation of the moral sense, we have already answered the question, actually both the questions, according to the criterion of virtue – Who was intended to benefit? I suggest that Hutcheson thought that this was just how we analysed actions, but that we did so consciously using reason. Hutcheson thought that just was a natural fact about how we, as humans, thought about actions.

Under Hutcheson's scheme though, this was not the case with our sense of beauty. Here we were busy with cognitive work analysing natural objects, or scenes in terms of the visual array they present, or we were busy thinking about theorems, but we were not *consciously* analysing these in terms of their uniformity/variety. Our sense of beauty may have led us to prefer regularity or universal truths, and if we are to become guided by this we may have learnt that universal truths were worth pursuing, but we did not need to be consciously thinking about uniformity amidst variety in order to raise an idea of beauty. We needed to use reason to know about regularity, to realise whether a shape was regular or misshapen and perhaps to know that a principle that explained many observations was different from one that explained one observation, but we did

³³³ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 177

³³⁴ Haakonssen, *Natural Law*, 73.

not need to search consciously for regularity or uniformity. That we preferred it, and that it was action-guiding in intellectual work was probably true, Hutcheson believed, but we did not need to realise this in order for it to be so. Peter Kivy has argued that Hutcheson's ideas of beauty are non-epistemic on the grounds that we do not have knowledge of this principle when we sense beauty, or that even if we do know this, then the idea of beauty is not produced as, or because, we know it. That is, Kivy claims, knowing it does not *cause* our idea of beauty. To be sure the perception of *the idea* of uniformity causes our idea of beauty, but our *conscious realisation* that this is the principle by which we judge does not.³³⁵ We do not need to be searching for beauty in order to perceive it.

I suggest though, that with the preparatory role of reason in moral judgment, we *do* know that we are examining agent intention, we *are* thinking about the thing that causes our moral ideas to emerge, and we do need to be thinking about it in order for an idea of moral sense to arise. We don't need to know that an actor's motivation will have a moral quality, but we do need to be thinking about that motivation and whom the actor intends to benefit by her action (herself, others, or both). In this way, our reasoning about actions may be said to cause our ideas from moral sense, where our reasoning about a visual array, or theorems may not be said to cause our sense of beauty.

I suggest that Hutcheson's moral sense approves the qualities we knowingly reason about in intentions. That we recognise that we have moral abilities at all, though, is the result of our moral sense. Without it we might still judge actions according to the rule of whom the agent intends to benefit, but without a moral sense we would not realise which of these intentions was a moral good, or even that there was such a thing as moral good. We would be *moral* idiots because our ideas of actions would not contain anything that linked them to virtue because we would not have any ideas of virtue or a sense that morality existed. The moral sense operates to signal to us that benevolence is what is *morally* good. This is not a judgment that arises in particular cases, it is a blanket response to the

³³⁵ Kivy, "Response to Shelley," 182. Kivy emphasizes that his argument holds good only for Hutcheson's thought in the first edition of the *Inquiry*.

reasoned detection of benevolence. We are saved from the effort of discovering which intentions are morally good or evil, but we are not saved from the effort of reasoning the benevolent or selfish intention in each case that comes before us. In this sense, we judge properly the presence of benevolence and we sense/judge that it is a moral good. The judgment that the moral sense offers is simply 'moral' or 'not moral'. There are difficulties here. Most problematic is the fact that we can't really ever know the intentions or motives of another person and must look to outcomes. As Hutcheson admitted, it is 'the external marks by which men must judge', because we 'do not see into each others hearts.'³³⁶

To a certain extent, however, I think that adverting to the role of preparatory reasoning allows Hutcheson to escape the charge that the moral sense is driven by innate propositional content. This is because we are unaware that we judge by the principle that benevolence is a moral good. Hutcheson has shifted the heavy lifting epistemic work back onto conscious reasoning. It just happens that we already, naturally, that is innately but *consciously* assess actions by thinking about who benefits from them and what the intention of the actor is. The recognition that benevolent intention is good in actions and is a necessary or 'natural' judgment, or perception, is achieved by a sense, by a 'fix'd law of nature'. In this way thinking about the presence of benevolence in an actor's intention does raise the idea of moral approval – it does *cause* this idea. Thinking or reasoning about an actor's intention in combination with the moral sense therefore is Hutcheson's *whole* moral epistemology in the *Illustrations*.

One implication of thinking about Hutcheson's ideas of moral sense in this way is that, contrary to what Haakonssen and Gill suggest, these ideas are an infallible judgment that benevolence is the moral good (a 'necessary judgment', an 'absolute perception'). Both Haakonssen and Gill suggest that Hutcheson's theory is a cognitive one because our moral sense has a truth-value and may be wrong.³³⁷ That is, they argue, we may be mistaken in our moral judgments and use reason to correct them. I suggest, on my reading, that the only thing that we

³³⁶ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 130.

³³⁷ Although they have different opinions as to what the implications of this are. See Haakonssen, "Natural Law and Moral Realism," 73-75. See Gill, *British Moralists*, 299.

may be mistaken about is the reasoned appreciation of the motivation of the actor and the amount of public good that was either intended, or was actually produced, by the actor. Ideas from moral sense arise from this reasoning to indicate moral worth only upon the reasoned appreciation of benevolence. Our ideas from moral sense cannot be wrong, unless our underlying reasoning has gone astray in some way. We may have long-held faulty views or beliefs about what is, in fact, benevolent or contributes to the public good acquired through poor education, or 'fantastik' associations, or just faulty reasoning. So it might be that our moral sense responds to a faulty judgment of what is benevolent, but the moral sense *always and only* responds to what we consider to be benevolence, or self-interest.³³⁸ The truth-value is attached to our reasoning about an actor's intention. Our reasoning about the presence of benevolence can be faulty, and it is open to correction by subsequent reasoning but we cannot directly stop the appearance of an idea of moral worth upon the perception of benevolence. Neither can we correct our perception that *what we believe to be benevolence* is morally worthy. These ideas signal to us that benevolence *is* moral good. This is not open to modification by reason. We may have mistakenly reasoned, or assumed, or believed, that which is actually a selfish motivation is a benevolent motivation, and we may correct this, but this is reason correcting reason. It is not reason *directly* correcting an idea from moral sense.

The other way, I suggest (much more tentatively), in which Hutcheson may have conceptualised the natural operation of the sense of beauty and the moral sense was to see them as computationally driven. Hutcheson maintained that the ideas of duration and number 'do or may, accompany all perceptions of the mind'.³³⁹ This was not controversial within the epistemology of ideas; it just meant that we received ideas of how strong or lasting our sensory ideas were - how sweet, or beautiful, or painful. In the *Inquiry* Hutcheson provided several equations that comprised his 'universal canon to compute the morality of any actions', or 'how

³³⁸ Michael B. Gill, 1995. "Nature and Association in the Moral Theory of Francis Hutcheson," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 12 (1995): 281-301, and "Fantastick Associations and Addictive General Rules: a Fundamental Difference Between Hutcheson and Hume," *Hume Studies* 22 (1996): 23-48.

³³⁹ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 115.

we compute the morality in our sense of them'.³⁴⁰ Hutcheson described the compound ratios by which we assessed the 'moral importance of any agent, or the quantity of public good produced by him', and its converse to assess moral evil. He derived, or proved, several aspects of his theories by them – for example, the need to take into account the ability of the agent to achieve the outcome in relation to their intention to do good. The equations were removed from the 4th edition of the *Inquiry* but were restated in words covering the same themes.

In the *Illustrations*, however, Hutcheson used formulae again to explain, 'how we compute the goodness of temper' and the 'quantity of love toward any person' (the degree of desire we have for their happiness), which was raised by our consideration of any sensitive being (who has not harmed us). We were naturally inclined not to distribute our benevolence generally, but rather were predisposed (through the weakness of our understanding and lack of power to obtain goods for all) to favour particular individuals with the most 'quantity of love'. These individuals were those who we perceived as having the most 'goodness of temper'. This is in a 'compound proportion of the apprehended causes of love in him, and of the goodness of temper in the observer'.³⁴¹

Hutcheson also used these formulae to deduce that not loving God is perceived to be far more condemnable than not loving our fellow creatures.³⁴²

Brooks and Aalto characterise Hutcheson's approach here as his attempting to present his theories 'in mathematical terms'.³⁴³ Indeed this is an instance of Hutcheson stepping outside of his usual reliance on introspection in his method. Hutcheson is understood here to have stated the axiomatic principles of his theory as equations, and derived conclusions from them that agreed with other aspects of his theory (about how we assess the degree of benevolence in intentions in relation to the outcome of an observable action, for example).³⁴⁴ In this way Hutcheson could be seen to offer a 'mathematical statement' of his

³⁴⁰ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 128.

³⁴¹ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 189.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁴³ G. P. Brooks and S. K. Aalto, "The Rise and Fall of Moral Algebra: Francis Hutcheson and the Mathematization of Psychology," *Journal of the History of Behavioural Science* 17 (1981): 354.

³⁴⁴ Brooks and Aalto, "Moral Algebra," 348-9.

work. The equations also stood as advice on how one *ought* to think or reason about actor intention in relation to outcome and various other relevant factors. It needs to be emphasised heavily here, *contra* Brooks and Aalto, that the operation of the moral sense is *not* being described here. Hutcheson was formulating his ideas on the operation of *reason* in assessing intention and outcome.

I think, however, that possibly Hutcheson alluded to something a little different in the *Illustrations*. It is not just that various aspects of our moral thought and behaviour can be described using equations, or even that we ought to make use of his formulae to help us reason about moral matters. I think Hutcheson also implied here that our thought is mathematised to some degree. We know from the *Metaphysics* that Hutcheson argued that the ideas of number and duration accompanied every ‘perception of the mind’, whether they derive from internal or external sensation. As such all our thought was numerated. In the remarks in the *Illustrations* especially, Hutcheson seems to me to have been describing not just how we *ought* to think about judging ‘goodness of temper’ and ‘quality of love’, if we wanted to judge correctly, but rather how love was raised towards another person by a non-conscious calculation of the ‘compound proportion of the apprehended causes of love in him, and of the goodness of temper in the observer’.³⁴⁵

Again, this moves the rational element of judgment in the case of morals away from the ideas of moral sense, which again here seem to be some sort of emergent function upon our prior reasoning. Is this Hutcheson suggesting a computationally driven model of mind from which moral properties emerge in the form of our ideas of moral sense? Is this how he might have thought that a power, as opposed to a principle or innate proposition might operate? Again, this is a tentative suggestion, but whatever the status of our preparatory reasoning, whether it is an examination of agent motivation by a declarative principle or one driven by an implicit calculation, the result is that an idea from moral sense emerges, arises, or is produced by this reasoning.

³⁴⁵ Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 187.

In this section I offered an account of the role of reason proper in Hutcheson's epistemology. I have suggested two ways in which our ideas from moral sense might arise from that process. I think the account of preparatory reason producing an idea of moral sense, in the way that I have outlined, was probably Hutcheson's settled view at the end of 1720s as he responded to the criticisms of Burnet and Balguy and attempted to shield his moral sense from the charge of innatism.

Hutcheson, I suggest, was concerned primarily to account for our experience of moral evaluation. The conclusion that can be drawn from this section and the previous one, which looked at the permeability of the boundary between sense and judgment, is that his moral epistemology was built upon the shifting notions of the operations of sense and judgment that were characteristic of epistemological logics in general. The way of ideas placed great emphasis upon the first act of perception, or the reception of simple ideas. These ideas, in addition, within nativist theories of ideas such as those of Descartes or Leibniz, were allowed to emerge from principles or general propositions, that we were not necessarily aware of. Hutcheson did not need us to know that benevolence was the moral good in order to have an idea from moral sense. However, he needed us to reason, naturally, about whom the agent intended to benefit by her actions, in order for the emerging moral ideas to be of epistemic value to us. As such, he might shield his moral sense from accusations of nativism.

In the next section I will examine the ontology of Hutcheson's moral ideas. In the very last section, I will look at the implications of this material for an assessment of Hutcheson's realism, within the terms of eighteenth-century epistemology.

The ontology of ideas from moral sense

I will argue that what secured the reality of our moral perceptions, for Hutcheson, is, ultimately, their ontology. I am not going to address the question of whether these ideas are concomitant ideas, as Norton has suggested, and

Moore continues to suggest.³⁴⁶ I think that Hutcheson's use of this term is difficult to interpret. In this section, I will examine the nature of the ideas from moral sense.

Locke was officially agnostic on the question of thinking matter, as he denied us an ability to know the real essences of any substances. Hutcheson was in agreement that we do not have real knowledge of essences of substances both material and spiritual 'the inner nature or essences of things are hidden from us.' (*Metaphysics*) and 'all our ideas of substances are inadequate' (*Logic*). But Hutcheson claimed 'there may be full knowledge of spirits and bodies alike; the inner nature of both are unknown, [but] the properties (*affectiones*) are known'.³⁴⁷

Hutcheson, in the *Logic*, distinguished three types of ideas: ideas of sensation, ideas of imagination and ideas of pure intellect. Emily Michael has shown that 'intellectual ideas' were a distinctive feature of several Scottish logics that appeared in the lectures given by John Loudon, whom Michael believes to have been Hutcheson's tutor in logic at Glasgow. At any rate, the appearance of intellectual ideas in these logics was intended to address the question of the immortality and immateriality of mind. Intellectual ideas were held to have been 'pure' and non-corporeal in that they did not arise from material parts of mind. They were not imagistic in nature or provoked directly by a material external source but instead arose from the mind itself. Moore, like Michael, notes likely continental influences on pure intellections as a type of ideas found in the Scottish logics. Arnauld and Malebranche both denied that the source of all our ideas was sensation and imagination working upon these ideas, and appealed to pure intellect as an operation distinct from imagination (Arnauld) or that the source of all ideas was pure intellect (Malebranche). In the St. Andrews logic, which Michael believes Loudon to have based his lectures upon, intellectual ideas are said to allow us to 'conceive God, angels, the human mind, virtue, truth

³⁴⁶ Moore, *Logic*, footnote 4, 12-13.

³⁴⁷ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 117.

and so forth'.³⁴⁸ By their action Loudon understood us to be able to have knowledge of both universals and spiritual entities, including ideas of affirmation and negation, truth and virtue.³⁴⁹

In his *Logic*, Hutcheson explained that ideas are divided into 'sensations, imaginations and pure intellections'. Sensations can be external or internal. Pure intellections are ideas from internal sense, which are not 'grasped by any of the bodily senses'. By them we

discern things which are different from body as well as their modes, but we also attain more accurate ideas of number and of shapes which have several parts than those which the sense provide.³⁵⁰

Hutcheson then elaborated on the relationship between pure intellections and the internal sense of consciousness. Pure intellections are produced by our internal sense, which is also our power of reflection.

There is also an internal sense which above all furnishes pure intellections; this is called consciousness (conscientia) or the power of reflection. This sense affects all the actions, passions, and modes of the mind: namely, judgment, discourse, certainty, doubt, joy, sorrow, desires, aversions, love and hatred, virtues, vices. The more precise and abstract ideas of primary qualities are also attributed to pure intellections. But in truth all ideas arise from reflection or from [an] external sense.³⁵¹ [My emphasis.]

Just to be clear, in the *Logic* there are three possible categories of ideas (sensations - external or internal, imaginations, and pure intellections), but they are *not* mutually exclusive. They can't be because our ideas of internal sense are *also* our pure intellections and they produce our ideas of virtues and vices (and abstract ideas of primary qualities).

The issue of the relationship between our power of reflection, our ideas of reflection and our conscious awareness is one that has long troubled Locke

³⁴⁸ Michael, "Glasgow Logic," 89-90.

³⁴⁹ See also Moore, introduction, *Logic*, xi.

³⁵⁰ Hutcheson, *Logic*, 12.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12

scholars.³⁵² Thiel has argued that Locke does not equate the power of reflection with conscious awareness, but that many of Locke's contemporaries did not recognise this. Locke certainly referred to the operation of an internal sense, where 'the mind turns inward upon itself'. Hutcheson himself adverted to this.³⁵³ I am not going to discuss Locke's position here, but I want to look at how Hutcheson positioned himself in relation to Locke, on the question of our ideas of beauty and moral sense and internal senses and reflection.

In the preface to the *Essay*, Hutcheson set out his complaint about the narrow use of the term sense to refer to external senses. Hutcheson complained that we had 'multitudes' of perceptions that 'had no relation to external sensations',

if by it [external sensation] we mean perceptions, occasioned by motion or impressions made on our bodies, such as the ideas of number, duration, proportion, virtue, vice, pleasures of honour, of congratulations; the pain of remorse, shame, sympathy, and many others.³⁵⁴

Hutcheson wished that those who were

at pains to prove a beloved maxim, that "all ideas arise from sensation and reflection," had so explained themselves, that none should take their meaning to be, that all our ideas are either external sensations or reflex acts upon external sensations; *or if by reflection they mean an inward power of perception, as I fancy they do, they had as carefully examined into the several kinds of internal perceptions, as they have done into external sensation; that we see whether the former be not a natural and necessary as the latter.*³⁵⁵

Hutcheson very obviously had Locke in his sights here. Hutcheson's position here is that an 'inward power of perception' produces several types of 'internal perceptions'. This 'inward power of perception' works by performing 'reflex acts upon external perceptions'. A little later on, in a footnote, Hutcheson explained that our moral perceptions of approbation and dislike, like our ideas of regularity and uniformity in figures, for example, were produced when affections, tempers, sentiments and actions were 'reflected upon in ourselves'.

³⁵² Udo Thiel, "Hume's Notions of Consciousness and Reflection in Context," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 2 (1994): 75-115. See also Kevin Scharp, "Locke's Theory of Reflection," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2008): 25-63.

³⁵³ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 115, see also footnote 9, 115.

³⁵⁴ Hutcheson, *Essay*, 5.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Our sense of beauty, Hutcheson maintained, derived from ‘*perceptions of the internal sense*’, our moral perceptions arose ‘in a like manner’.³⁵⁶

In the *Metaphysics* Hutcheson seemed to separate our ‘internal sense, or consciousness’ from our reflexive or subsequent sensations, as he has them in consecutive subsections.³⁵⁷ But he also (in this section) continued to refer to our ideas of number and duration (‘our more abstract ideas of primary qualities’) as being perceived by ‘the internal sense or by reflection as it is called’ as he had done in the *Logic*.³⁵⁸

Hutcheson’s terminology is confusing, but I believe that Hutcheson’s view was that reflection (as an act) is a reflex operation upon ideas got from external sensation, and that we are made aware of this operation by our internal sense, which is the source of our ideas of ‘reflex or subsequent sensations’. This internal sense, or ‘consciousness, or power of reflection’, gives us our ideas of whatever our reflex acts of reflection have done to ideas from external sense. As such, our ideas from our (internal and reflexive) moral sense (of vice and virtue) are in the category of pure intellections. Pure intellections are produced by an internal sense, working upon information from external sense. This reading brings together Hutcheson’s various uses of internal sense, reflection, consciousness, an inward power of perception, reflex acts and reflexive or subsequent sensations.

If we turn to the *Metaphysics* we can see where Hutcheson was keen to take this division between pure intellections (from internal reflection) and ideas of external sense and imagination.

Hutcheson’s chapter in the *Metaphysics* entitled ‘*Whether a Spirit Is a Different Thing from Body*’ makes it clear that he intends his ideas of an inner sense, or ideas of pure intellection, to be ideas of spirit. Hutcheson began by agreeing again with Locke on the question of essences within this context,

³⁵⁶ Hutcheson, *Essay*, 16.

³⁵⁷ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 117.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

it will be well to remember that the eye of the mind is dull, and cannot penetrate to the inner natures of things, and therefore we are merely inferring likely conjectures about them from properties known by sense or experience.³⁵⁹

Hutcheson continued though,

it is not by arguments or reasoning based on the perceived nature of things that we are brought to adopt some of the most vital doctrines in philosophy, but rather by a certain internal sense, by experience, and by a kind of impulse of nature or instinct.³⁶⁰

Hutcheson agreed with Locke, that reasoning based upon the deliverances of our external senses cannot provide us with knowledge of real essences, but he maintained instead that our ideas from internal sense can, for example, give us probable belief that spirit is different from matter. Hutcheson went on to explain that we all, ‘under the guidance of nature’ are conscious that our mind is distinct from our body, and this consciousness,

seems to perceive that this body and its parts, however they may be connected with *itself*, are nevertheless subject to *itself*, to be ruled by *its* command, and are useful to *itself*; and perceives *itself* therefore to be distinct from that body.³⁶¹ [Italics in original]

In the next section headed “*A threefold distinction between perceived properties*”, we can see more starkly what else Hutcheson’s ideas from ‘pure intellection’ are capable of providing us with (‘a certain internal sense, experience, and a kind of impulse of nature or instinct.’)³⁶² Here Hutcheson explains that this argument ‘comes from Plato or Socrates’. Hutcheson goes on to describe the three types of properties and their perceptions. It is worth quoting at length:

Some [perceptions] under the guidance of nature herself refer wholly to external things, which belong to us only in the sense that they are perceived and whose changes do not affect us. There is a second kind of perception, namely those which touch us more nearly, pervading us with a sense of pleasure or pain, and which by a warning of nature, are always attributed to the parts of the corporeal system we call our body . . . These two kinds of ideas are involved in some way with corporeal properties i.e., motion extension, and space and contribute nothing to the true dignity and excellence of man or his depravity or baseness, and one would

³⁵⁹ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 139.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 141.

not put a lower or higher value on himself or another [person] on the basis of these ideas.

Finally, there is a third kind of perception, foreign to every corporeal property, which represents the very properties of man or of the human mind, *and involves no ideas of space, extension, or motion*, but *depicts the true properties of each self*, from which are fashioned all its dignity, goodness and excellence on the one hand, and all its evil depravity and baseness on the other. Such are the notions of understanding, cognition, knowledge, reasoning, love, benevolence, faithfulness and virtue and of their contrarities; none of them having anything in common with any kind of corporeal property.³⁶³ [My emphasis.]

Here Hutcheson provides us with an answer to the question of what the ontology of our moral or intellectual ideas is. They are quite distinct from anything that is known to us by its effect upon our body, *including* primary qualities such as space, extension and motion.

This is a non-corporeal reality (spirit) that includes several denominators of cognitive and moral activity ('understanding, cognition, knowledge, reasoning, love, benevolence, faithfulness and virtue') and their 'contrarities', the perceptions of which provide us with ideas of the 'very properties of man or the human mind'. It is a reality that encompasses all of our thinking that is *not* concerned or to do with, corporeality. Most primary and secondary qualities refer to physical properties and these perceptions are differentiated entirely by Hutcheson from our reason and moral qualities. In the *Logic* Hutcheson included only the more abstract ideas of primary qualities in his ideas of pure intellection.

We have seen that Hutcheson categorised our ideas of vice and virtue and our 'more precise and abstract ideas of primary qualities' together as intellectual ideas, or ideas of pure intellection. So, our ideas from moral sense are not like ideas of primary qualities in the same way that ideas of extension, figure, motion and rest are. These (the ideas of extension, figure, motion and rest) are ideas of primary qualities perceived by external senses only and are *not* ideas of pure intellect. Ideas from moral sense *and* ideas of number and duration, which are

³⁶³ Ibid. NB There is *no* indication that this was a revision added in the 1744 edition in Moore's notes.

concomitant and apply to ideas of primary qualities, are both ideas of pure intellection. Our ideas of virtue and vice are ideas of pure intellect as well, but they are not 'abstract ideas of primary qualities'. Hutcheson identified both our ideas of vice and virtue and ideas of number and duration (our 'more abstract ideas of primary qualities') as being ideas of pure intellect, which come from inner sense, which is consciousness.

So, are our ideas of vice and virtue ideas of anything that exists outside our own minds? Hutcheson's ideas of pure intellect are also his ideas from a 'third kind of perception'. They '*represent* the very properties of man or of the human mind'. They '*depict* the true properties of each self, from which are fashioned all its dignity, goodness and excellence.' [My emphasis.] Hutcheson has made his case that we are not able to reason our way to an understanding of the value of these properties without the assistance of a sense, or third kind of perception. The same argument applies to our privileging of rationality.

The ideas from Hutcheson's 'third kind' of perception tell us about our own minds and report its true properties. These may be triggered by other minds, presumably in temporal sequence after we have gained some knowledge of our own minds (presumably early on in development). We know all men have the properties of 'understanding, cognition, knowledge, reasoning, love, benevolence' and so on. Man is perceived to be capable of being an understanding, cogitative animal and a loving, virtuous, faithful animal 'and their contraries' using this third kind of perception. These ideas give us an understanding of the properties of our own non-corporeal natures. These are created natures of course, and it is arranged by a 'fix'd law' that we have ideas of this. We have ideas of all our non-corporeal properties. Since Hutcheson says of corporeal properties 'no one would not put a lower or higher value on himself or another [person] on the basis of these ideas', we may take it that we rank order our value as people on the basis of these ideas. They are judgments of 'our value' and the value of others. This is how the moral sense can order or prioritise affections and intentions; we make a value judgment by appeal to these kinds of ideas.

We value virtue (benevolence) in exactly the same way that we may understand epistemic virtue. We sense that it is better that we reason, calmly reflect, cogitate, seek knowledge. Both understanding and benevolence are divine communicable attributes that we partake of because God is loving and seeks our happiness and saw that the best way to achieve this for us is to create us with analogous versions of these abilities and then have us value them.

Hutcheson's realism

Michael Gill sees the debate about realism within eighteenth-century British moral philosophy as being characterised by two sorts of approach. There were those who alleged that there was a real difference between the motives in the people they judged virtuous and those they judged vicious (anti-egoist realists) and there were those who held that moral properties 'exist independently of the human mind and that our moral judgments represent those properties accurately' (mind-independent realists).³⁶⁴ Gill agrees that Hutcheson is an anti-egoist realist, but believes that Hutcheson promoted a brand of subjectivism under which it is only a contingent fact that our moral judgments coincide, and where it is possible that what is moral for one person is not moral for another. Gill's full statement is as follows:

I hold that Hutcheson believes that moral properties depend on human affections and that these moral judgments do not represent anything in the external world. So according to Hutcheson if no one had a moral sense, moral properties would not exist; and if everyone had a moral sense that approved of, say, malice, then malice would be as moral as benevolence is now.³⁶⁵

From the argument presented in this and the previous chapter, I think that Hutcheson's theistic metaphysics deny that 'if no one had a moral sense, moral properties would not exist; and also that if everyone had a moral sense that approved of, say, malice, then malice would be as moral as benevolence is now'.

³⁶⁴ Gill, *British Moralists*, 296.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 296.

Hutcheson's theistic metaphysics indicated that whatever our ideas of virtues are, they reflect, however poorly, the same ideas of virtue that exist as divine ideas (of his own virtues). The only way in which we, as a species, could actually approve of malice, *as opposed to our mistakenly believing that an act of malice, was an act of benevolence*, is if God understood malice to be virtuous. I am not suggesting that Hutcheson claimed that, as individuals we could not be mistaken in our judgments about the presence of benevolence. I am suggesting that Hutcheson maintained that our *perception or judgment of benevolence itself as being a moral good* is always a true reflection of what the moral good is, because benevolence is God's goodness, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, benevolence is praiseworthy in itself (however mistaken we may be about the actual presence or absence of benevolence).

As explained, Hutcheson argued that God is moved by the necessity of his own nature to seek our happiness and to create in accordance with what will, eventually turn out to bring us happiness. On Hutcheson's understanding, God retained the natural power to do as he pleased, but not the moral liberty. As I argued in the previous chapter, there is no way in which if, for example, God knows that his own virtue exists and that it consists in his benevolence, that he could create us with a malice-approving sense and still be acting rationally. He could have created us without a moral sense, I suppose, if he did not wish to communicate his moral attributes to us.

Hutcheson argued that we are only aware of moral value because of our third power of perception. It is quite true, and of course, it is Hutcheson's main claim that *we can only know any of this a posteriori, working back from effect to cause*. But this does not entail that what we value is not mind-independent. Gill presents substantial textual evidence of Hutcheson's arguments for our sense of beauty reaching no further than our own minds. Our responses being sensations that existed within our own minds, where there is '*perhaps* no resemblance to the objects which we find beautiful' [my emphasis], where a mind without a sense of beauty could not call objects beautiful, where beauty always has a relation to the 'sense of some mind' and so on. Gill argues that we should see

Hutcheson as having claimed the same kind of ‘origin’, for our moral sense. However, our ideas of beauty are not mentioned in the list of ideas produced by the third power of perception, which may mean that Hutcheson just did not see them as having the same ontology as our ideas from moral sense.

I think though, that we need to look at the proposed function of our sense of absolute beauty. As I discussed previously its intended function (Hutcheson believed) was to incline us to search for general and universal truths, rather than particular truths. Now, it may very well be true that neither God, nor any other beings, require our particular sense of beauty, or love for the uniform to search for general truths. It may also be true, as Gill indicates, that animals may have a different sense of what is beautiful. This though would be because God did not find it necessary to incline beasts or angels to search for general truths (because animals required knowledge of particular truths and angels had intuitive insight into those truths). What is mind-independent is the value of general truths, because, as Hutcheson argued, general truths describe the operation of the universe.

The same, I think, is true for Hutcheson’s moral sense. The mind-independent value it connects us with is God’s goodness. As I argued before, our reasoning about the intentions of actors and the outcomes of their actions is fallible and may vary between persons, so that we may have actually approved something which was not in fact a morally good action, and which might be corrected by further reasoning. This is not the operation of our moral sense though – our moral sense just responds to what we detect as benevolence or self-interest (or calculate to be the greater part of a relative mix of the two). What is independent to our minds is God’s goodness. It is true that it was not naturally necessary for God to communicate this to us – he could have left it as an incommunicable attribute. He chose not to though. Having chosen freely to communicate his goodness to us, Hutcheson maintained, God was limited in his choices as to how he communicated this to us, by the goodness of his own nature *and* by his own understanding of what that goodness consists in. That is, having given us a moral sense, his concern for our happiness dictated that it should respond to the

analogous form of his goodness, he had implanted in us. This, it suggests, is the nature of the moral realism that was offered by Hutcheson's moral theory.

In the next chapter, I move on to discuss the objections of Clarke's supporters, Gilbert Burnet and John Balguy, to Hutcheson's moral sense and indeed Hutcheson's theistic metaphysics in order to continue to explore the ways in which the principles responsible for the experience of moral thought were contested.

Chapter 5

Gilbert Burnet and John Balguy: 'Rational and sensible agents'

In this chapter, I will examine the response of Clarke's defenders, Burnet and Balguy to the appearance of Hutcheson's moral sense theory and to Hutcheson's views on God's communicable attributes (and their relationship to our own moral abilities). I will also return to the theme of Chapter 2, which discussed Clarke's views on the relationship of moral knowledge to motivation and moral action. Here, I consider the degree to which Burnet and Balguy can be said to have taken the view, attributed to Clarke, with respect to the motivation of moral actions. I ask whether they (as I argued, Clarke did not,) defended the idea that a rational perception of the fitness of an action and our obligation to perform it was sufficient to motivate a moral action?

The three main themes of the thesis are all addressed here: I begin with the approach taken by Burnet and Balguy to moral epistemology and their accounts of sense, judgment and reason (the influence of Locke is noted and discussed). I then move on to the question of motivation and I finish with an account of their views on the moral attributes of God. In each section I will discuss Burnet first, and then Balguy.

The experience of reason

Burnet and Balguy had taken to print in order to explain and promote Clarke's views, where Clarke's account of the fitness or unfitness of actions seemed unclear. Part of this defence involved an engagement with Hutcheson over the experience of moral judgment and how to interpret that experience. One of their difficulties was that Clarke had not much concerned himself with the details of moral epistemology, beyond his contention that intuition of self-evident truths served as the foundation of our moral knowledge. Burnet and Balguy advanced their arguments with reference to their understanding of the general perceptual account of reason provided by Locke.

Locke had denied the existence of self-evident principles in moral reasoning. When presented with any candidate moral rule, Locke had argued we might always ask why this should be a rule?³⁶⁶ Burnet and Balguy, as we shall see, rejected this claim, but they used Locke's account of reason as the general framework for their epistemology. This offered Burnet and Balguy certain advantages as they attempted to counter Hutcheson's account of a moral, internal sense. In an effort to accommodate Hutcheson's appeal to the phenomenological aspects, or experience of moral judgment, Burnet and Balguy stretched a perceptual account of reason to make reason itself an 'internal sense', which was also our moral sense.

It is here that, once again, that we can see the influence of a psychological or epistemological approach to logic upon accounts of moral reason. Method demanded that we introspect and observe the experience of thought (the flow of ideas through the mind and the operations that we performed upon them) in order to explain how we arrived at truth (or probable belief).³⁶⁷ As discussed in Chapter 1, and the second of the chapters on Hutcheson (Chapter 4), the terms used to describe or account for the experience of thought were liable to lack the sort of precise referents that indicated a clear demarcation between sense, judgment and reason. This was especially true where that experience was of our immediate, intuitive, responses. Hutcheson, Burnet and Balguy all attempted to explain what they took to be the brute fact of our immediate and affective moral judgments – as such, they were all intuitionists.³⁶⁸ They battled, amongst other things, over what might be termed the 'experiential priority' of reason over sense. By this I mean that both Burnet and Balguy claimed that reasoning, however perceptual in nature, provided us with certain experiences that were of epistemological value to us. They both argued that these were experiences that could not be had by an act of sensation. Hutcheson, conversely, claimed only a

³⁶⁶ Locke, *ECHU*, 1:3:4, 68.

³⁶⁷ For the identification of cognitive psychology with descriptive epistemology, see Goldman, "Epistemology and Psychology," 29-68.

³⁶⁸ See W. D. Hudson, *Ethical Intuitionism* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1967).

sense was capable of delivering the right sort of experience to make a moral judgment.³⁶⁹

Given space constraints, I am not going to address how far, or how successful, Burnet or Balguy were in defending Clarke's theory. I am also going to leave Burnet and Balguy's own readings of Hutcheson largely unchallenged. There are already accounts of the exchange between Burnet and Hutcheson and the impact of that discussion on the development of Hutcheson's thought in the *Essay/Illustrations*.³⁷⁰ My concern here is to examine the ways in which Burnet and Balguy used aspects of Locke's approach to reason to counter Hutcheson's arguments (as they saw them), in order to explain how reason could be termed our moral sense with any degree of coherence. I say 'as they saw them' because Burnet wrote in response to the publication of the first edition of Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, published in 1725, while Balguy wrote initially in 1728 and 1729 to refute the arguments presented in Hutcheson's *Inquiry* and the first edition of his *Essay/Illustrations*. I don't believe that either could have had access to Hutcheson's notes on *Metaphysics* or *Logic*, or the text of his *inaugural lecture*. It was in these texts, as we saw over the course of the two previous chapters, that Hutcheson developed and extended his theistic metaphysics, and revealed the ontology of his ideas of moral sense. The aim of those chapters was to examine the direction of Hutcheson's thought in the period up to 1730. I do not doubt though, that had Burnet and Balguy had sight of these other texts, they would still have found elements to quarrel with.

The crux of Burnet and Balguy's objection to Hutcheson's moral sense was their understanding of the limitations of a sensory idea on the Lockean model of an idea from external sense delivering information about Lockean secondary

³⁶⁹ Gill has examined the phenomenology of Hutcheson's account of the beauty of virtue in contrast with the analogy drawn by some rationalists to the experience of mathematics. My aim is not quite the same here. I examine the ways in which Locke's account of reason and logics of ideas in general appealed to the experiences of immediacy and certainty to indicate the presence of knowledge or truth to us, along with other experiential features of the act of reasoning which Burnet and Balguy deemed to be significant. There is some overlap with Gill's approach though. See Gill, "Math or Beauty".

³⁷⁰ Gill, *British Moralists*, 156-167, has an account of the ways in which Hutcheson responded to his rationalist critics' comments on the *Inquiry* in the *Essay/Illustrations*. See also Peach, introduction, 3-100, for discussion.

qualities such as colour or taste. Locke had been very clear about the nature of ideas of secondary qualities; there was no *necessary* connection between our ideas of secondary qualities and the primary qualities from which they derived. The information they reported to us was the result of an 'arbitrary determination' by God.³⁷¹ Burnet and Balguy both saw ideas from Hutcheson's putative moral sense, by extension, as exhibiting the same sort of contingency. They were unhappy with his moral sense because it did not appear to deliver ideas of moral good that were eternal or immutable.³⁷² Such ideas, they thought, could only report information about our own reactions, and could not deliver a moral judgment. More importantly, these ideas did not appear to reflect, in any direct way, the ideas of moral good found in the divine mind.

They were, however, happy enough to use Locke's suggestion that his ideas of reflection derived from an inner sense, to equate the *power* of reflection, which they read as reason (the perception of the agreement or disagreement between ideas) with an inner sense, in order to produce a rival to Hutcheson's moral, and inner, sense.

Gilbert Burnet and the moral sense

Burnet did not question the existence of a moral sense, or the divine source of its institution within us.³⁷³ He took the view that the conclusions of Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, although generally correct and 'capable of demonstrative truth', left virtue 'unsupported' and in need of a 'firm foundation'. Fortunately, Burnet continued, this foundation had already been supplied by the principles advanced by Cumberland, Clarke and Wollaston. These principles, he argued, could be reduced to a single proposition, 'that virtue or moral goodness, is founded on truth'.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Locke, *ECHU*, 4:3:28, 558-559.

³⁷² Beiser, *Sovereignty*, stresses how threatening all English rationalists found any challenge to the eternal and immutable nature of moral ideas, 269.

³⁷³ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 203.

³⁷⁴ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 199-200.

Burnet argued that a sense could only deliver an idea of good in the secondary sense of it being 'good' relative to us. He identified Hutcheson's ideas from moral sense with the perception of pleasure. Pleasure, Burnet maintained, was known to be deceitful about the true nature of any good. The ideas of moral good and moral evil in the divine mind however, must be 'immutably fixed' and refer to a good or evil in the 'primary', or 'absolute' sense. They do not refer to what God approves of, or dislikes (if they did they would be 'useless and supernumerary words'). So, when we say that God is good, this cannot be because we believe that he simply approves something, if we have no idea *why* it is that he approves it. God's bare approval, or disapproval, of an action cannot indicate his moral perfection to us, unless we know that the basis upon which this approval and disapproval is founded is fixed, or eternal, and has an 'immutable foundation in the nature of things'. Burnet went on:

It follows, that things are not morally good because God approves them. But he is immutably good himself, in the moral sense of the word, because he always and, unchangeably, approves what is in itself good, and disproves what is in itself evil, and always acts conformably.³⁷⁵

Our moral ideas derive from God's moral ideas. God's ideas derive from the eternal law that specifies moral truth. Our ideas ought not then, Burnet thought, to derive from a different, special sense. In this way, Burnet may be seen to insist on an analogous form of God's communicative attribute of understanding.³⁷⁶

In Burnet's first letter we find him rebutting the basis for the experience of moral judgment with a petition to Locke's account of reason. Burnet, like Balguy and Gay, offered no resistance to Hutcheson's description of the experience of moral judgment as being rapid, involuntary and pleasant or unpleasant depending on the finding. Locke, as we saw in the introductory chapter, had argued that almost all of our simple ideas were accompanied by ideas of pleasure or pain.³⁷⁷ Burnet believed that this explained their apparent coincidence of idea and pleasure – the experience of reasoning, of discovering what is reasonable, itself gives us pleasure.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 202.

³⁷⁶ Just as Hutcheson had suggested God may have had something analogous to our moral sense. Hutcheson, *Illustrations*, 153.

³⁷⁷ Locke, *ECHU*, 2:7:1-6, 128-131.

The constitution of all rational agents that we know of is such indeed that pleasure is inseparably annexed to the pursuit of what is reasonable. And pleasure ought never to be considered something independent on reason, no more than reason ought to be reckoned unproductive of pleasure. *But still, the ideas of reason are quite different from those of pleasure and must always in reasoning be considered distinctly; reason as the ground of inward pleasure and that pleasure as the encouragement to follow reason.*³⁷⁸ [My emphasis.]

Burnet made full use of Locke's characterisation of intuitive knowledge as the immediate perception of agreement or disagreement between ideas. Burnet called reason an internal sense and, in relation to actions, he argued, this is our moral sense. But reason, as the 'sense' of the relationship between ideas, Burnet argued, was quite distinct from any 'joy' that those ideas may give us.

*Reason and pleasure may both of them be properly enough styled internal sense and, with relation to moral actions, moral sense. But still they must be conceived as different senses; reason as the sense of the agreement or disagreement of our simple ideas or of the combination of them resulting from their comparison; pleasure as the sense of the joy which any ideas afford us.*³⁷⁹ [My emphasis.]

Burnet went on to explain that the pleasant or painful experience that accompanies the results of an encounter with truth or falsehood (although it may also be properly styled a moral sense) is not the rule by which we assess truth or falsehood. Pleasure gives us an indication of truth having been discovered by us (we believe) about a moral action. Yet the experience of pleasure, even moral pleasure, cannot function either as an implicit rule, or a declarative principle to judge *by*.

The other internal or moral sense of pleasure or pain, whereby we conceive joy in discerning truth, or pain in feeling ourselves embarrassed with falsehood – or, in moral actions, by reflecting upon ourselves, or observing in others, moral good or moral evil – is not itself the rule by which we judge, or can judge of truth or falsehood, of moral good or evil; but only the consequence of finding we judge right, and according to reason. And this latter sense indeed constitutes our idea of beauty; by which word, I think, we mean no more than what pleases us.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 204.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 204-205.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

Burnet here accounted for the 'other internal or moral sense of pleasure and pain' we feel in the intellectual activity of judgment and truth-seeking in the way that Descartes had, as an *emotion intérieure* arising from rational activity in the mind.³⁸¹ Burnet seems to have equated this to a joy in discovering truth or moral good (founded upon truth), and a pain upon discovering falsehood or moral evil (founded upon falsehood). As Burnet well knew, a pleasure in discovering general truths (uniformity amidst variety) was exactly the function Hutcheson had envisaged for our internal sense of (absolute) beauty. Burnet claimed that we find beauty, or more properly pleasure, in what we have first judged by reason, to be right. We may have had the experience of the pleasure of rational perception at the same time as we discerned truth, he allowed. We may not experience this as a clear temporal priority, but there is logical priority as the rational perception of truth or falsehood produces the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

I do not say, there is always a distance of time between the two sentiments, viz. of the truth or right, and beauty. But I speak only of the order in which we should consider them, and their dependence they have on one another.³⁸²

Burnet equated reason with an internal sense here. Locke had described our ideas from reflection as deriving from an inner sense, and identified knowledge as the perception of the agreement or disagreement of the connections between ideas, known through reason. Hence, I suggest, Burnet's identification of reason as the moral (inner) sense in order to undermine Hutcheson's own petition to internal senses. Thiel, as we saw in the introductory chapter, has argued that Locke's ideas of reflection did not refer to the activity, or power of reflection itself (i.e. reason), nor were they the source of our conscious awareness of our own minds, but he suggests that there is no reason to suppose that this view was widely held in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.³⁸³ Burnet seems to have used the sensory (conscious) *awareness* of the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas as part of a justification for his claim that

³⁸¹ See Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 198.

³⁸² Burnet, *Correspondence*, 205.

³⁸³ See Udo Thiel, "Hume's Notions of Consciousness," 102-105, for a discussion of Locke's position.

reason is an internal sense. Reason was a moral sense for Burnet, presumably because it was a 'sense' of the agreement or disagreement of ideas about moral actions. Burnet made no distinction here between the perceptual awareness of our having perceived a connection between simple ideas, and *having* a simple idea from an inner sense informing us of the mental operation of reasoning - but then Locke himself was not clear about this.

Moreover, Locke had not distinguished between the intuitive knowledge of our own ideas (our awareness, or knowledge, of our own ideas and their content) and the intuitive knowledge that we have *of* self-evident propositions. Thiel has provided an account of the correspondence of John Wynne with Locke in 1695, which spoke to this very matter.³⁸⁴ Wynne wanted to know, from Locke, whether our conscious awareness of our own minds ought to be considered as a different sort of knowledge to the intuition of self-evident truths (or the certain, i.e. self-evident agreement of certain ideas)? Locke's reply to Wynne does not survive, but Thiel suggests that another of Wynne's letters to Locke gives us an indication of what Locke thought here. Locke appears to have replied that they ought both to be considered 'under the general name of intuition' because, although different, they were experienced with the same immediacy and an 'equal degree of certainty'.³⁸⁵

Burnet also gave exactly this experiential priority to reason. He argued that the experience of discovering truth delivered the experience of certainty that we needed in order for us to feel secure. In the introductory chapter I discussed the ways in which epistemological logics, or logics of ideas, were founded upon the psychology or phenomenology of reasoning, and the way in which the experience of certainty became paramount as proof within them.

Locke wrote to Stillingfleet, for example, that 'with me, to know and to be certain, is the same thing.'³⁸⁶ In the *ECHU* he affirmed the following:

³⁸⁴ Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*, 118-119.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid*, quotations from Locke's letter are cited at 118.

³⁸⁶ Locke to Stillingfleet, *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. iv. (London: Thomas Tegg and others, 1823), 145.

Once we know we are certain it is so; and we may be secure, that there are no latent proofs undiscovered, which may overturn our knowledge, or bring it in doubt.³⁸⁷

Locke did not, as explained in the introductory chapter, make self-evidence a proof in practical reason. Certainty (of self-evidence), however, was the crux of Burnet's argument to Hutcheson over what the experience of moral reason provides us with. Burnet maintained that we could not use pleasure or the sense of moral beauty as 'ultimate principles' because we could not gain the experience of satisfaction or certainty to move to any demonstrative conclusions from them. We must judge the experience of moral beauty by referring to reason '*or our internal sense of truth and falsehood, moral good and evil, right and wrong.*'³⁸⁸ [My emphasis.]

When we go back to reason in our investigation, i.e. when we resolve propositions into self-evident or evident truths, then we find no further doubt in our minds but meet with a principle which we cannot but acquiesce in. In one case we still leave our principle to be proved. In the other we reach a principle which is self-evident or certainly demonstrable. . . . when we rest our foot upon such truths as are evident or demonstrate, we leave nothing unproved *but arrive at as much certainty as we are capable of and can go no further.*³⁸⁹ [My emphasis.]

Burnet argued that the perception of a self-evident truth left no *experiential* room for doubt.³⁹⁰ In addition, he claimed, this experience of certainty was accompanied by an experience of intellectual joy. So, for example, Burnet argued that since we all 'immediately and with one glance of thought' perceive it 'reasonable and fit' that advantage for everyone is better than private advantage or advantage for some, so we feel certain, and see subsequently beauty in any action that aims at this.³⁹¹ We might feel as if we have experienced the judgment of benevolent action as beautiful, but we must have *felt certain* that benevolence was a moral good in the first place. In the example cited, Burnet claimed that we just need to ask ourselves 'why do we find benevolence beautiful?' Then we will immediately see that it is self-evidently true that 'happiness for all is best' and

³⁸⁷ Locke, *ECHU*, 4:15:3., 655.

³⁸⁸ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 207.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

feel certain of this. Then we have grounds for our judgment of benevolence in others, and more importantly we will know the truth of, and feel certain of, the reasons for acting benevolently.³⁹²

Burnet also addressed Hutcheson's charge that deductive reason itself was too slow and doubtful to account for the immediacy of our moral response. Burnet countered that we may 'see the truth' before we have reasoned all the steps.

Sometimes, we perceive truth or right, by a kind of natural penetration and sagacity of the mind, before we have stayed to weigh distinctly every one of the steps which lead to it. And then taking the conclusion for granted, we esteem it beautiful or pleasant.³⁹³

This was especially true in moral science, he claimed, which was far less abstruse than other sciences.

Few, indeed are capable of such quick perceptions in those kind of sciences, where the conclusion are forced to pass through many steps. But almost all mankind are capable of them in moral science, where the conclusion and premise lie within a narrower compass.³⁹⁴

Burnet did make a clear distinction between deductive reasoning and the rational perception of self-evident truths. Burnet, though, thought that there were plenty of examples of self-evident truths that just could not be questioned further. For example, the truth that 'it is better that the species should be happy than that it should not' (also, 'it is best that all should be happy'), is both self-evident and 'such an unmoveable truth that it will bear all the weight we can lay upon it'.³⁹⁵ Furthermore, this truth in combination with the deductive truth that the moral sense tends to make us happier in the long run 'will afford us a solid bottom on which the whole structure of morality may safely rest'.³⁹⁶

Burnet, minding Locke's opposition to the self-evidence of practical truths, maintained that all truth is 'strictly speaking' speculative. Truths are 'seen and perceived by the mind'. When they relate to action in rational agents they are

³⁹² Ibid., 236 – 237.

³⁹³ Ibid., 206 .

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 206.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 238.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 238.

called practical truths, but they are really just the rational conclusions drawn from speculative truths, which are not in themselves rules for action ('it is best that all should be happy'). Burnet argued that a *nominally* practical truth was to discover, from the reason of things, our obligation to act, or in other words,

in what manner persons are obliged to act towards such objects, or what means they are obliged to employ in order to obtain them.³⁹⁷

So, using our previous example, Burnet proposed that we perceive immediately that 'it is best that that all should be happy'. Our 'object' is therefore happiness for everyone, and from this we may conclude that benevolence is the 'properest and fittest means to procure the happiness of the species.' Therefore, we are under an obligation to act benevolently.

I will examine Burnet's views on obligation in a little more detail when I move on to look at his position on motivation. At this point, I turn to Balguy's response to Hutcheson's moral sense. Balguy, like Burnet, addressed the issue of the coincidence of ideas of pleasure with the results of reason which told us whether an action is fit or not, to be performed. He also termed the perception of the agreements or disagreements between ideas an internal sense, but here he offered an objection to the terminological equivalence of sense and perception. Balguy too, dealt with Locke's refusal to allow self-evidence a place in practical reason.

Balguy and the moral sense³⁹⁸

Balguy turned his attention to Hutcheson's moral sense in the first and second parts of his *Foundation of Moral Goodness, Second Part*, (1729, 1733).³⁹⁹ Balguy

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 218.

³⁹⁸ For biographical details and an overview of his thought, see Hugh David Jones, *John Balguy: An English Moralist of the Eighteenth Century* (Leipzig: Verlag Von Quelle and Meyer, 1907). Balguy is not much discussed in the secondary literature, but see Irwin, "Balguy: A defense of Rationalism" and "Balguy and Clarke: Morality and Natural Theology," *Development, Vol. II*, 439-463 and 465-472. See also Carey, "Hutcheson and the Scottish Enlightenment," 43-44, and David Fate Norton and Manfred Kuehn, "The Foundation of Morality," in Knud Haakonssen, ed. *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 958-262.

³⁹⁹ John Balguy, *The Foundation of Moral Goodness: Or a Further Inquiry into the Original of Our Idea of Virtue. By a Clergyman*, 1728, revised 1731, 1733. Henceforth *First Part; The Second Part of The Foundation of Moral Goodness; Illustrating and Enforcing the Principles and Reasonings*

championed Clarke's position that eternal law was the foundation of moral goodness and, as such, was the 'original' of our ideas of virtue. For Balguy, eternal law must be the origin of our moral ideas because it was the origin of God's moral ideas. It would be inappropriate for the source and nature of God's ideas (a rational perception of eternal law) and our ideas (an implanted moral sense) to be different. Eternal law dictated what was right – both to God and to us.

In the *First part*, Balguy's concern was to show that a perception of the rightness of an action is not delivered by a moral sense. Balguy held that we could only approve an action that what we had first reasoned was 'fit' to be performed. This was true both logically and temporally. In addition there were two ways in which virtue could be considered, 'either under the notion of pulchrum, or honestum'. Pleasure, or beauty, Balguy thought, is not seen, or 'visive', but felt, and on these experiential grounds,

sensibility seems to be as distinct from understanding, as the understanding is from the will. We should not therefore confound them in our conceptions.⁴⁰⁰

Balguy, in 1728, confessed to being unsure about whether we needed a special sense, or 'some distinct power', to perceive the *beauty* of actions, since as individuals we differed greatly in our affective responses to moral actions.⁴⁰¹

Balguy agreed that we possess more 'superior' senses that responded to music and paintings and buildings, however, these only relished such objects or raised pleasure in our minds. They could not communicate the truth of the relations of those things (like harmony, form or structure). At any rate, our ideas of virtue considered as 'honestum', were, Balguy insisted, ideas of the intrinsic rectitude of actions. Any sensed approbation, in the form of pleasurable feeling, followed on from the perception of that rectitude.⁴⁰²

Contained in the Former. Being an Answer to Certain Remarks Communicated by a Gentleman to the Author, 1729, 1733. Henceforth Second Part.

⁴⁰⁰ Balguy, *First Part*, 24.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, 23-24. Balguy began as a supporter of our sense of the beautiful in aesthetics, but later took up the rationalist position. See Kivy, *Seventh Sense*, 127-133 and 138-140.

⁴⁰² Balguy, *First Part*, 23.

In the *Second Part*, Balguy offered further argument for our faculty of reason being the only faculty we needed to use in order to access moral truths. Balguy did not disbar the identification of reason with a moral and, again, an internal sense.

If anyone has a mind to call that faculty by which *we perceive moral agreements and disagreements an internal sense*, I am very unwilling to dispute about words.⁴⁰³ [My emphasis.]

As long, that was, as we also allowed that the intelligence we used to reach physical or mathematical truths was also an internal sense. Balguy thought that external senses were ‘very distinct from our understanding’, as they only supplied material to it (like ‘an architect’ and his ‘labourers’).

Balguy then claimed that difference between the power of perception responsible for any truth, including moral truths (which is called ‘intelligence’) and that of the power of perception responsible for sensory information (which is called ‘sense’), was to be found in their objects. Intelligence perceives ‘real agreements’, whereas a sense perceives the effect external objects have on our own particular minds. A sensory perception, moreover, actually modifies our minds in some way. An intellectual perception, however, does no such thing. An intellectual perception,

only shows what its objects are in themselves; where they agree or disagree, or differ from each other. *Both sense and intelligence consist in a power of perception, and both powers are passive*. But I know of no other resemblance between them.⁴⁰⁴ [My emphasis.]

Balguy objected to the blurring of the boundaries between sense and intelligence, because for Balguy, this distinction was founded upon the objects that they perceive.

If a power of perceiving real agreements ought to be called a sense or sentiment; what partition, what boundaries will remain between sense and intelligence?⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ Balguy, *Second Part*, 48.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Balguy is acute here though, on the implications of ‘a power of perceiving real agreements’ being called a sense. If the term ‘sense’ was pressed into service, then ‘what boundaries will remain between sense and intelligence?’ he asked. It is this question that speaks to the semantic instability of the terms sense, judgment and reason. Balguy insisted here, I think, that if Hutcheson’s moral sense was supposed to provide us with epistemological access to real knowledge, then this was an activity of the intellect, no matter that we experienced both sense and intelligence as involuntary and non effortful mental operations.

For Balguy, truth was either of words, ideas, or things. Verbal truth is the truth of propositions relating to either the truth of ideas (*ideal* truth) or the truth of things. The truth of things pertains to the relative natures of things and their agreement or disagreement. Moral truth is the truth of things, and it dictates the ways in which different things should be treated. Balguy argued, for example, that to treat men, brutes and stones in a similar manner is disagreeable to the nature of things. It is disagreeable in the same way as an attempt to make an angle from two parallel lines would be disagreeable to the truths of things such as angles and parallel lines.⁴⁰⁶ Our moral ideas, unlike our mathematical ideas, however, are only *representations* of relative natures, and so cannot be as certain of our perception of them as we may be of our ideas of numbers, which have no external referents. In most cases, though, we may rely on these perceptions. The objects of these perceptions are ‘often self-evident truths, and almost always resolvable into such’.⁴⁰⁷ They ‘seldom fail to appear to us in a clear light’. Balguy here followed Clarke and Hutcheson, and Locke, in maintaining that we do not have access to the essences of ‘things’, we have access to their modes of existence only.⁴⁰⁸ Our ideas here are only copies of divine ideas.⁴⁰⁹

In the *Second Part* Balguy complained that Locke had insisted on the absence of any self-evident practical propositions, but that he had still proposed that a certain demonstration of morality was possible. Balguy wanted to know from

⁴⁰⁶ Balguy, *First Part*, 36.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

what foundation that demonstration would proceed? Given that Locke had suggested that morality might be demonstrated with as much certainty as mathematics, what would be the foundational premise, if not a self-evident proposition?⁴¹⁰ Balguy here appealed to the obviousness (he thought) of the truths about *the relations* (not the essences) of agents to actions and objects.

The relations of other modes may certainly be perceived as well as those of number and extension.⁴¹¹

Once again our own certainty proved to be the criterion for truth (although we could be mistaken and correct our views). Hutcheson argued that our moral ideas contained a distinctive pleasure of moral approval (or its contrary), which provided a sort of evaluative certainty of its own. Balguy, on the other hand, also placed great emphasis on the special quality of what reasoning as an act means to us – its ‘honour’ or ‘dignity’, or the ‘fitness’ of reason to influence us, together with the special quality of the objects of rational moral thought. The apparent ‘self-eligibility’, ‘intrinsic excellence’ or ‘self-amiableness’ of such actions, he argued, resulted in their necessarily being approved as right and freely chosen.⁴¹²

Burnet and Balguy’s reliance upon our access to the self-evidence and the ‘self-eligibility’ of moral principles carried them to argue that the *criterion* of truth now became our *certainty* of the truth. Burnet and Balguy supposed these experiential features (of moral reasoning) to be part of the reason why we choose to act in accordance with them. We are just carried by the quality of the experience of our own reasoning process to act in accordance with its diktats. In this sense, their battle with Hutcheson is about the meaning we give to our introspective experience of moral approbation, and parts of their argument exploited or reflected the terminological confusion of Locke’s account of reason, reflection, intuitive knowledge, conscious awareness and sense.

⁴¹⁰ Balguy, *Second Part*, 43.

⁴¹¹ Balguy, *First Part*, 44.

⁴¹² Balguy, *Second Part*, 74, for example.

The question for the next part of the chapter is whether or not Burnet or Balguy argued that a rational perception of the fitness of an action, and (therefore) our rational obligation to perform it, was sufficient to motivate an action.

Burnet, Balguy and the question of motivation

Burnet and Balguy, I argue, like Clarke, were both rationalists about moral knowledge and moral obligation, but were not about motivation, or at least were not straightforwardly so. I argue that for Balguy, as much as for Clarke, our lack of perfection entailed the need for us to recognise the truth of the promise of the afterlife and the distribution of divine justice in order for us to lead a moral life. Balguy, in fact, called acting to secure divine reward our ‘religious obligation’. In order to make virtue a practical reality, Balguy claimed that we needed to recognise and fulfil both our religious and our moral obligations. Irwin treats Balguy’s (and Clarke’s) religious commitments as an almost separate part of their theory.⁴¹³ Irwin sees both Clarke and Balguy’s appeal to the consequences to self of compliance or non-compliance with divine command as simply a practical *support* for virtue. But Irwin here, I believe, misses completely the moral value that Balguy allows acts of self-interest to have.

Irwin makes the same observation about Balguy that we saw Schneewind make about Clarke. This is that the will may ‘rebel’ against the necessary conclusion of reason, which Clarke, for Schneewind, explained by pointing to the weakness of will. Irwin, talking about Balguy, says,

like Clarke, he [Balguy] allows this possibility [that the will may not comply with rational assent], but he has some difficulty explaining it. *Though he agrees that the will sometimes rebels against rational assent, he still assumes that rational assent is normally sufficient for action, without any further approval by the will.*⁴¹⁴ [My emphasis.]

I argue that neither Clarke nor Balguy thought rational assent to the fitness of an action was ‘normally sufficient’ to move an agent to a moral action. It ought to have been, they agreed, but as a species we had failed that particular test. God

⁴¹³ Ibid., They appear in a separate section in a later chapter entitled “Balguy and Clarke: Morality and Natural Religion,” 465-475.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 445.

has seen fit, they also agreed, to create us with a variety of apparent weaknesses (God's reason for this is ultimately the result of his wisdom and his wish for our happiness). God's perfection lies in the perfect conformity of his will to his understanding. Since we lack this perfection, our ability to fulfil a rationally perceived moral obligation is incomplete. The appeal to divine reward and punishment notwithstanding, Clarke, Balguy and Burnet also all referred to the hedonic elements of conscience to motivate behavioural compliance with rational assent. In which case, as I argued in Chapter 2, they then argued that the motivation was hedonic, and did not derive directly from the perception of the fitness of an action.

Burnet and motivation

Burnet, in his correspondence with Hutcheson, did not assign a prominent role to the pleasures and pains of eternity in his moral theory. The question (for me) is why not? If I am correct to emphasise the vital part that belief in the promises of the afterlife plays in Clarke's theory, and, since Burnet wrote to defend Clarke's approach as much as Balguy did, why is this argument largely missing in Burnet's letters to Hutcheson?

An answer may be found, I believe, in the preface that Burnet wrote to the publication of his letters with Hutcheson. Here, Burnet reported that the foundation that Hutcheson's 'beautiful structure' so badly lacked had already been provided by Cumberland and Clarke 'in the beginning of his second Boyle lectures', and Wollaston.⁴¹⁵ The beginning of the second Boyle lectures (the first proposition) was precisely the place in which Clarke outlined the way in which our moral knowledge and obligation was founded in reason. The rest of that lecture, however, was devoted to an explanation of why the natural knowledge of the perception of the fitness of an action was insufficient to actually move us to virtue and how Revelation made up for this deficit.

⁴¹⁵ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 199.

Burnet, in his correspondence with Hutcheson, made it clear that his question was not ‘what in experience is seen to lead men to act but *what ought to*’.⁴¹⁶ [My emphasis.] What ought to motivate us was the subject of Clarke’s first proposition. Burnet, as we shall see, fully allowed that God had gifted us all sorts of useful natural passions, affections and even a moral sense itself to help motivate us to act (‘the proper means to animate and support as reason dictates’). Nevertheless, Burnet, like Clarke in the first proposition, argued that affections were not what made an action moral, and they were not what *ought* to move us to virtue.⁴¹⁷

At one point in his reply to Burnet, Hutcheson chastised Burnet for bringing in the ‘end of the Deity as a reason [for us] of pursuing public good’.⁴¹⁸ This was because Hutcheson was seeking to account for how virtue might emerge in us, irrespective of our knowledge of God, or the metaphysical grounding of moral good. Burnet, I think, responded to the terms of Hutcheson’s argument. He agreed that an account of our natural moral understanding should be given. For Burnet, and for Clarke and Balguy, natural reason could indeed tell us what *ought* to motivate us.

I’ll begin by looking at Burnet’s thoughts on obligation. For Burnet only discursive reasoning, and not the immediate perception of a self-evident truth, laid

the proper and indeed, strictly speaking, the only obligation upon us to act in a certain manner, since we are always self-condemned whenever we contradict its conclusions and directions.⁴¹⁹

Burnet thought that we could not be obliged by a disposition to act from natural affection, or a sense of beauty in an action because these are only affections and

⁴¹⁶ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 232.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴¹⁸ Hutcheson to Burnet, *Correspondence*, 228.

⁴¹⁹ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 223, 244. As we saw in chapter 4, there was a similar emphasis on discursive reason in the re-formulation that Hutcheson gave to moral obligation in the *Illustrations* – that it included the moral sense in the context of a fully reasoned appreciation of the context and consequences of an action.

relish and carry no obligatory force with them, until we have judged them 'fit' by deduction from a rational principle.

In short, *all sort of obligation to anything requires reason to give it force, without which it is a mere phantasm of the imagination.*⁴²⁰ [My emphasis.]

Burnet claimed that we cannot even 'form an obligation without introducing reason at its foundation'. We can only be obliged to an end that is rational, meaning an end we have reasoned as correctly reflecting the nature of things and the relations between them. What does obligation mean?

Obligation is a word of a Latin original signifying the action of binding which, therefore in a moral sense . . . must import the binding of an intelligent agent by some law, which can be no other than the law of reason. For all other ties are reducible to this and this is primary and reducible to no other principle.⁴²¹

Burnet maintained that we are self-condemned when we act against what we know to be true, as we might judge ourselves if we acted against a truth about anything. I can act against desires and affection, however, Burnet maintained, without having to 'bring myself in guilty'. Moral goodness, in our case, as in the case of God, just was, for Burnet, acting in accordance with what we took to be a true proposition, or propositions. Burnet said that when

I find certain true propositions resulting concerning the nature of things, then moral goodness, I say consists in acting agreeably to those propositions, moral badness acting disagreeably to them.⁴²²

For Burnet, what actually moves a person to act is not the question – this is generally *not* moral obligation, he freely admitted, but only reason can tell us if a planned action is the right/correct one, which then puts us under a moral obligation.

The question is not what is seen in experience to lead men to act. I confess their passions and affections generally do lead them. And it is their happiness and the wisdom of their creator that they have such affections and passions as naturally tend, till they corrupt them, to produce in many instances the same effects which reason dictates. But it is still reason which informs us beforehand that such actions would be right as well as

⁴²⁰ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 224.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 232.

afterwards they were right. And of this indeed there can be no doubt to anyone who has ever felt reason working in his breast.⁴²³ [My emphasis.]

Burnet did not wish to deny the motive force of beauty and pleasure that we perceive in virtue, or our natural affections for others, since they were put there by divine institution in order that we be motivated by them.

I know they are the most successful solicitors to everything that is right and reasonable if duly attended to and not mistaken or misused. And we should be comfortless and forlorn creatures if we had no affections and inward warmth of sentiment to spur us on to what dry reason approves of. But I would not have men depend on their affections as rules sufficient to conduct them, though they are the proper means to animate them and support them as reason directs. I would have them search still higher for the foundation and grounds of these very motives.⁴²⁴

Burnet clearly expressed the view in these letters that the comprehension of our obligation is reached by right reason. We may carry out an act from kind affection, which results in the beneficiary gaining in natural good, and Burnet argued that this is 'generally' what leads us to act. But he was silent on what 'generally' means. It is just not clear to what degree Burnet thought it was possible for us to act purely from a regard to the moral value of an action. In any case, the role of conscience working to motivate us to fulfil an obligation is not free from hedonic influence.

Burnet's minimal comments on the force of self-condemnation of acting (we are 'self-condemned' where we act against the results of our own reasoning, hence we are obliged to follow them), like Clarke's, are difficult to interpret.⁴²⁵ Do we act to fulfil our obligation to reason because we believe the action to be right, or do we act to secure the pleasure of self-approval and avoid the pain of guilt (of acting according, or not, to that knowledge)? What role do these considerations of our own 'self-good' play in our consistently, or at least regularly behaving according to our understanding of what it is right or correct (or at least regularly enough to secure our own salvation)? Moreover, did it matter to God, why we acted or was the matter of our actual motivation a matter of indifference to him,

⁴²³ Ibid., 233.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 207.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 224.

as long as we also aimed for virtue as well? What was God's view on mixed motives? These concerns lay at the very core of Balguy's approach to the possibility of virtue as he took up the question of the moral value of acts of self-interest.

Balguy and motivation

Balguy is important because he attempted to address, more directly than Clarke perhaps, the question of how God had acted to make virtue possible for us given the tendency of the sensible parts of our nature to lead us away from our rational understanding of what is right.

In the *First and Second Parts* Balguy argued that our *moral* obligation consists in our freely choosing to act according to our rational perception of the 'fitness' of an action. But did he make the 'practical claim' that this is sufficient to move us to choose to act virtuously? I argue that Balguy did not make the claim that knowledge of fitness and the obligation derived from this is sufficient to motivate moral action, for exactly the same reason that I argued that Clarke did not – because we presently require, and have required since the Fall, knowledge of our immortality and a future state where divine justice is meted out, to in order behave virtuously.

Balguy's first *Letter to a Deist*, published in 1726 took on Shaftesbury's claims over the sufficiency of the inherent moral beauty of an action to move us to virtue.⁴²⁶ Balguy agreed that though 'her charms' were considerable and derived from an intrinsic worth, these weren't sufficient to make us behave virtuously. Balguy thought that Shaftesbury's insistence on the detrimental effect that acting for reasons of self-interest had on the moral quality of our motivation was misplaced. This, Balguy argued, was because considerations of reward and punishment clearly enhanced our ability to behave virtuously. In the *Second Part* Balguy argued that, as we had been created both rational and sensible, God had placed us under a 'double obligation' as rational and sensible (sensitive)

⁴²⁶ John Balguy, *A Letter to a Deist Concerning the Beauty and Excellency of Moral Virtue, and the Support and Improvement Which it Receives from the Christian Religion*, 1726. Henceforth *First Letter*.

agents.⁴²⁷ These twin obligations were designed to enhance our ability to practice what we knew to be right. The implication of this was that we were not less obliged in the actual performance of a moral action by a consideration of divine rewards and punishments. Moreover, for Balguy (although he did not state this), the implication was that the ‘natural sanctions’ of conscience (guilt and condemnation) could also now be seen to be perfectly acceptable in the fulfilment of our obligations as sensible agents. Balguy, moreover, argued that certain duties to self, such as self-care and personal development also came under the label of moral virtues, although they were not social virtues.⁴²⁸ So, we have both religious obligations that entail that we need to consider the, likely, judgment of our actions in a future state and we have duties to our moral (self) development that entail that we ought to act on the hedonic force of conscience.

Both Clarke and Balguy believed that our natural reasoning abilities, in practice, had been partially destroyed by the Fall. For the ‘greatest part of mankind’, our choice to pursue sensual pleasure and indulge our passions had overwhelmed the ability of natural reason to perceive the truth and to choose to fulfil our obligation to act according to it. Both Clarke and Balguy, it is true, most frequently made the claim that the insufficiency of reason applies to the majority of mankind, rather than the explicit assertion that no one was ever moved to a moral action by reason of its having been understood to be the right thing to do. Clarke, as we saw, deemed it possible that a very few excellent ‘ancients’ might have managed this very occasionally, but that same natural reason remained an inadequate source of motivation for even sages to live a life of consistent virtue.

Balguy argued, like Clarke, that the Stoic claims to the sufficiency of the intrinsic qualities of virtue were misguided, given the sensible elements of our natures, which had been implanted by a God who created us according to what was best for us, given his total comprehension of eternal law. Indeed, Balguy saw himself, in the *Second Part*, as having reconciled the truths in both Stoic and Epicurean positions, and to have done so in a way that respected God’s intention in creating

⁴²⁷ Balguy, *Second Part*, 14-15.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

us rational *and* sensible.⁴²⁹ It was Balguy's particular mission to explain why, given that we were created with the dual qualities of rationality and sensibility, it was perfectly acceptable to act for self-concerned reasons concerned with the quality of our immortal lives in a future state. He refused to disbar certain duties to self-interest from the moral sphere. These were not *social* virtues (friendship, gratitude, natural affection, generosity, public spirit and compassion), but they were not entirely outside of the moral sphere as Hutcheson had, he thought, claimed. Balguy found that he could not

conclude that no actions can be morally good, which are solely directed to private interest.⁴³⁰

The *First Letter* was penned anonymously by Balguy, after reading the *Characteristics*, to complain about the 'low and disadvantageous account he has given of those religious motives which both reason and revelation set before us.'⁴³¹ Balguy agreed with Shaftesbury that morality could 'in no way' be resolved into self-interest. 'Interest can never enter into the nature and constitution of virtue, yet why may it not be allowed to accompany and stand beside her?' Self-interest, thought Balguy, could only be opposed to virtue if it destroyed benevolence. If we destroyed benevolence, then we destroyed virtue, he allowed.⁴³² Balguy here showed the same sort of pragmatic attitude to moral thought that Hutcheson did in his letter introducing the *Inquiry*. Hutcheson, as discussed in Chapter 3, maintained that whichever beliefs about our own nature and the nature of God increased benevolence were correct beliefs. Balguy claimed that reasons of self-interest could only be opposed to what we thought of as virtue if they actually decreased the amount of benevolence that resulted from their being held.

Balguy insisted that virtue and the rewards of virtue (which accrued to the actor, so amounted to a selfish motivation if we acted to reap them) should not be considered as antithetical to one another, primarily because they had been joined together by God. He then outlined all the ways in which knowledge of a

⁴²⁹ Balguy, *Second Part*, 99-100.

⁴³⁰ Balguy, *First Part*, 5.

⁴³¹ Balguy, *First Letter*, 5.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 10.

future state with rewards and punishments develops and enhances our benevolence, and prevents us from sinning. These 'new motives' do not hinder benevolence, he claimed, since a 'strict attention to self-good' adds to our enjoyment of virtue. In addition, this knowledge promises us 'great and endless happiness' and a peaceful and tranquil mind, 'in proportion to the strength of our hopes'. Experience and observation would tell us that this knowledge increases our goodness of temper, 'endears' us to one another and moves us to respond with gratitude to our creator, both of which have a positive practical effect. Truly, to live without these hopes 'would strike all virtue dead' - 'dejected and disconsolate', we would do no good for either for others or for ourselves.⁴³³

In short, to prescribe and preach up virtue, without a future state, appears to be no otherwise than as a sort of religious knight-errantry. However men may gaze or listen for a while, they will never be influenced by a doctrine that is carried so high, as to be above the principles of human nature.⁴³⁴

The other difficulty with a sole appeal to the intrinsically appealing qualities of virtue was 'how small a proportion of mankind' were capable of discerning them. Shaftesbury's scheme required the cultivation of tastes unlikely to be stirred in the 'bulk of mankind', and even an appeal to a universal moral sense, as proposed by Hutcheson, needed to be 'cherished' by the care, attention and *practice* of virtue if it is not to be extinguished.⁴³⁵ Both schemes appeared to Balguy to be insufficient to support and maintain morality in most of us, because we cannot arrive at a natural knowledge of the worth of virtue by 'abstract reasonings and speculations'. In truth

to expect indeed any way that the greatest part of mankind should have just ideas of virtue and understand its worth; is to expect the greatest part of mankind should become philosophers.⁴³⁶

Even if this truth were perceived, how, Balguy asked, could it be expected to operate effectively on us? 'What slight hold would such intellectual beauties take on the understanding of the vulgar; and how feebly would they operate upon

⁴³³ Ibid., 11-15.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 16-17.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 13.

them?'⁴³⁷ Whatever it is that motivates us to an action, by the necessity of our created natures, it needs to work strongly on our 'gross minds' by affecting our sense and passions. What better method then, than rewards and punishments to motivate us to do our duty? Direct compulsion was 'inconsistent with our nature', therefore God provided us with these more suitable motives. The necessity of these motives will become clear when we recognise 'a great part of mankind as deeply engaged in sinful courses'. Reformation could not be left either to our ('their') 'dark and depraved' natural reason or an unsupported moral sense. The intrinsic goodness of virtue is not apparent to most people. Try representing 'to a vicious man the beauty of virtue and you speak to him in a language he does not understand.'⁴³⁸

Vice had ruined our natural understanding, and a 'strong attachment to sin' is produced by inclination and strengthened by practice. The only truth powerful enough to penetrate the fog of depravity is a truth that first appeals to self-interest. It is not only to those of us engaged in vice that a future state of rewards and punishments acts as an encouragement to virtue. These same motives that work on sin also work to console those of us suffering in grief, pain, adversity or hardship. Like Clarke, Balguy found the Stoic appeal to the sufficiency of the intrinsic qualities of virtue deeply misguided. These motives then, supply all the defects of our nature with effective motives to conduct ourselves virtuously. Such motives are not a social virtue, but acting upon them produces virtue, and as such, they are necessary for virtue.

We plainly see that she is not self-sufficient; and how could her defects be better supplied, than by those rewards which revelation has offered men?⁴³⁹

They are 'auxiliaries' to virtue to be sure, but they are no less necessary to the practise of virtue. In reality, if we took away all the actions that had been conducted for the benefit of others but in expectation of interest to ourselves, 'the remainder, in all likelihood' would not be very considerable. Our duty and interest must coincide for moral actions to be performed.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 23-24.

‘Tis vanity and presumption in him to slight those advantages which are necessary to his well-being. On the other hand ‘tis mean and mercenary to pursue those advantages alone. To prevent both God has closely connected our duty and interest and interwoven them together.⁴⁴⁰

Wanting to please God, for reasons of self-interest, was nothing to be ashamed of, in fact it rivalled disinterest for the claim of noblest motive.

A desire to please the supreme being, and obtain his approbation, is so wise and worthy an intention, so just a principle of action, so agreeable to the dictate of right reason, and the genuine inclinations of human nature, that it may seem to rival the most disinterested love of virtue, or at least to claim a place very near it.⁴⁴¹

What the ‘exalted mind’ of Socrates understood was that to separate virtue and interest, and pursue *either* alone was to act not only against our own natures but also the ‘rules of found wisdom’. The knowledge that at the crucifixion, Christ endured his position ‘for the joy that was set before him’, was surely enough authority and assurance that anyone could want that ‘the mixed principle before mentioned is perfectly right’.⁴⁴²

Six years later in 1732, after the publication of his *First and Second parts*, Balguy added a postscript to the *unaltered* text of the third edition of his *Letter to a Deist* (henceforth *Postscript*). In it he wanted to clarify that whatever he had said about the usefulness and ‘in some cases absolutely necessary’ rewards offered by religion, the truth remained that ‘the more disinterestedly the agent acts, the more virtuous he is’. Balguy wished to retract anything that he had said which was contrary to the notion that,

the highest principle of a moral agent is a love of virtue for virtue’s sake; as his chief merit is to pursue and practice it upon its own account.⁴⁴³

This indeed is God’s perfection. And it would be ours too except that, in our present condition, it was impractical for parts of our duty to be motivated by disinterested love of virtue alone.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 27.

⁴⁴³ *Postscript*, 1732, 33.

Man is not capable of so perfect and exalted a course of virtue . . . at least not in his present condition. Considering the indigence and infirmity of his nature, some parts of his duty are really impracticable on the foot of disinterest.⁴⁴⁴

Since,

a sensible agent can no more be indifferent to happiness than a moral agent can be indifferent to rectitude. They must therefore be reconciled and rendered consistent; which in many cases cannot possibly be, without support and influence of future rewards.⁴⁴⁵

Given that it is in our nature to seek happiness, we may give up the prospect of immediate happiness in return for a fuller happiness in a later state, but for God to require a person to give up happiness altogether (assuming no future state) would be to require him to

renounce, or counter-act the principles of his own nature; which unavoidably engage him in the quest of happiness, at the same time that they incline him to the pursuit of virtue.⁴⁴⁶

Balguy stated that virtue or moral rectitude could, and should, be considered in two ways. Either it could be regarded

in itself, as an eternal rule of action for intelligent beings, necessarily arising from the nature of things, its own dignity and beauty must, in ordinary cases, recommend it to uncorrupted minds.⁴⁴⁷

Or else it could be thought of as religion, or 'the will and command of the supreme legislator', and as such must be enforced by reward and punishment. Given the depravity of the 'bulk of the species', the majority of us need to be governed by authority and 'managed by the springs of hopes and fear'. If

this be the true state of mankind, as must be acknowledged; whoever attempts to take off men's thoughts and regards from the sanctions of religion and fix them entirely on the natural charms of virtue will in all probability do much more hurt than good.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 37.

It should also be emphasised that while in the *First and Second Parts* Balguy wrote primarily to explain the foundations of moral virtue 'in itself', he made here the same argument about our dual, but distinct, existences as 'moral agents' and 'religious agents'. In the *Second Part*, Balguy complained that Locke (and others) had confused the two by founding both moral virtue and religion upon the will of God. In fact, religion and moral goodness

may be looked upon as coincident, both in respect of their ultimate ground, and the agreement of their precepts, yet upon these accounts we ought not to confound these ideas, which are themselves distinct.⁴⁴⁹

God, being morally perfect, is 'incapable of religion'. In our case although those moral actions performed for their own sake are 'the purest and most perfect' that we are capable of, but, we nonetheless need religion. We need it in order to fulfil all our duties to God, which call for some of the same actions, but which derive from his authority as our governor, who wants us to be happy in our immortal state – it is the actual performance of benevolent action that is important to God. This is presumably because by acting for the good of others, from whatever motive, we increase happiness on earth for everybody, which is his aim. The actual performance of the action is what Balguy seems to think is paramount in meeting the demands of our religious agency. The perception of the obligation to act in accordance with what reason tells us is required; it is what is paramount in meeting the demands of our moral agency. In terms of our ability to fulfil our roles as moral agents, we had been given a chance to use our natural reason, but failed.

God was pleased therefore to reinforce virtue with religion, to give men new light, and new laws, and strengthen these laws by powerful sanctions.⁴⁵⁰

Our duty to behave virtuously is in fact composed of two separate duties, one to act for virtue's sake, and one to act according to God's will. Balguy did not agree with Hutcheson 'that no actions can be morally good, which are solely directed at private interest'.⁴⁵¹ He appraised the reader of the following situation:

⁴⁴⁹ Balguy, *Second Part*, 42.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁵¹ Balguy, *First Part*, 5.

Whatever pre-eminence may be due to virtue, on account of its intrinsic excellence and dignity, yet the authority and majesty of religion seem much fitter, and more effectual to restrain licentious men, and govern a degenerate world. Those purer beings, which are of an order superior to human nature, need not perhaps any other rule than the internal one of reason or virtue; but our frail and faulty species wants both another law, and a legislator, to curb their follies and vices, and keep them in some measure within the bounds of their duty.⁴⁵²

Balguy's aims were three fold – to explain the need for the Revelation of the Gospels, to encourage his readership to virtue, and to insist that the foundations of morality did not rest upon the arbitrary will of God, but rather upon an eternal truth, which God had chosen to be guided by. We, being less than perfect, needed the obligations of religion as well as the perception of our moral obligation to make us practice virtue.

Balguy argued, in the *First and Second Parts*, against Hutcheson, that we could not count an action from instinctual affection moral, at some length. This was because he thought that acting from instinct did not fulfil our obligations, moral (including our social duties and duties to self) or religious (to obey the will of God). He also said, quite clearly, that we need to use reason to discover our duties and perceive our obligations and that virtue consists in a 'rational determination'.⁴⁵³ The closest that Balguy comes to the undifferentiated practical rational claim is here, when Balguy dealt with Hutcheson's claim that reason could not excite us to action. Balguy argued that a rational perception of virtue leads to our approbation of it (because it is a *rational* perception),

What is the reason exciting a man to the choice of a virtuous action? I answer, his very approbation of it is itself a sufficient reason, *wherever it is not over-ruled by another more powerful*.⁴⁵⁴ [My emphasis].

The point being that we have other rational approbations, which include those that argue for our rational self-interest, or happiness. Balguy argued that we have a non-reducible rational affection for the 'rectitude' of actions (their 'honestum', not their 'pulchram'). This is not reducible to an affection for self, or

⁴⁵² Balguy, *Second Part*, 43.

⁴⁵³ Balguy, *First Part*, 13, 21.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Balguy had rubbished Leibniz's notion of sufficient virtue (which Leibniz claimed was undermined by Clarke's moral necessity).

others, and we may be excited by it. ‘The end of rational actions and rational agents’, Balguy insisted ‘considered as such, is reason or moral good’.⁴⁵⁵ But, we need to keep in mind that we are both rational and sensible agents and have obligations to both these agencies. The sensitive part of our nature demands that we fulfil our obligations to the will of God, because obedience also determines our happiness. Indeed,

as God has framed our natures in such a manner as makes it necessary to approve and pursue both these ends, we may infallibly conclude, that he does not intend to suffer them finally to interfere.⁴⁵⁶

I do believe that Clarke and Balguy are done a disservice by readers whose interpretative strategy leads them to ignore the parts of Clarke and Balguy’s argument which dealt with the role of future reward and punishment. This approach does indeed leave them looking as if they struggled to account for motivation, as Irwin and Schneewind suggest. They didn’t struggle to account for motivation; they just did so in a way that later commentators have not always deemed valid, or interesting.

In the final part of this chapter, I will explore Burnet and Balguy’s theistic metaphysics and compare their arguments with those presented by Hutcheson. This comparison is made somewhat difficult because I have presented Hutcheson’s arguments as they were found across texts that Burnet and Balguy did not have access to. Hutcheson, however, did indicate the direction of his thought on God’s moral attributes in the *four treatises* and Burnet was, of course, aware of Hutcheson’s discussion of this matter in his letters to Burnet. Burnet and Balguy responded to these arguments. These arguments are important because they reveal the foundation of Burnet and Balguy’s objection to Hutcheson’s moral theory. Burnet and Balguy objected to Hutcheson founding moral goodness on the benevolent nature of the Deity. Burnet insisted that God aimed at our happiness because eternal law stated that happiness was best. God’s moral perfection lay in his always conforming his will to his understanding of what was right (his rectitude). This is where our moral goodness lies too, but

⁴⁵⁵ Balguy, *First Part*, 88.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

our less than perfect natures led God to implant kind affections to help us act for the happiness of others. Balguy made the same arguments.

Burnet on God's moral perfection

We saw in the previous two chapters that Hutcheson had maintained that God's creative acts were made in conformity to his understanding of what would be best for us, because of his benevolent nature. God retained the absolute power to act (prior to creation) as he willed, but he chose not to act against this understanding in his acts of creation. Burnet equated antecedent fitness with the situation that obtained prior to, or independent of God's creation.⁴⁵⁷ Hutcheson, in conversation with Burnet, did not discuss God's natural power (which I have suggested, for Hutcheson, equated to his absolute power to act, not the choices he made in conformity with his moral nature).

Hutcheson, in reply to Burnet, had argued that God's moral perfection lay in 'something like' our kind affections (as far as we are able to comprehend his moral nature). Burnet countered that the value of universal happiness was *understood* by the divine intelligence. This understanding in fact legitimised God's benevolent desires.

It is best that all should be happy. This is the truth a conformity to which makes the desire of public good reasonable in the Deity, and I add in all rational creatures who would imitate the wisdom and goodness of the Deity.⁴⁵⁸

Hutcheson only referred to the communicable perfections of God in his *Metaphysics*, but Burnet saw the implications of Hutcheson's reference to God's kind affections as exciting him to action. Burnet saw that Hutcheson referred here to God's pleasure in his kind affections as exciting God to action, because this would ground God's communicative decision to implant analogous affections and a moral sense in us. But God's happiness, for Burnet, was not a moral reason for God to act. God is esteemed to be essentially good by us because his actions conform to his understanding.

⁴⁵⁷ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 220.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.

I own, indeed, that we cannot but conceive something in the Deity in some measure analogous to our kindest affections as that he takes infinite pleasure in communicating his good to his creatures. But this consideration leads us only to conclude him infinitely happy and not good in a moral sense. We esteem him essentially good because he knows all truth and always acts according to it.⁴⁵⁹

Moreover, Burnet argued that God's happiness was so complete as a result of his perfect ability to conform his will to his understanding that he did not require the assistance of affections to 'augment his disposition to do right'. God

stands in need of no such assistance from affections to redouble his happiness and, thereby to augment his disposition to do right, as he has made us to want and has therefore afforded us. And as he does not stand in need of such assistance, so neither could he possibly receive it, being of a perfectly independent nature whom therefore nothing from without can influence or act upon.⁴⁶⁰

Burnet and Hutcheson, I suggest, both thought that God had decided to create in accordance with his understanding, but they thought that this decision was not motivated by his benevolence. For Hutcheson, God saw that his own moral perfection was his benevolence. God had chosen to communicate this to us, both because it was true that benevolence was a moral perfection in itself, and because he was made happy by it, and wished to share that happiness with us. We have already seen Hutcheson's remarks concerning the necessity of God's nature not reflecting any abridgement of his freedom. Burnet also thought 'the necessity of [God's] own nature' prompted his conforming his power to his understanding. It was not God's love for us, however, or his kind affections, that Burnet claimed constituted the necessary part of his moral nature. God was perfectly happy in his perfect knowledge and his unlimited power to act in accordance with this knowledge. Burnet appears to have thought, contrary to Hutcheson, that God's affection or love for us was not communicated by him to us as a moral perfection, but rather our own kind affections were implanted to help us with our less than perfect ability to conform our wills to our understanding. For Burnet, God's love for us did not need to cause his creative action, because that was not what constituted his moral perfection – this was the

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 239.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 247.

rectitude of his will. We, however, required the assistance of kind affections as a motivational aid, but they did not constitute our moral goodness either.

I believe that Burnet may have followed Clarke here and that the comprehension of their position, and Hutcheson's, is enlarged by a consideration of the nature of God's moral perfection. I suggest that Burnet's objection is that Hutcheson founds divine moral perfection in an affective aspect of his nature, rather than it being in his nature to always conform his will to his understanding. Burnet however, is more concerned with what it is that is necessary in the divine nature that leads God to always obey his understanding, not whether there was something necessary in the divine nature that achieved this in the first place.

Balguy and God's moral perfection

Balguy in the *First Part* offered a range of objections to Hutcheson's claims that virtue consisted in benevolent affections (in ourselves and in God), and that we were in possession of a moral sense which enabled us to receive ideas of moral goodness.

Balguy's objections to moral goodness consisting in instinct or affection were, as might be supposed, grounded in an objection to actions of natural necessity being counted as moral. Necessity for God, Balguy thought, could mean one of two things, either he was necessarily determined by the reason of things, or by a necessary disposition of his nature (his benevolence, for example). If God was determined by the latter this was not a moral perfection. The 'blind instinct' of brutes could not be a factor at work in a perfect being. God must have decided to act benevolently for the reason that it was the best thing to do, not through an impulse of love towards us, or an unavoidable inclination, *in order for us to consider him perfect*.⁴⁶¹ Balguy then gave a range of examples that demonstrated how we place a lower moral value on behaviour issuing from love rather than duty. Instincts and affections were legitimate auxiliaries to reason, instinct being a kind of 'infant virtue', which would lead us to a place where reason could assume command. He also, frequently and with a variety of rhetorical flourishes,

⁴⁶¹ Balguy, *First Part*, 4-10.

put forward the objection that it was 'ignoble' for virtue to be founded on sense and instinct.⁴⁶²

Balguy took up Hutcheson's comment that there was 'nothing surpassing the natural power of the Deity' directly. Balguy argued that

it was no more in the power of the Deity to make rational beings approve of ingratitude, perfidiousness etc., than it is in his power to make them conclude that a part of any thing is equal to the whole.⁴⁶³

I have argued, in a previous chapter, that this was not Hutcheson's point here. I argued that Hutcheson opposed natural to moral power and that the exercise of God's natural power, without his moral power, would have entailed that he also abandoned his understanding of eternal law in creation. Quite why God's natural power would never be exercised in this way was, of course, due to his moral perfection. Balguy, however, would not have been aware of the full drift of Hutcheson's argument here.

In another tract Balguy expressed his views in more detail. In his *Divine Rectitude* of 1733, Balguy insisted that the 'narrowness of our minds' entailed that we could never really know the full extent of God's perfections. Balguy, however, thought that whatever these perfections might be, they could be subsumed under the idea of his moral rectitude. This amounted to God's 'determining himself by moral fitness, or acting perpetually according to the truth, nature and reason of things'.⁴⁶⁴ Balguy objected here, again, to the notion that God's moral perfection lies in the 'supposition of such a natural propension' as his benevolence. This was 'injurious to his honour' and lessened his moral excellence. It was 'intrinsically right and fit to communicate happiness', and the production of happiness, or natural good must be preferable to its non-production, but this was not God's final end.⁴⁶⁵ God's own end was his 'glory, which consists in his own approbation of his works and actions.'⁴⁶⁶ This was not

⁴⁶² Ibid., 11-18.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁶⁴ John Balguy, *Divine Rectitude: or, a Brief Inquiry concerning the Moral Perfections of the Deity, particularly in respect of Creation and Providence*, 1733, 4. Henceforth *Divine Rectitude*.

⁴⁶⁵ Balguy, *Divine Rectitude*, 10-11.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 12.

because he had created a world that was conducive to *our* happiness, which was only a subservient end, but because the ‘real and intrinsic worth’ of his creation was ‘amiable in the sight of the creator himself’.⁴⁶⁷

This chapter has explored the ways in which Locke’s perceptual account of reason gave rise to Burnet and Balguy’s claims that reason was our inner, and moral sense, and how the focus on our experience of immediate, affective moral reactions led to their claims about the experiential priority of reason over sense perception in the intuition of self-evident moral principles. It was Balguy who objected to the resulting indistinctness of the boundary between sense and reason, or intellect. In addition, I argued that Balguy followed Clarke in his approach to motivation, which was not, in fact, something either of them could be said to struggle with, once their whole approach is considered. Lastly, I considered their objections to Hutcheson’s account of benevolence as God’s moral perfection.

In the next chapter I move on to Gay, who protested about the reliance of moral theory on the awareness of our introspective experience in moral thought and motive, this picks up on this theme discussed in some detail in Chapter 4 on Hutcheson. Gay’s chief aim, I suggest was to explain how the rational and sensible parts of our nature might be brought together in a unified account of agency that saw human nature, obligation and motive bound together to explain the possibility of virtue. In addition, Gay presented a theory of divine motivation that moved away from the idea of God’s communicable virtues.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 13.

Chapter 6

John Gay: 'Resting Places'

In 1731 Edmund Law appended the anonymous *Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality* to his translation of William King's work, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*.⁴⁶⁸ This work was written, as it turned out, by Law's Cambridge associate, John Gay. Gay was heralded by Albee, as 'one of the most original, even if not one of the profoundest, thinkers in the whole development of English ethics'. In the *Dissertation*, Albee found the first statement of the 'utilitarian principle in its wholly undifferentiated form'.⁴⁶⁹

Gay's originality, with respect to the precise nature of his theological utilitarianism, is not of direct concern here. My concern is to look at the ways in which Gay responded to the work of Clarke and his defenders and to Hutcheson, with respect to the three themes that the thesis is concerned with: the relationship of rationalism to obligation and motivation, the relative roles of sense and judgment in moral knowledge (and the demand that motive, ideas, principles, propositions and judgments be available to conscious awareness), and the theistic metaphysics used to support arguments about realism (with particular emphasis on God's communicative attributes). In addition, although this is not major theme in itself, as has been the case in the preceding chapters, Locke's influence will be made apparent. Locke was a far less problematic figure for Gay, who, like Edmund Law, took himself to be following Locke in his approach to moral matters.

Gay has been selected for inclusion in the thesis because he took himself to be offering a synthesising solution to the threefold discord between Clarke and his supporters, Hutcheson, and those such as John Clarke of Hull, Archibald Campbell and Law's group at Cambridge, who proposed self-interest as the sole

⁴⁶⁸ William King, *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, trans. Edmund Law (London: Thurlbourn, 1731). Henceforth *Origin*.

⁴⁶⁹ Ernest Albee, "Review: British Moralists; Being Selections from Writers Principally of the Eighteenth Century by L. A. Selby-Bigge," *Philosophical Review* 8, no. 1 (1898): 82-86. See also his *A History of English Utilitarianism*, 1901.

principle of motivation in moral action.⁴⁷⁰ Gay proposed a model of rational action that consisted of a four-part theory of obligation, and he identified each obligation with a particular ‘inducement’, which promised to affect our happiness as individuals. He explained both our experience of ‘public affections’ as the motivation for other-directed actions, and our experience of approbation of beneficent actions, or benevolent characters as supervening on more a fundamental principle of private happiness. Gay rejected the accounts of moral obligation provided by Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, and Hutcheson. He also overruled Hutcheson’s appeal to evidence from introspection, as to our motivation and moral approval or disapproval, on the grounds that we need to go beyond our immediate awareness in order to uncover the ‘fundamental principle of virtue or true morality’. Gay’s explanation of motivation and approbation relied on the operation of the principle of the association of ideas, the specification of which Gay attributed to Locke.

To see why Gay believed his account capable of synthesising the approaches of Clarke, Burnet and Balguy and Hutcheson, attention must be paid to Gay’s understanding of what it was that God had communicated to us via his act of creation. To understand Gay’s position, it will be necessary to discuss the work of Edmund Law and William King.⁴⁷¹ This will be the focus of the next section of the chapter. The subsequent section will deal with Gay’s account of motivation. The final section will look at Gay’s objection to introspection as a method in moral philosophy, and the nature of the associative process that he held

⁴⁷⁰ Gay is also included because, as Garrett, has recently been at pains to point out, Gay’s work has, to date, been underexplored in the secondary literature. Although I do not discuss it directly here, I have had sight of a PDF of Garret’s recent very helpful (to me) and insightful talk on Gay - “A Lockean Revolution in Morals.” Paper presented at the John Locke Conference, Department of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, April 11th, 2015. Gay is also discussed briefly in Christian Maurer, “Self-Interest and Sociability,” in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James A. Harris, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 304-105, and Carey, “Hutcheson and the Scottish Enlightenment,” 49-50, and Irwin *Development, Vol II*, 825-827. Gay has received some attention in the literature on David Hartley, as he is the figure named by David Hartley as the inspiration for Hartley’s own associative theory of mind. See Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature* (New York; State University of New York Press, 1999), chapter 7, 265-296.

⁴⁷¹ Gay mentioned Hutcheson by name, and he discussed the approach of those who appealed to fitness and unfitness, and distinguished their approach from that of Wollaston. He did not refer to Clarke, Burnet or Balguy by name.

responsible for our apparent experience of benevolent instincts and a moral sense.

King, Law and Gay and divine communication

Edmund Law first published his translation of William King's *De Origine Mali*, together with his own set of footnotes in 1731. King's foremost concern was theodicy. Law's footnotes were designed to shepherd the reader towards Law's own views on a range of topics, which included epistemology, and the nature of our abstract ideas.⁴⁷² Law, who took himself to be following Locke, denied the abstract notions of space and time any real existence outside of our own ideas.⁴⁷³ Law's target here was Clarke and his defence of Newton. Law was part of a wider group at Cambridge who all objected, for somewhat different reasons, to Clarke's attempt to demonstrate what they saw as 'Newton's God', and Clarke's use of the a priori as a means of demonstrating the first cause and his incommunicable attributes.⁴⁷⁴

When it came to the 'general powers and properties of human nature', Law had also looked to Locke.⁴⁷⁵ In Law's opinion, the views of Locke and Clarke here were incommensurate, not least because of Clarke's founding

all our moral knowledge, on certain innate instincts, or absolute fitnesses (however inconsistent these two terms may appear), the former [Locke's approach] being wholly calculated to remove them.⁴⁷⁶

Presumably, although he does not explain this further, Law found Clarke's self-evident moral principles operationally equivalent to an appeal to innate

⁴⁷² Law's concerns were not simply broader than King's- on occasion they held opposing views, for example Law removed the section where King defended the existence of innate ideas. See John Stephens, "Edmund Law," 166.

⁴⁷³ Ayers has argued for a realist reading of Locke's ideas of space and time, as Young points out, Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, 88. Moore has argued that Hutcheson, in his *Metaphysics*, used his own realist reading of Locke to counter Law's thesis with an argument for the real existence of space and time. See Moore, introduction, *LMNSM*, xxiv.

⁴⁷⁴ Clarke's particular demonstration of the divine attributes of immensity and eternity were closely associated with Newton's understanding of the universe as containing the real entities of absolute space and time (Clarke deemed space and time 'coeval' with the existence of God). See Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, 83-119, and on the separation between the reception of Locke and Newton in early eighteenth-century Cambridge, with respect to Clarke's work.

⁴⁷⁵ Edmund Law, "Preface," in *An Essay on the Origins of Evil*, by William King, 5th Edition, Revised (London: Faulder, 1781), xvi. Law named (only) Locke as 'one of my chief guides'.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid*, xix

instincts. Locke, as Law knew, had denied the existence of both innate and self-evident propositions as practical principles where they were supposed to guide us unknowingly, or unquestioningly, towards moral good.⁴⁷⁷

Law argued, again on the basis of his reading of Locke, that the nature of our abstract ideas of space and time was such that they did not allow us to assert the real existence of God's incommunicable properties of immensity or eternity, as (Law believed) Clarke had suggested they did. When it came to the relationship between God's communicable attributes and his creative activity, both King, and Law argued against the view taken by Balguy that was discussed in the previous chapter. To recap: - Balguy insisted that God had created the world for his own final end, which was in fact, his own glory. The creation was not (just) the result of divine benevolence, as Hutcheson had argued. Balguy maintained that God's glory could only be satisfied by the creation of something intrinsically good, and not just something that would make us happy. Making himself, or indeed us, happy, Balguy declared, was only one of God's subservient ends in creation. King and Law shared the assumption made by Clarke and Hutcheson (discussed in chapter 3), and Burnet and Balguy, that since God was perfect and his creative powers unlimited, he neither needed, nor wanted for anything. King argued however, that this meant that God did not create for his own advantage, which included his own glory.⁴⁷⁸ King admitted that Scripture tells us that 'the world was made for the glory of God', but argued that this was falsely considered as analogous to man's own desire for glory to God.⁴⁷⁹ The correct interpretation, King claimed, is that although God's communicable attributes, his power, goodness and wisdom, 'shine forth as clearly in his works as if he had no other intent in making them beside the ostentation of these attributes', God's real aim,

⁴⁷⁷ Locke denied that innate speculative principles could operate to produce a particular truth without our being aware of their content. In addition he claimed that there were, in fact, no self-evident moral principles because we could always ask why they should be followed as rules. The comparison that Law drew between Clarke's self-evident principles and innate principles is awkward (as he acknowledged here) because Clarke, like Burnet, did not differentiate between speculative and practical principles in the way that Locke did. For Clarke and Burnet, an *obligation* to perform an action arose from the perception that an action was fit to be performed because it accorded with the eternal relations between the different natures of things.

⁴⁷⁸ King, *Origin*, 52 -54.

⁴⁷⁹ See Stephens, "Edmund Law," for a summation of King's views, 167. (Stephens does not discuss, Clarke, Balguy or Hutcheson.)

or end, in creation was to communicate his power and goodness in order to make us happy.⁴⁸⁰ He had done this by creating ‘a world with the greatest goodness’. What King meant by ‘good’ here, he explained, was a natural good for us, that could, if used properly, make us happy.

By good, I here understand, that which is convenient and commodious, that which is correspondent to the appetite of every creature.⁴⁸¹

Law also took the view that God had communicated his power and goodness to us, by the exercise of his will, in making a world in which we were capable of being happy.⁴⁸² God had created the conditions under which we may freely choose to make ourselves happy, in either this world or the next, by obeying his will.⁴⁸³ Neither Hutcheson nor Clarke, nor Burnet or Balguy, would have disagreed with this. But they argued that God had communicated his goodness (his benevolence or his rectitude) to us, by creating us with an analogous form of goodness as a potential of our own nature. This is not what Law, or his associate John Gay, claimed.

Hutcheson had insisted that God communicates his own moral perfection, which we understand to be benevolence or irreducible kind affections, by creating us capable of similar kind affections and of recognising them as moral good (and after observation and reflection, by extension and enlargement, capable of understanding that benevolence is God’s moral perfection). God’s goodness, for Hutcheson, is not reducible to God’s desire to communicate that goodness in order that either he, or his creatures, is made happy, although this is a result of it. It is important to emphasise again that for Hutcheson, participating or sharing directly in divine love itself, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, is not the method whereby the communication of God’s goodness is achieved (as it had been in reformed accounts of the operation of the Trinity). Our benevolence, for

⁴⁸⁰ King, *Origin*, 54

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁸² Law, “The Translator’s Preface,” in *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, by William King (London: Thurlbourn, 1731) ix.

⁴⁸³ Law develops his argument on freedom here across the editions. See Stephens, “Edmund Law,” 168.

Hutcheson, is only analogous to God's.⁴⁸⁴ Clarke and Balguy argued that God's moral perfection lies in the unalterable rectitude of his will, and that this too constitutes the basis for our moral ability. Again, for Clarke and Balguy, the nature of God's moral perfection is communicated to us – we ought to be able to understand that our knowledge of an action as 'fit' means that it ought always to be performed, and we ought, therefore, to always perform it. Clarke and Balguy believed that that perfection, or some appropriately analogous degree of it, had been potentially achievable by us, at least prior to the Fall. However, as I argued, they maintained that it had been proven to God that we had chosen to ruin our understanding and/or the ability to conform our will to that understanding. We therefore needed revelation to comprehend a range of other truths (the existence of a future state, for example), which would help motivate us to behave in a way that would ultimately be acceptable to God (irrespective of the true nature of moral goodness).

Gay followed Law (and King) on the question of God's motivation and his aims in creation. King, Law and Gay supposed that God's goodness is known (outside of revelation) through observation of natural good in the world, and the potential for happiness that it offers us. Law offered the following observation:

When I enquire how I got into this world, and came to be what I am, I'm told that an absolutely perfect being produced me out of nothing, and placed me here on purpose to communicate some part of his happiness to me, and to make me, in some measure, like himself.⁴⁸⁵

Gay and Law both argued that God's happiness, and his goodness led him to communicate that happiness to us. They did not make an argument from the nature of the divine will (i.e. in terms of its rectitude [Clarke], or its necessary determination by his loving nature [Hutcheson]) that supposed that the nature of his moral perfection was found, in some small analogous way, in human nature. Gay argued, it seems to me, that what is communicated to us in creation, is *what* God wills us to do (i.e. the content of divine command), and of course, the

⁴⁸⁴ See Danaher, *A World For All?* 181 on the difference between Hutcheson's use of the distinction between communicable and incommunicable virtues, and the more traditional understanding of this division that occurred in the context of metaphysical arguments to do with the Trinity.

⁴⁸⁵ Law, "The Translator's Preface," in *Origin*, iv

fact that it is the command of an all-powerful being. Gay said, very clearly, that for us as sensible and rational agents, who were created to respond to pleasure and pain, that 'happiness is the general end of all actions'.⁴⁸⁶ He did not say that happiness is the general end of all God's actions, quite possibly because he thought that God's general ends in their entirety had not been disclosed to us, but he believed that God's aims in creation were directed towards our happiness.⁴⁸⁷

Gay took the notion of God's communicable attributes away from a consideration of virtue as a facet of our nature that echoed the moral perfection of the divine nature (benevolence, or the ability to conform will to understanding of what was right, or fit, regardless of whether our own interests were harmed by acting this way), towards the idea of us as beneficiaries of God's own happiness, who were created needing each other in order to increase the 'sum of pleasures' available to us, in order that we might be happy, and that God might see his happiness reflected back to himself.

Clarke and his defenders, Hutcheson, Law and Gay, all agreed that God wanted us to be happy, and that being virtuous would make us happy, if not in this life then the next. There was also an agreement that God's communication of his goodness to us, in whatever form or forms it took, made him happy (although this was not a necessary part of his motivation). Their differences lay in their understanding of what God's moral perfection consisted of, and his method of communication. For Hutcheson this communication is achieved by implanting analogous benevolent instincts. For Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, it is achieved by granting us sufficient natural, moral knowledge and a free will that ought to be used to produce behaviour consistent with that knowledge (and was originally capable of being used to that end). Burnet and Balguy agreed that we had been granted natural affections for others, which were not reducible to self-interest, but these natural affections had been gifted to us as a motivational aid, rather than being constitutive of moral goodness itself (which was rectitude). For Gay, this

⁴⁸⁶ Gay, *Dissertation*, xxv.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, xix.

communication is achieved by creating us with a will that responds to the reasoned appreciation of that which we believe will lead to our own private happiness.

Gay did not directly discuss the difference in position between himself, Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, and Hutcheson on the question of God's communicable attributes. Gay believed, apparently, that the competing moral schemes proposed by Hutcheson and Clarke and his defenders were not rival accounts at all. He appears to have understood, not without justification, that their schemes all relied, in some real way, upon our fundamental need to make ourselves happy in this or a future world, and that God had willed our happiness (whatever his motive for doing so), and that by being virtuous we would make both God and ourselves happy.

Gay claimed that the differences between himself and other moralists arose because the general idea of virtue had not been agreed upon, and because they had used the wrong rule, or criterion, to judge whether or not an action agreed with this general idea of virtue. Gay's explanation, as we shall see, relied upon a general, complex, idea of virtue that included the notions of obligation and approbation, and upon a range of proximal and distal criteria used to decide whether an action is virtuous or not. Gay's refusal to accept Hutcheson's claim that we need to be introspectively aware of any true principle of motivation in order for it to act as a practical principle also played a large part in his account of moral motivation and approbation. The following section will examine Gay's attempt to synthesise various moral systems with his own approach. Particular attention will be paid to Gay's treatment of the question of our motivation for virtue.

Gay, moral ideas, motivation and obligation

Edmund Law, Daniel Waterland, Thomas Rutherford and Thomas Johnson all opposed the curtailment of divine power that they thought Clarke's commitment

to the necessary and immutable dictates of eternal law required.⁴⁸⁸ Gay was a representative, along with others who followed Law at Cambridge, of a group who sought to advance the 'interested scheme'. Its supporters asserted that the pursuit of happiness, or the avoidance of pain, provided us with the only possible motivation for acting, and that benevolence was a duty we performed in order to advance our own happiness (whether we were aware of this motivation, or not). They worked from, or at least shared, Locke's basic model of motivation in human behaviour. Locke had allowed only two innate practical principles in his account of action.

Nature, I confess, has put into man a desire of happiness, and an aversion to misery: these indeed are innate practical principles, which (as practical principles ought) do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions without ceasing.⁴⁸⁹

Locke, in fact, also allowed a small collection of behavioural dispositions or specific character traits, which are formed *in utero*, but neither these, nor any innate principles, of any kind, were held to incline us towards either moral goodness or moral evil.⁴⁹⁰

The particular task that Gay set himself in the *Dissertation* was to explain how the schemes put forward by Clarke and his defenders and Hutcheson, and others including Wollaston, and unnamed others, could in fact be subsumed under his own approach.⁴⁹¹ Gay began his *Dissertation* with something that sounds very much like a reference to 'two-parts of ethics' that we saw proposed by Bacon, Henry More, and Locke in the introductory chapter. I suggested that this distinction - between our knowledge of how we ought to live to please God and secure our eventual happiness (usually adequate) and the appropriate motive or means required to bring this behaviour about (usually inadequate) - reflected the overriding concern of philosophers of the period which was to show how we could achieve virtue. The two parts, in Locke's particular formulation, were the

⁴⁸⁸ See Stephens, "Edmund Law," 163-173.

⁴⁸⁹ Locke, *ECHU*, 1:3:3, 67.

⁴⁹⁰ Although we were also naturally inclined to form habits of thought and action which, if not carefully regulated, would lead us to vice. This is the lesson and theory behind Locke's approach to moral education. See John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁴⁹¹ See *Dissertation* xi. Wollaston is named and discussed at xx.

‘rule’ (which was generally agreed upon) and the ‘true motives to practice’ (which were generally not). Gay began thus:

Though all writers of morality have in the main agreed what particular actions are virtuous and what otherwise, yet they have, or at least seem to have differed very much, both concerning the criterion of virtue, viz what it is which denominated any actions virtuous, or so to speak more properly, what it is by which we must try any actions to know whether it be virtuous or no, and also concerning the principle or motive by which men are induced to pursue virtue.⁴⁹²

Gay believed that the agreement between various authors over which actions were virtuous, in the context of apparent differences in their statements about what virtue itself was, could be accounted for by their use of a ‘different criterion (though they did not know or attend to it)’ from the principle they professed to use in order to identify a particular action as virtuous.⁴⁹³ More charitably, Gay thought, this situation might have arisen from semantic confusion. This confusion was the inevitable result of the nature of our moral ideas, which Gay identified as Locke’s

mixed modes, or compound ideas arbitrarily put together, having at first no archetypes or original existing, and afterwards no other than which exists in other men’s minds. Now since men, unless they have these their compound ideas, which are signified by the same name, made up precisely of the same simple ones, must necessarily talk a different language, and since this difference is so difficult, and in some cases impossible to be avoided, it follows that greater allowance and indulgence ought to be given to these writers than any others.⁴⁹⁴

As I suggested in chapter 1, it was partly Locke’s claims about the constructed, compounded nature of our moral ideas and the semantic instability of moral terms that was the necessary result of their make-up, which led Hutcheson to look to the model of sense perception as a source of our common, non-composite, primitive moral ideas. Gay however, embraced the necessary diversity of opinion that Locke’s mixed moral modes were able to account for. He thought that the constructed nature of these ideas entailed that opposing moral schemes would, in fact, be resolvable into his version of the interested scheme, once agreement could be reached over the ‘confused notion of virtue in general.’

⁴⁹² Gay, *Dissertation*, xi.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, xi.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

However, Gay noted, even the full specification of the simple ideas which went towards the final compound of a mixed mode could not tell us how to decide whether a particular action was in fact an instance of a particular virtue. (If temperance was a virtue, for example, how would we know whether a particular action was temperate or intemperate?). Gay's point was that the compound idea of virtue could not contain its own measure, or rule, or criterion. This, as we saw in chapter 4, was Locke's counter argument to Thomas Burnet's moral sense. Locke insisted that in moral cases we need a rule to judge by, we could not simply have an idea of moral good which both (somehow) includes a statement of the moral good and a judgement that an action is an instance of that moral good, unless that idea is considered (illegitimately) as innate, or it is produced (again illegitimately) by the operation of an innate proposition, or principle that we are unaware of.

Hutcheson's moral ideas may have been the target here for Gay (although Gay doesn't state this directly). Just as a Lockean simple idea of sweet could only report sweet and not bitter, or a simple idea of willing could only tell us that we willed (and not doubted), so, (and given that Hutcheson himself had drawn the parallel with Lockean simple ideas of reflection), an idea of moral approbation could only identify moral approbation. As discussed in chapter 4 however, somehow the principle that 'benevolence is morally approvable' is also contained within that idea, or produces that idea. Gay insisted that we needed an external criterion or rule *which did not contain the idea of virtue itself*, in order to judge whether an action was virtuous or not.

Gay defined the general idea of virtue as composed of elements that 'everyone, or most, put into their idea of virtue' – that is, that it implied 'some relation to others', and an obligation to choose the action, and that the actions were deserving of approbation.

Virtue is the conformity to a rule of life, directing the actions of all rational creatures with respect to each other's happiness, to which conformity

everyone in all cases is obliged and every one that does so conform, is or ought to be approved of, esteemed and loved for so doing.⁴⁹⁵

The criterion of virtue was whatever rule of life obliged us to obey it. It is important to note that for Gay, the criteria by which we judge whether a particular behaviour is virtuous also contains a motivational element – it is a rule of life and derived ultimately from an authority. The immediate criterion of virtue was the will of God. More specifically it was that part of God’s will concerned with our actions relating to others.⁴⁹⁶

Since the ‘happiness of mankind is the criterion of the will of God’, Gay continued, so it should be ours. He argued that it is evident from observation of the good in the world, and from the happiness we take from it, that God has willed our happiness. That our happiness depends upon one another’s behaviour is also observable. Therefore, Gay maintained, we understand that it is clearly God’s will that we act to secure happiness for each other, as far as we are able.

Now it is evident from the nature of God, viz his being infinitely happy in himself from all eternity, and from his goodness manifested in his works, that he could have no other design in creating mankind than their happiness, and therefore he wills their happiness, therefore the means of their happiness, therefore my behaviour as far as it may be a means of the happiness of mankind should be such.⁴⁹⁷

Gay then argued that the *criterion for the happiness of others* was discoverable by reason considering the ‘relations of things (which relations, with respect to our present inquiry, some have called their fitness or unfitness)’.⁴⁹⁸ What Gay meant by this, he explained, was that some things were ‘apt to produce pleasure, others pain, some are convenient and others inconvenient’. When we judge things *as they really are* (i.e. correctly), then this reflects the operation of ‘Right Reason’ (which means reason getting it right, presumably).⁴⁹⁹ This, very obviously, was not what Clarke or Burnet or Balguy would have accepted as ‘Right Reason’. Their account had reason discovering the eternal relations between the eternal

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., xvii

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., xvii – xviii.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., xix.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., xix.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., xx.

natures of things that were governed by eternal laws, and not simply discovering those things that tended to produce pleasure or pain in us, or were convenient or inconvenient to us. Moreover, although Gay did claim that we were virtuous when we conformed our will to an understanding of what was morally correct (which was to act for one another's happiness), unlike Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, Gay claimed that the fulfilment of a *moral* obligation to act in the interests of others was motivated, or induced in the first place, by a concern to raise esteem or approbation, but it was also more fundamentally a matter of self-interest, because 'God only can in all cases make a man happy or miserable'.⁵⁰⁰

Gay considered that we have various obligations, which are all 'rules of life', that could be differentiated by the manner in which those obligations were induced in us.

Obligation is the necessity of doing or omitting any action in order to be happy, i.e. where there is such a relation between an agent and any action that the agent cannot be happy without doing or omitting that action, the agent is said to be obliged. So obligation is evidently founded upon the prospect of happiness.⁵⁰¹

Gay claimed that, by perceiving the natural consequences of things according to the fixed law of nature, we understand our natural obligations. We perceive the consequences of our actions, in terms of societal response ('that arising from merit or demerit, as producing the esteem and favour of our fellow creatures, or the contrary') - these are our obligations 'usually titled virtuous'.⁵⁰² Our civil obligations derive from perceiving the authority of the magistrate, and lastly our religious obligations arise from the perceiving the authority of God. The first three of these however, are properly, subsumed under the fourth, since 'a full and complete obligation which will extend to all cases, can only be that arising from the authority of God'.⁵⁰³ Thus Gay argued that the immediate criterion of virtue was the will of God - not the whole will of God, but that portion of it that issued rules directing our behaviour with respect to other people. The criterion of the will of God was the happiness of mankind. The criterion for the happiness

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., xix.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., xviii.

⁵⁰² Ibid., xviii.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., xix.

of mankind, for us, was reason, or experience informing us of what was likely to produce pleasure or pain for others or ourselves.

Balguy, as we saw in the previous chapter, had also argued that we were under more than one obligation. Balguy had supposed that there were two sources of obligation – moral and religious. Balguy though, kept the two obligations separate in terms of the authority from which they were derived. He insisted that our obligations to our present and future happiness were religious duties to be fulfilled in order to comply with the will of God. Our *moral* obligations, however, were derived entirely from our rational appreciation of the fitness or correctness of an action, irrespective of the benefit of that action to ourselves, or indeed to others (insofar as we knew). The actual motivation for the performance of a moral action, for Balguy, would properly have been both the will of God *and* eternal law, but there were two separate obliging authorities. Gay thought that Hutcheson, Clarke, Burnet, Balguy or indeed anyone who did not bring the will of God directly into their account of obligation, including moral obligation, had failed to explain how we could be obliged, or would act in a way that would harm our own interests.⁵⁰⁴ Gay agreed that specific moral actions could very well produce an immediate diminution of our own private happiness (including loss of life) and that moral actions were undertaken with the understanding that this would be the result. Those such as Clarke, Burnet and Balguy,

who drop the happiness of mankind, and talk of relations, the fitness and unfitness of things, are still more remote from the true criterion of virtue. For fitness without any relation to some end is scarce intelligible.⁵⁰⁵

Clarke and Balguy, as discussed here and in chapters 2 and 5, considered our self-concerned motivation (as opposed to our moral obligation) for action as rightfully dependent upon the will of God. Burnet too, actually, *had* argued that fit was a ‘relative word expressing the relation of means to an end’ and that the end of a moral action was also the will of God. He had done so in his exchange of letters with Hutcheson (and had been ticked off by Hutcheson for bringing the Deity into such matters.)⁵⁰⁶ Burnet explained that the ‘perfectly wise and good’

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, xxi.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ Hutcheson to Burnet, *Correspondence*, 228

God had created us according to eternal law, and that our happiness ‘must be the chief end for which the wise and good author’ had brought his rational creatures into being – in this sense the end of other-directed actions was the will of God. However, Burnet went on, the reason why God sought to make us happy was that happiness itself was a reasonable end as specified by eternal law. It was, since we had some access to that part of eternal law that governed our own concerns, therefore fit and reasonable to us that we should act to make one another happy. God, being wise and good had provided with the ‘natural affections leading to this end’. These are benevolent affections that are not reducible to self-interest, because they do not need to be. They just need to be a reasonable means (for God) to his reasonable end (our happiness). To the question ‘Why ought the public good to be sought after?’ Burnet answered ‘because it is fit to accomplish the wise end of the creator to make all his creatures happy that it should be so.’ ‘Why is that end to be regarded?’ Burnet replied ‘because it is a wise and reasonable end.’ ‘Indeed the fitness of means to an end lay no obligation but the end is reasonable.’⁵⁰⁷ So, for Burnet, the will of God was indirectly the end to which fitnesses aim. Burnet would not have accepted Gay’s account unless Gay had also made it clear that God’s goodness lay in the rectitude of his will (his always conforming his actions to that which is reasonable according to eternal law).

To consider the arguments of Clarke and his defenders and Hutcheson on Gay’s terms, we can see that, the criterion for the will of God, for Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, was the reasonableness of his desire and will for our happiness, and not simply ‘the happiness of mankind’. For Hutcheson too, once the arguments in the *Metaphysics* are read alongside the *four treatises*, we can see that the criterion for the will of God would have been that his motive was benevolent, which was ‘praiseworthy in itself’, and not just because the (always successful) results of that intention cause the happiness of mankind.⁵⁰⁸ It is important to note that it is not entirely clear how Gay (whose *Dissertation* is the only work known to be his) dealt with the question of what gave God the *moral* authority, as opposed to the

⁵⁰⁷ Burnet, *Correspondence*, 221.

⁵⁰⁸ Hutcheson, *Metaphysics*, 175.

bare power, to command us. I presume that he would have argued that God's goodness (known through observation of the world) secured this, but as I have suggested, this goodness is not explained in this short work, further than the assertion of God's power, desire and ability to make us happy.

Gay, introspection and the association of ideas

Just as Law had deemed Clarke's absolute fitnesses to be equivalent to innate instincts, so Gay charged Hutcheson's moral theory with either advancing 'the doctrine of innate ideas', or offering an account of our moral abilities that were too mysterious to comprehend ('it relishes too much of that of occult qualities').⁵⁰⁹ Gay agreed with Hutcheson, just as Gilbert Burnet and Balguy had done, that something we might call a moral sense existed ('a power or a faculty'). But although

it is necessary in order to solve the principle actions of human life to suppose a moral sense (or what is signified by that name) and also public affections, *but I deny that this moral sense, or these public affections, are innate or implanted in us. They are acquired either from our own observation or the imitation of others.*⁵¹⁰ [My emphasis.]

Gay complained that Hutcheson's explanation of both the reliably observed tendency of agents to act against their own best interests, and the equally reliably observed inability of agents to say why they approved as they did in moral cases, stopped short of a full explanation. He found Hutcheson's appeal to an implanted moral sense and 'natural' kind affections to be mistaken, because, he argued, Hutcheson had failed to look beyond our introspectively available experience. Hutcheson had assumed innate or implanted abilities to act in the interests of others and to approve such motivations and actions. In so doing, Gay claimed, Hutcheson had missed the true, original, principle behind our election and approbation of actions.

This ingenious author is certainly right in his observations upon the insufficiency of the common methods of accounting for both our election and approbation of moral actions, and rightly infers the necessity of supposing a moral sense (i.e. a power or faculty whereby we may perceive any action to be an object of approbation, and the agent of love)

⁵⁰⁹ Gay, *Dissertation*, xiv. Carey also discusses Gay's charge of innatism to Hutcheson, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson*, 49-50.

⁵¹⁰ Gay, *Dissertation*, xxxiii.

and public affections, to account for the principle actions of human life. But then by calling these instincts, I think he stops too soon, imagining himself at the fountain-head, when he might have traced them much higher, even to the true principle of all our actions, our own happiness.⁵¹¹

As we have seen, Gay insisted that the real principle behind choice of actions was in fact the agent's private happiness, based on the inducements offered by actions considered obligatory.⁵¹² The *original* principle behind our approbation of an action, or actor, Gay insisted, was reason pointing out the prospect of that private happiness.⁵¹³ The fundamental principle of private happiness in both cases needed to be uncovered, or better, recovered by us, since it was not apparent to us by immediate introspection into our motives, or judgements.

The 'grand objection' to his scheme, Gay acknowledged, was that, when we act in the interests of others, or when we approve the intentions, or actions of an agent, we are not generally aware that we select or approve an action because it will tend to our private happiness. In fact we may very well not be able to supply any reason for election or approbation other than that it seemed the 'right' course of action to undertake or motive to approve. As Gay admitted, the assumption here was that

if the grateful or compassionate mind never thought of that reason, it is no reason to him.⁵¹⁴

Gay did not find virtue 'inconsistent with acting upon private happiness',⁵¹⁵ (although acting purely from self-interest was 'prudent but not virtuous'.)⁵¹⁶ He argued that when we acted virtuously we ought, or deserved to receive, the merit or esteem of others. The expected procurement of this merit, or esteem, could be a motive in itself for the performance of an action (presumably where we did not have an idea of the more immediate criterion of the action as commanded by God), but this did not mean that we did not also experience the sorts of affections towards others that Hutcheson (and Clarke, Burnet and

⁵¹¹ Ibid., xiv.

⁵¹² Ibid., xxv.

⁵¹³ Ibid., xiv.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., xxiv.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., xxv.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., xvii.

Balguy) claimed we experienced. Gay understood that although we experienced kind affections towards others, and experienced the motivation to make them happy, such estimable feelings actually originated in a more fundamental concern for private happiness.⁵¹⁷

Gay explained the occurrence of public affections in the following way: Our happiness on earth depended upon the actions of other people (the voluntary actions of rational agents). We therefore approve of others acting in our interests because this is likely to increase our happiness - hence we approve other-directed actions and the benevolent agents behind them. Then, Gay slipped in, because we also desire what we approve, so we desire 'the happiness of any agent who has done us good', take pleasure in this, and anticipate the pleasure that the agent's happiness will bring them.⁵¹⁸ This was not inconsistent with Hutcheson's claim that our virtue raised kind affections and esteem or complacency in the recipients of our beneficence, but Hutcheson had insisted that acting to procure esteem or the expected return of feelings detracted from the virtue of an action. When Gay said that our obligation 'usually titled virtuous' arose from the expected procurement of 'esteem and favour from our fellow creatures', he did not need to insist that we acted *solely* from this motive - we could also genuinely desire, and experience the desire for, the happiness of others. The basis of our feelings of love and concern for others, however, originated in their ability to act in our interests. Indeed Gay made it clear that our obligation to that agent extended no further than her intention to act in our interests.⁵¹⁹ An argument from undisclosed nature of the selfish origin of our moral motivation is what Hutcheson would have found unacceptable.

As we saw in chapter 3, Hutcheson insisted that we had to have introspective awareness of our motivation in order for it to motivate us directly. Gay described the objection thus:

⁵¹⁷ Hutcheson's objections to this argument were discussed in chapter 3.

⁵¹⁸ Gay, *Dissertation*, xxiv.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

That reason or end of every action is always known to the agent, for nothing can move a man but what is perceived.⁵²⁰

Gay accused Hutcheson of faulty reasoning here. Gay maintained that arguing for the existence of instinctive public affections, (because that is what introspection reveals to us as motive), or an implanted moral sense, (because we can't say why we approve of benevolence or public affections), is to argue 'ad ignorantiam' or 'a remotione'.⁵²¹ Gay did not elaborate on his comment, but there are various versions of this fallacy (the argument from ignorance).⁵²² They involve the complaint that an absence of evidence or proof (of a more fundamental principle behind election and approbation that we are not aware introspectively of, for example) is not evidence of absence (that a fundamental principle does not exist, for example). A form of the fallacy, or a related fallacy, is the argument from self-knowing, or introspective awareness. This fallacy, familiar to many psychologists, is described (in Wikipedia) as follows

1. If P were true then I would know it; in fact I do not know it; therefore P cannot be true.
2. If P were false then I would know it; in fact I do not know it; therefore P cannot be false.⁵²³

This is the root of Gay's complaint to Hutcheson – just because we are not aware that our true motive is private happiness (or that our approbation of virtue was originally the result of 'reason, pointing out private happiness'⁵²⁴), it does not mean that this is not, in fact, our true motive (for action or approbation).

Gay agreed with Hutcheson that we approve of motives and actions that aim at the happiness of others. However, he argued that this was because

in the pursuit of truth we don't always trace every proposition whose truth we are examining, to a first principle or axiom, but acquiesce, as soon as we perceive it deducible from some known or some presumed truth.⁵²⁵

⁵²⁰ Ibid., xviii.

⁵²¹ Ibid., xiv.

⁵²² Locke has his own, idiosyncratic formulation of this, *ECHU*, 4:17:19, 686.

⁵²³ Wikipedia, "Argument from Ignorance," accessed 29th March 2017.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_from_ignorance

⁵²⁴ Gay, *Dissertation*, xiv.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., xxix

Rather than 'run everything to the fountain-head', and because of the narrowness of our minds, we employ a heuristic and

choose out certain truths and means of happiness, which we look upon as resting places, which we may safely acquiesce in, in the conduct both of our understanding and practice, in relation to the one, regarding them as axioms, in the other as ends'.⁵²⁶

This practice leads us to mistake intermediary propositions for axioms and intermediary ends as innate principles or instincts.

It is important to understand, though, that Gay did not claim that his fundamental principle operated entirely outside of our conscious awareness. Gay's claim was that we had, at some original point, been aware that we approved the actions of agents that were directed towards our own happiness. The explanation that Gay provided is that in thinking about our motive or moral judgments, we do not always interrogate them sufficiently to uncover the more fundamental principle behind them. With respect to motive, Gay explained that we habitually settle for identifying our 'inferior ends' rather than seek out, or recall our 'ultimate ends'.⁵²⁷ For example, the inferior end of study is knowledge, but we ultimately seek knowledge because it tends, or we believe it will tend, to our happiness in some way. So, we must have had some experience of knowledge furthering our private happiness, or we may reason for ourselves that it is likely to do so.⁵²⁸ It is important to stress that Gay did not claim that we have never understood that knowledge either brought, or was capable of bringing, us happiness. He does not suggest unconscious motivation here, rather the habitual forgetting of an original insight, together with the operation of a process known as the association of ideas.

The case is really this. We first perceive or imagine some real good, i.e. fitness to promote our happiness in those things we love and approve of. Hence (as was above explained) we annex pleasure to those things. Hence those things and pleasure are so tied together and associated in our minds, that one cannot present itself but the other will also occur. And the

⁵²⁶ Ibid., xxx.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., xxv.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., xxv.

association remains, even after that which first gave them the connection is quite forgot, or perhaps does not exist.⁵²⁹

Gay explained that, in the case of the miser, for example, her attachment to money is formed first by her perceiving the goods or happiness that money is able to supply her. Pleasure is thus associated with money in her mind. But over time she forgets that money brought her pleasure and she simply associates money itself with pleasure. She then seeks to amass money, without intending to use it to secure her the goods or services that originally brought her happiness, because the money itself now brings her 'the phantastical pleasure of having it'.⁵³⁰

In the same way, by the process of association we come to love or approve of benevolence itself, because the original increase in our own happiness that agents acting benevolently produced is forgotten, and we now just associate pleasure with the perception of benevolence, either as our own intention or as an intention in others. Our instinctive public affections, and implanted sense of moral approbation, are really just the experience of associated pleasures that were originally associated with the reasoned perception of our own happiness. At the very end of his *Dissertation*, Gay claimed that the other way in which we may acquire such associated pleasures is by education, or through the imitation or observation of others because we perceive the esteem that others accord us when we imitate them.⁵³¹

In eighteenth century British philosophy four different attitudes towards the principle of association of ideas were taken. These were: to admit it as a principle of mind but to construe it as a cause of comprehensive error in human understanding (Locke), or as a source of deviance from innate good moral or aesthetic sense (Hutcheson) (although both Locke and Hutcheson do allow its usefulness in language acquisition and memory, and Locke suggests ways in which it may be put to good use in early years education); to admit it as a

⁵²⁹ Ibid., xxx-xxxii.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., xxxi.

⁵³¹ Gay, *Dissertation*, xxxiii.

principle of mind and report its activity as both beneficial and detrimental to the construction of veridical understanding (Berkeley, with Hobbes as a predecessor); to admit it as the single unifying principle of mind (Hume, Hartley, Priestley), or to deny it as an original principle of mind (Reid).⁵³² Whatever Gay's later influence was, I do not believe there is sufficient evidence in the *Dissertation* to claim that Gay took association to be the single unifying principle of mind. I do believe however, that he thought that God had implanted this principle into our understanding in order to encourage us to act to increase public happiness.

Locke and Hutcheson were vehemently opposed to the operation of associations in reasoning, and especially moral reasoning.⁵³³ Locke had argued that the natural tendency of our ideas to become habitually or customarily associated with one another prevented the proper supervision of judgment that the understanding ought to provide. The natural (true) correspondence and connection of our ideas would never be discovered, because the strength of these associations made by custom, once formed, were so difficult to break. The immediate and binding way that our ideas naturally combine or recombine make this process highly vulnerable to irrational or habitual associations. Once formed associations are difficult to distinguish from judgment in knowledge, or intuitive knowledge proper.⁵³⁴ This is because, as discussed in the introductory chapter, for Locke intuitive knowledge is perceptual in character - we simply see or perceive the connection between ideas. In the judgment of probable belief (which is what our understanding is most concerned with), the understanding ought to voluntarily exercise governance, but the strength of an associative connection can lead to our most deeply held beliefs going unscrutinised by judgment. Locke made his opposition to its pervasive influence upon the understanding pellucid.

I shall be pardoned for calling it by so harsh a name as madness, when it is considered, that opposition to reason deserves that name and really is

⁵³² See Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) for an introduction to association (but who does not offer this summary).

⁵³³ See Gill, "Association," for Hutcheson's position.

⁵³⁴ Locke, *ECHU*, 4:33:4-5, 395.

madness; and there is scarce a man so free from it . . . I do not mean when he is in power of unruly passion but in the steady calm course of his life . . . if this be a taint which so universally infects mankind, the greatest care should be taken to lay it open under its due name, thereby to excite the greatest care in its prevention and cure.⁵³⁵

Gay's appeal to the association of ideas where associations are formed through education or custom allows that the original insight into our own private happiness only devolves as far as the perception that by acting in a particular way we will gain esteem from those we admire. In his general account of an original act of reason pointing out private happiness, Gay, I suggest, comes closer to adverting to Locke's account of unnoticed inference in perception, discussed in the introductory chapter and chapter 4.

Locke insisted that ideas that are associated are not part of propositional thought – they are merely associated, so that one regularly follows the other into our mental purview. In the case of unnoticed inference in three-dimensional visual perception, Locke wrote that

this in many cases, by a settled habit, in things whereof we have frequent experience, is performed so constantly, and so quick, that we take that for the perception of our sensation, which is an idea formed by our judgment; so that one, *viz.* that of sensation, serves only to excite the other, and is scarce taken notice of itself.⁵³⁶

S. K. Land objects to Locke's account here because he believes that Locke has identified the mental act of judgment in a way that leaves it virtually indistinguishable from that of the association of ideas.⁵³⁷ It may be difficult to distinguish the two here, but Locke and Gay pointed to an original act of judgment that has become habitual. In the case of Locke, in the domain of visual perception and Gay, in our approbation of actions, an original veridical judgment is made which is later forgotten. In this way, I suggest, Gay thought that our introspective experience of approbation itself was misleading, but only insofar as God had intended that it should operate to encourage us 'in the conduct of our understanding and practice' to act for one another's happiness.

⁵³⁵ Locke, *ECHU*, 4: 33.4, 394.

⁵³⁶ Locke, *ECHU*, 2:9:8, 145.

⁵³⁷ Land, *Philosophy of Language in Britain*, 73.

Gay's moral theory is included in this thesis because Gay himself believed that it functioned as a terminus for some of the arguments presented by the other authors considered here. Gay's attempt to synthesise the approaches of Clarke and his defenders and Hutcheson, with his own voluntarist position, relied upon their shared commitment to the basic principle that God aimed at the happiness of all, and that therefore, this ought to be our aim too. There is no talk of the nature of God's communicable attributes, or the legitimacy of various necessities with which God might have been led to act in creation. Gay, I suggest, sought to reduce the terms of the argument with respect to divine action to something that all could agree on – that God, because of his goodness, aimed at everybody's happiness, and that, therefore, we ought to aim at everybody's happiness too.

Gay's own commitment to the ultimate authority of God's will and its motive effect on the fulfilment of our obligations, would have been rejected by Clarke and his defenders as the source of our *moral* obligation, but not as the legitimate source of our own motive to obey what we knew to be a divine command. Hutcheson similarly would not have disagreed that this could be an inducement for us to act. By stopping at the notion that God willed our happiness because he was good, and not speculating further than this into God's attributes, or his motives or reasons in creation, Gay, I suggest, indicated that we, as moral agents, need not go further than this 'fundamental principle' behind God's creative activity, in order to see how and why God had made virtue possible for us. Moreover, Gay sought to explain how the different principle parts of our nature (the sensible and the rational) might be brought together in a unified account of agency that saw human nature, its motivational apparatus and obligation bound together to explain the possibility of virtue.

Gay's multifactorial model of moral thought and action used elements of Clarke and Hutcheson's epistemology to explain different aspects of our introspectively available moral experience. If Gay's *Dissertation* was conceived as a consensus forming exercise, then it would have failed here. Neither Clarke, Burnet, Balguy, nor Hutcheson would have been remotely satisfied with Gay's theory. Clarke and

his defenders would have rejected Gay's reductive account of reason as a method of anticipating and calculating pleasure and pain. Hutcheson would never have agreed that our public affections could be reduced ultimately to a concern for self-interest. Although Hutcheson very clearly thought that acting for the sake of the happiness of others was ultimately in our best interests, the idea that we approved of benevolence because it tended towards our own best interests was something that he railed against from the beginning of his career. But Gay was concerned with outcome – the good produced, and Hutcheson himself had admitted that we cannot be sure of the motives of others, and that it was easier to work backwards from the outcome of an action to discover the motive of its agent.⁵³⁸

I suggest that in all these ways Gay's theological utilitarianism was designed to provide us with the most straightforward answer to the question of how God had made it possible for us to be virtuous. Moral theory did not need to concern itself with theistic metaphysics, beyond the idea of an all-powerful creator who aimed at our happiness. Moreover for Gay, although our ultimate obligation and motive for a moral action was God's authority, we did not necessarily need to realise this in order to act virtuously, we just need to have reasoned, at some point, that it was in our best interests for others to act benevolently towards us, in order for us to approve benevolence, esteem our benefactor and then to seek to accrue similar esteem for ourselves by acting benevolently. This perhaps would not lead us to heroic acts of self-sacrifice, but the associative nature of our ideas would ensure the divinely intended consequences of a general increase in human happiness.

⁵³⁸ Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, 130.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The broad intention of this thesis was to investigate the ways in which (some) early eighteenth-century British moral philosophers sought to account for the possibility of virtue. In so doing my intention was to further undermine the convention that British moral philosophy of this period is best conceived as a struggle between rationalist and sentimentalist epistemologies. Over the course of the preceding chapters I aimed to establish that the appropriate interpretive context for the accounts of moral epistemology offered by Clarke, Burnet, Balguy, Hutcheson and Gay was their wider, practical concern to demonstrate to their readership the various ways in which God had made it possible for us to be virtuous. I argued that each of the philosophers situated their epistemology within the wider framework of an attempt to prove the reality of virtue in the sense of virtue being an achievable practical endeavour. The ultimate reality of virtue, or of moral good, was secured, in each case, by an appeal to theistic metaphysics, where God's goodness was either the bare fact of his aiming at our happiness (Gay), or a necessary part of his nature (Hutcheson), or the rectitude of his will (Clarke, Burnet and Balguy). I believe that a detailed account of the ways in which these authors used the theory of God's communicable attributes is missing from the secondary literature, as it stands.

I presented reinterpretations of the work of Clarke and Hutcheson, whose moral philosophy, I suggested, aimed to provide solutions to the problems of a Christian moral life lived in the round, rather than to satisfy the Whiggish demands of later histories of autonomy or accounts of moral cognitivism. I argued that Clarke, Burnet and Balguy did not propose a rationalist account of epistemology in order to explain how we might be brought to lives of virtue. Rather, their intention was to explain how we *ought* to have been able to bring ourselves to behave well using natural reason, but that, in fact, we had demonstrated (to God) that we required certain religious truths about the long-term consequences of our actions to be revealed to us. I offered a partial

corrective to the views expressed by commentators whose own concerns seem to have led them to deny, or to side-line, those parts of Clarke and Balguy's argument that clearly stated the practical necessity of our holding views on the reality of future reward and punishment in the afterlife. The readings of Schneewind and Irwin which focus on Clarke and Balguy's epistemology, do indeed leave Clarke, Burnet and Balguy looking as if they struggled to account for the motivation of moral actions. I have argued that they did not struggle to explain motivation; they simply did so in a way that later commentators have not always deemed valid or interesting.

I also presented an account of Hutcheson's moral realism. This was something of a reframing exercise, as it relied upon an interpretation of several parts of the material found in Hutcheson's texts on *Metaphysics* and *Logic*, which either had not been examined before, or had not been integrated with the arguments found in the *four treatises*. I argued that Hutcheson's sentimentalism, resting as it did on the ideas of God's communicable virtue, was unlikely to have been understood by Hutcheson as a species of voluntarism and, in fact, that Hutcheson went some way beyond an appeal to a providentially implanted naturalism. I discussed the way in which the theory of God's communicable attributes legitimised Hutcheson's use of introspection into our own motives, and the ways in which he believed that our own beliefs about our own nature and that of God were of practical importance.

I also outlined the way in which Hutcheson's introspective method rested upon the assumption of the transparency of our thoughts and motives to us. The significance of this assumption (inherited from earlier logics of ideas) for Hutcheson's moral epistemology was discussed at some length. Another major part of thesis was concerned with demonstrating the ways in which the moral epistemology presented by Hutcheson, Burnet and Balguy and Gay reflected the influence of earlier logics of ideas, and especially Locke's way of ideas. Locke's influence on Hutcheson's epistemology is far from being an underexplored topic in the secondary literature. However, my concern here was to reveal the ways in which the first act of perception or reception of simple ideas became the focus of

attention within epistemological logics in general, and that the boundary between this and the second act of judgment was not seen as being fixed within these logics. This approach offers another context within which to understand the grudging consensus that arose in the earlier part of the eighteenth century concerning the existence of something called a moral sense. There was widespread agreement that our moral thought needed to be accounted for in a way that avoided appealing to anything that looked as if it might be an innate idea, principle or maxim, and yet would still describe a principle of mind that operated in everyone to provide some sort of potential, primitive, commonly available guidance in moral judgment-making. I spent some time detailing the ways in which Hutcheson, Burnet, Balguy and Gay borrowed from, or exploited, particular aspects of Locke's general perceptual account of reason in order to account for our experience of moral evaluation as an involuntary, immediate, affective experience. I explained how the battle to explain the brute fact of our immediate moral reactions became a battle over the experiential priority of sense versus reason. I also explained the way in which Gay sought to integrate these aspects of our experience of moral thought into his own associative account of moral judgment.

I presented a fresh perspective on Hutcheson's moral epistemology in the following three ways: First, by looking at the permeability of the boundary between sense and judgment upon which his moral epistemology was built. Second, by looking at the ways in which Hutcheson, subsequent to the first edition of the *Inquiry*, shifted the epistemological burden onto the preparatory reasoning that occurred prior to the emergence of our ideas of moral sense, in order for those emerging moral ideas to be of epistemic value to us, and so that he might shield his moral sense from accusations of nativism. Third, and perhaps most importantly of all, by inspecting the ontology of his ideas from moral sense as this was presented in the *Metaphysics* and the *Logic*.

I explored the work of Burnet, and Balguy and Gay, in more detail than is found in the existing secondary literature, because their work was central to the detail of the debate about the original, foundational and fundamental principles of virtue

that occurred between 1725 (the publication date of Hutcheson's *Inquiries*) and 1732 (the publication of Gay's *Dissertation*). This material provides the context for the various explanations of a moral sense discussed in this thesis.

Furthermore, a closer reading of their work reveals that the objections that Burnet and Balguy had about Hutcheson's position in the *four treatises* were as much concerned with Hutcheson's views on the principles that motivated or caused God to create in the way that he did, as they were on the necessity of our own moral epistemology being founded upon our intuitive insight into self-evident propositions. Gay's work is important for a number of reasons, but here I have outlined his attempt to synthesise the positions of rival moral schemes. His chief aim, I suggest, was to explain how the rational and sensible parts of our nature might be brought together in a unified account of agency and obligation that saw human nature, its motivational and cognitive apparatus, and God's ultimate authority, bound together to explain the possibility of virtue.

The thesis had three aims: 1) to examine the relationship of rationalism to obligation and motivation in the work of Clarke, Burnet and Balguy, and 2) to explore the relative roles of sense and judgment in Hutcheson, Burnet, Balguy and Gay and to (re) examine the nature of Hutcheson's moral realism, and 3) to investigate the theistic metaphysical claims made by all parties with respect to the arguments about moral realism. I believe that I have fulfilled these aims and that in so doing I have made an original contribution to scholarship.

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